

THE COSMIC BATTLE

Study a Map

Something took place in the fall of 1944 that can explain a major reason why many Christians see evangelism as a hobby rather than a 24/7 occupation. It was late October when an officer commanding a platoon of American soldiers received a call from headquarters. Over the radio, this captain learned his unit was being ordered to recapture a small French city from the Nazis-and he learned something else from headquarters as well. For weeks, French resistance fighters had risked their lives to gather information about the German fortifications in that city, and they had smuggled this information out to the Allies.

The French Underground's efforts had provided the Americans with something worth its weight in gold: a detailed map of the city. It wasn't just a map with the names of major streets and landmarks; it showed specific details of the enemy's defensive positions. Indeed, the map even identified shops and buildings where German soldiers bunked or where a machine-gun nest or a sniper had been stationed. Block by block, the Frenchmen gave an accounting of the German units and the gun emplacements they manned. For a captain who was already concerned about mounting casualty lists, receiving such information was an answer to prayer.

Before the soldiers moved out to take their objective, the captain gave each man a chance to study the map. And wanting to make sure his men read it carefully, he hurriedly gave them a test covering the major landmarks and enemy strongholds. Just before his platoon moved out, the officer graded the test, and with minor exceptions every man earned a perfect score. As a direct result of having that map to follow, the men captured the city with little loss of American lives.

Nearly thirty years after this military operation took place, an army researcher heard the story and decided to base a study on it. The project began in France, where instead of a platoon of soldiers, he arranged for a group of American tourists to help him with his research. For several hours, the men and women were allowed to study the same map the soldiers had, and then they were given the same test. You can guess the results. Most of the tourists failed miserably. The reason for the difference between these two groups was obvious-motivation. Knowing their lives were on the line, the soldiers were highly motivated to learn every detail of the map. For the tourists, being in a research study provided some motivation. But most of them had nothing to lose but a little pride if they failed the test. *from: The Gift of Honor, Gary Smalley & John Trent, Ph.D. pp. 1-2*

This story illustrates how one's sense of motivation changes one's performance, and we see that when faced with the motivation of life or death, the soldiers were highly motivated to gain information about the enemy's position, the enemy's tactics, and the enemy's strongholds. They sought reliable intelligence before going into battle. As

Christian soldiers we need to have reliable intelligence about our enemy before we engage in battle. Paul provided Timothy with insights into how to engage the enemy.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (New International Version)

24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Cosmic Battle Review

Last month we, as a church, started the Truth Project. If you will remember, Tour 1, on Veritology we discussed the question what is truth. In that Tour Dr. Tackett asked the class to finish this verse:

John 18: 37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world to _____"

testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

While exploring truth Dr. Tackett explained that what keeps us from the truth are lies, and he then explains the cosmic battle between truth and lies.

This morning I would like to explore this cosmic battle. What does the word battle mean. For some of you who have served our country in military service, you understand what the word battle means. And all of us thank you for putting your lives on the line for the defense of our country. For the rest of us, our concepts of a battle come from personal communication with service men and women, I'll call them all soldiers, or we get impressions from movies, books, newspapers, or the evening news. We are spectators of the battle. Now we care about the outcome, we support our soldiers, but we are not on the battlefield.

In the case of the cosmic battle, everyone is involved. The cosmic battle is just that, cosmic in scale, it is the battle for all of creation.

You see, Scripture is clear that there is a battle going on, therefore there must be a battlefield, there must be someplace where the two sides engage in battle. And in battle there are those who fight, in our case those who fight for the Truth, those who fight for the Lie, and there are a third group, those who are taken captive.

Let's break this down into elements and look at some Scripture.

Elements of the Battle

Army of the Lie

Revelation 12:7 And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

... 13 When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. ... 17 Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

The dragon, Satan, is the general of the army of Lies. He rebelled against God in the heavenly realms, and with a third of the angels he battled, but fell to earth claiming it as his and making it the next battleground.

1 Peter 5:8 (New Living Translation)

8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

Names mean something in the Bible. When we want to understand God's character, we look at His many names. Similarly when we want to understand the enemy we can also look to the Bible for his names. What is he? A roaring lion. In other passages he is described as a serpent, a dragon, a tempter, the evil one, a liar, and a murderer.

J.I. Packer in his book 18 Words, states: "this indicates his cunning, hatred, ferocity, and cruelty against the people of God... These words indicate the character and aim of the strategy with which he assaults us." He is pure evil, there is no good in him, there is no love, he is fueled "solely by the power of hatred towards God...like other professional liars, Satan has at one point at least lost his grip on reality."

Do you remember what Dr. Tackett said in Tour 1 that the definition of insanity was, "the loss of touch with reality." Is Packer right in his assessment of Satan as insane? Let's take a look at Scripture.

Would any sane person make a bet with God and think that they have a chance of winning? No some of you might say it would be foolish, others attempting to be more politically correct would say that it is ill advised, or not recommended. Let's return to Scripture for an example and perhaps then we can call it what it really is.

That is exactly what Satan does in the book of Job when he visits God.

Job 1: The Message

6-7 One day when the angels came to report to God, Satan, who was the Designated Accuser, came along with them. God singled out Satan and said, "What have you been up to?"

Satan answered God, "Going here and there, checking things out on earth."

8 God said to Satan, "Have you noticed my friend Job? There's no one quite like him—honest and true to his word, totally devoted to God and hating evil."

slide Job part 2 of verses

9-10 Satan retorted, "So do you think Job does all that out of the sheer goodness of his heart? Why, no one ever had it so good! You pamper him like a pet, make sure nothing bad ever happens to him or his family or his possessions, bless everything he does—he can't lose!"

11 "But what do you think would happen if you reached down and took away everything that is his? He'd curse you right to your face, that's what."

12 God replied, "We'll see. Go ahead—do what you want with all that is his. Just don't hurt him." Then Satan left the presence of God.

God is omnipotent, He sees all eternity in an instant, He knows the outcome at the same moment He know the bet. There is not even a mathematical chance that Satan can win. The odds are zero to infinity that God is going to win. How can Satan make this bet, because he has lost touch with reality. Remember what Packer said, "He is pure evil, there is no good in him, there is no love, he is fueled "solely by the power of hatred towards God...like other professional liars, Satan has at one point at least lost his grip on reality." Satan is insane. He knows that he is actually a POW defeated by God, he is a traitor, a defector and knows what his future holds, death! and thinks he can change the outcome by fighting against God.

C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity cuts through the hogwash of answers about who Jesus is by boiling it down to three options: liar, lunatic, or Lord. Meaning either Jesus, and all the disciples, and all the witnesses, were liars, or Jesus was a man who lost touch with reality, meaning a lunatic, or He is Lord, the Son of the Living God.

I believe the same three options are available to everyone concerning who Satan is and every person in this cosmic battle is making a choice; is Satan a liar and a lunatic or is he the lord of your life. My friends, Scripture makes it clear that he is a liar, and I believe that he has lost touch with reality and hence is a lunatic. His strategy is to seek to make others into liars, and eventually have them lose touch with reality, thereby sealing their fate for all eternity.

Be careful! We tend to picture insane people as happily living in another reality, no bother to us, but this is not the case. Because he is insane and does not make rational decisions, he is more dangerous than you can ever imagine.

Who does he recruit for his army? Those who he takes captive. How?

Colossians 2:7-9 (New International Version) *8See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*

Remember that deceptive philosophies are lies.

John 8:43-45 (New International Version)

43Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

The general of the army of lies does not need to build his army, every single person born on this planet starts off in this army.

Ephesians 2 (New Living Translation)

1 Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

Do you have a clear understanding of the enemy, of his strongholds, of his tactics? Can we go into battle like the troops in the opening story having memorized the map of the city and thereby reducing the number of casualties? Before we answer that let us look at the other army.

Army of the Truth

Who are the soldiers in the army of truth? We are.

John 1:11-13 (New International Version)

11He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

All those who believe in His name, in His payment of the sentence for our sins, all those who believe in His resurrection, all those who are being transformed by the Spirit, all those are His soldiers, in his army, under His leadership. As soldiers we must prepare for battle, we must...

***Ephesians 6: 10** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ... **13** Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, {the battlefield} you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. **14** Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, **15** and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. **16** In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. **17** Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. **18** And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

Since we are in a very real war, we need to be dressed in full armor. In this passage, the only unprotected part is the back. This surely implies that we must not turn and run. We must also note where the battle is being fought. This information is given in verse 18. The first activity mentioned once we have donned the armor is PRAYER. The place and time of prayer will be focal point of the battle.

Now you understand the two armies, one army on each side of the cosmic battle. Like it or not, you are in one army or another. Now, let's talk about the battlefield.

The Battlefield

***Ephesians 6: 12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

You are all well familiar with the first skirmish on battlefield earth, it took place in the garden of Eden, and that skirmish left the army of lies with two captives, and the army of truth with no soldiers. Since that fateful day, everyone born on this planet comes into the world as a captive in the army of lies.

However, the Commander and Chief of the Army of Truth, God the Father had a plan to win the war by His power and might.

In fact, God spares nothing to try to free the captives. You see the Commander and Chief sent His General, our Lord Jesus Christ, to win the war for Him. Christ's mission was to free the captives. I like the way that C.S. Lewis describes it in Mere Christianity:

"[Christianity] thinks it is a civil war, a rebellion, and that we are living in a part of the universe occupied by the rebel. Enemy-occupied-territory- that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. When you go to church you are really listening –in to the secret wireless from our friends: that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going."

God planned for the Greatest Escape. I had a chance to watch the movie the Great Escape, a true story about Allied POWs in WW2 nazi Europe. These men risked

everything to organize the escape of all the POWs. When God the Father sends His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and General of His army into the world, He came to free captives, not just a few, but all the captives.

I'll call on J.I. Packer again as he describes the events on the battlefield well "Calvary was thus a decisive victory over Satan and Satan's hosts (Col. 2:15), ... The cross ensured that countless numbers would be 'delivered... from the dominion of darkness and transferred... to the kingdom [army of truth] of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins' (Col.1:13)."

How?

"This comes to pass through the preaching of the gospel which summons men to turn from Satan to God (Acts 26:18), and the concurrent work of Christ from heaven who moves men to the response of faith and repentance (Acts 5:3). Satan resists every time and every step of the way, but he cannot stop it happening. He is a decisively beaten foe."

How do you see the world?

What image comes to mind?

Does it look like this? [map of the earth in daylight]

I think this is how most of us see the world,

but we really ought to see it like this. [map of the earth at night, with darkness every where and pinpoints of light representing Christians]

You see the power of darkness, the army of lies, Satan and his demons rule this world and are intent on keeping the inhabitants captive. If we saw the world this way, if we saw our unsaved neighbors, our unsaved co-workers, our unsaved family members as captives living in a dark, enemy occupied territory, I think we would see them in their true spiritual state.

Let me show you a simple set of illustrations of the battlefield.

1 This slide shows a dark world in which there are many captives and a few rebel Christians.

2 Here is a closer look at just one of these rebel Christians amongst many captives. The Christian lives his life as Christ intended, directed by the Spirit, loving God, and loving his neighbor as himself.

3 The rebel Christian's life draws the attention of the captives, who being also made in the image and likeness of God, have an internal desire to be reunited with their Creator.

1 Peter 2:11-13 (New International Version)

11Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 12Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

4 As they draw nearer they begin to inquire.

5 God, sends a little bit of himself, He causes the creature to realize the desire for the Creator. C.S. Lewis said it this way in Mere Christianity, “We mean that God putting into us a little bit of Himself, so to speak. He lends s a little of His reasoning powers and that is how we think: He puts a little of His love into us and that is how we love one another.”

6 The captives, realizing the joy, forgiveness and grace that Jesus offers through His atoning sacrifice accept Him as Lord and Savior thereby joining the rebel force.

7 But it is a free choice, and not all accept the gift, they prefer the darkness to the light, they prefer the lie rather than the truth, and they are on their way to losing touch with reality, they are on their way to insanity, for all eternity.

Application

So what are the lessons learned that apply to our role as soldier of truth in this cosmic battle?

1. Christ came to organize a great escape, to offer every single captive the opportunity to escape and join the army of truth

Romans 5: 6You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2. Once you join the army of truth, be prepared for battle. The army of lies does not like deserters and strives to recapture them.

1 Peter 5: 8Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

10And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

11To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

3. Once you are a soldier in the army of truth, Christ, the General, will guard you.

1 Corinthians 10: 12So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

13No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Christ is jealous of every soldier and will not stand by and let one of His soldiers be captured by the enemy.

Leave No-One Dead or Alive

The soldier's first article of faith is summed up nowhere more eloquently than in an 1865 letter from William Tecumseh Sherman to U. S. Grant: "I knew wherever I was that you thought of me, and if I got in a tight place you would come—if alive." This is the unwritten, unspoken but unbreakable contract of the battlefield: You will leave no one, dead or alive, in the hands of the enemy. U.S. News and World Report, July 29, 1991, p. 5

4. As a soldier of Christ, it is our duty to follow His orders. What order did He leave us with?

Mark 16 15He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. 16Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Our duty is to engage the enemy and fight to free the captives. We do this by :

2 Timothy 2:25-26 (New International Version)25Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

We have the information to save lives, do you have the motivation to step onto the battlefield and free the captives?

Let us pray...