



**SECRET CHURCH**  
**ANGELS, DEMONS, AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE**  
**WHO WE ARE ...**

I humbly – and I pray carefully – intend tonight to bring you the Word of this great God. His Word and the study of it ignites His worship. So, we’ve worshiped in song; now, we will worship through the Word. So, if you have a Bible – and I really hope you do - if you don’t, shame upon you. I want to remind those of you who have been before and relay to those of you who this is your first time tonight that the purpose of our time together is far deeper than the study of angels, demons, and spiritual warfare.

I want to be clear from the start, this is not just a game. There is a real battle waging for real souls of men and women and little boys and little girls all around the world, and the stakes in this battle are high. They’re higher than any war that has ever been fought or will ever be fought in this world. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says:

*"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."*

From the very beginning, tonight, I want you to feel the weight of this text. There is a battle that is waging between the god, little "g," god of this age, who is blinding the minds of unbelievers, and God, big "G," God, over heaven and earth, who is shining light into hearts. Feel this. There is a true God of light who desires people all over this world to be saved, and there is a false god in this age of darkness who desires people all over this world and in this room to burn in hell, and you and I are right in the middle of it – verse 5 – preaching Christ.

This is where we have to decide who we are. In the late 1940's, the government of the United States commissioned the *S.S. United States*. It was an \$80 million troop carrier built for the Navy. It was designed to carry 15,000 troops into war, the fastest, most reliable troop carrier in the world. It could go 10,000 miles without having to stop for fuel or supplies. It could outrun any other ship, go anywhere in the world in less than ten days. The only catch was it never carried any troops.

It was put on standby once during the Cuban Missile Crisis, but it was never used in all of its capacity by the U.S. Navy. Instead, it became known as a luxury liner for Presidents, heads of state, and celebrities. Now, as a luxury liner, it couldn't carry 15,000 troops, but just under 2,000 passengers could enjoy the luxuries of 695 staterooms, 4 dining salons, 3 bars, 2 theaters, 5 acres of open deck with a heated pool, 19 elevators and the comfort of the world's first fully air conditioned passenger ship. Instead of a vessel for battle used during

the trenches of wartime, the *S.S. United States* became a means of indulgence for wealthy patrons who wanted to coast peacefully across the Atlantic seas.

### **A central question...**

I am convinced that we need to answer a central question in the church today, and that question is, "Are we, as the church, a troop carrier, or are we a luxury liner?" Are we a troop carrier, or are we a luxury liner, because things look radically different on a troop carrier than they do on a luxury liner.

### **Critical differences...**

There are some critical differences. Our demeanor will be different. The faces of soldiers that are preparing for battle look a lot different than the faces of patrons enjoying their bonbons. Our use of resources will be very different. The conservation of resources on a troop carrier contrasts sharply with the liberal opulence of a luxury liner, and our pace will be different. The pace at which a troop carrier moves is, by necessity, much faster than a luxury liner. After all, a troop carrier has an urgent mission to accomplish. The luxury liner is free to enjoy the ride along the way.

### **A crucial decision...**

I am convinced that, in the church in our day, we have settled into an understanding of the church as luxury liner. The church exists to make me feel comfortable, to adjust to my preferences and cater to my desires, and in the process, we have lost sight of an eternal battle that is waging around us, and we have a crucial decision before us, church. Are we going to indulge ourselves in the peaceful comforts of this world? Or are we going to engage ourselves in battle for peoples around the world? This is the question I am convinced we face in the church in our day.

I want to call you, tonight, to get aboard a troop carrier and to give your life to defeating an adversary and taking the gospel of the Kingdom to the ends of the earth, no matter what it costs you. That's what tonight is about. Secret Church is not designed to be luxury liner material. Tonight is not about catering to our comforts. Tonight is about equipping a body of people – not entertaining a body of people - but equipping a body of people to know who you are in Christ, and to know what it means to walk in victory with Christ.

Not only so you can experience victory, but also so that you might lead others to victory in the nations, that they might know the gospel of the Kingdom that we celebrate in this room tonight. That they might know the great God that we sing to. So, as we study, my encouragement for you is to take good notes. You're studying, tonight, not just for your sake. This is not just so that you can have more information. It is so that you can be equipped to take the Word of God on angels, demons, spiritual warfare, and practice it in the places where you go, and teach it in the context where you live as God takes you around the world.

This is bigger than what's just going on in this room. Make notes to go back in your Bible for days ahead. I want to give you as much information as possible, tonight, in the time we have, and maybe a little extra, on angels, demons and spiritual warfare. The goal, tonight, is not for you to walk away saying, "That was fun!" The goal is for 3,000 people to walk away, tonight, equipped and ready to take the nations for the glory of Christ in defeating an adversary. So you're in? Okay, here we go.

## WHERE WE'RE GOING ...

Just a little light intro. Here's where we're going. What I want us to do is I want us to camp out on some foundational truths that are going to set the stage for everything else in the evening. Then, we're going to split it up into these three categories, like the title. Angels: we're going to look at who are they, how are they organized, what do they do, and how do they relate to us? Then, demons: what are demons, who is Satan, how do Satan and demons relate to God, and how do Satan and demons relate to us? Then, we'll go to spiritual warfare, and we're going to take three major periods in redemptive history: the Old Testament, picture of Christ in the Gospels, and then the Church, the New Testament – the Letters, the Epistles. We're going to look at spiritual warfare in those three facets of Scripture. Then, we will conclude our night with controversial questions. What about deliverance ministry, casting demons out of people? Can a Christian be demon-possessed? Should we talk with demons – conversing, naming, binding demons? Can we acquire or inherit demons from other places or people? We will close out with two concluding challenges that have absolutely gripped me. I want to get to those now, but we're going to work our way there.

## FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS

### **There is a spiritual world.**

So, here we go – foundational truths. Just making sure we're on the same page here with some foundational truths before we dive in. First foundational truth: there is a spiritual world. There's a spiritual world. I want to invite you to turn with me to 2 Kings 6. Now, we're going to turn to some different passages. Not really a ton of passages, but there are some places where I want to make sure to draw your attention to certain Scriptures. I've tried to include as many Scriptures as possible in the guide, so that we don't have to spend too much time turning here and there, but I want you to see the story. Elisha was a prophet of God where we come in 2 Kings 6, and in this text, he's described as "*the man of God*." I want you to see what's happening here. Look at 2 Kings 6:8. Follow along.

Elisha is the man of God here, the prophet. *"Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, 'I will set up my camp in such-and-such a place.' The man of God sent word to the king of Israel..."* The man of God, remember, is Elisha. *"...Sent word to the king of Israel: 'Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there.' So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God and time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on guard in such places."*

So, you see what's happening here. The king of Aram wants to take out the king of Israel and all his army, but God tells Elisha where the king of Aram is going to be. So, Elisha says, "Hey, king of Israel, just so you know, the king of Aram is hiding out over here." Obviously, this did not make the king of Aram very happy. So, 2 Kings 6:11 says, *"This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, 'Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?'"* In other words, "Who is the rat here?"

*"None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, 'but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.'" "He knows everything about you, man. He knows all your plans." So, the king of Aram decides, "We need to take out Elisha." So, that's what happens, verse 13. "Go find out where he is," the*

king ordered, 'so I can send men and capture him.'" Like Elisha wouldn't know. That's the whole point.

*"The report came back: 'He is in Dothan.' Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city."* So, in the middle of the night, they are surrounding the city. The whole army is surrounding Elisha, ready to take him down. Then, what happens? Verse 15, *"When the servant of the man of God"* (Elisha's servant) *"got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city."*

*"Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked.* He's panicking. A whole army has come and is about to take them down. So, listen to what Elisha says to him. *"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. 'Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.'"* Now, that's an interesting response. Put yourself in the servant's shoes at this point. "Okay. Those who are with us – two – are more than those who are with them – army around the city. The old man's good at prophecy, but math is not his subject." So what happens?

*"And Elisha prayed, 'Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.' Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."* All of a sudden, the servant was able to see that an entire army of the Lord was surrounding this army, and that, indeed, there were more with them than there were – *"more with us than there are with them."* So, verse 18 says, *"As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, 'Strike these people with blindness.' So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked."*

*"Elisha told them, 'This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.' And he led them to Samaria. After they entered the city, Elisha said, 'Lord, open the eyes of these men so they can see.' Then the Lord opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria. When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, 'Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?'"* You see what just happened? Elisha led them directly to the king of Israel.

Now, the point of bringing that passage – I want to put that picture before you, because I want us to realize how alike we are to the servant of Elisha. We see so little. That's the point. There is a spiritual world, and, brothers and sisters, there are a lot of things that are going on that we do not see. An invisible world that is just as real as the visible world, yet far more powerful. Just think of this. There are vast numbers of angels, good and bad, all around us. Just kind of let that soak in. Angels, holy angels, that if we were to see them, we would be floored by their beauty. Also, evil angels, demons, that if we were to see them we would shudder back in total horror. God, open our eyes to see the spiritual world.

Now, at this point, objections begin to pop up. Spiritual explanations are primitive. "Don't you know, science, technology, medicine have basically rendered belief in the spiritual world as erroneous? If you say you believe in demons and angels, that's like saying you believe in dragons, elves, and the tooth fairy. Really? Demons and angels in a Western worldview, in our context in particular? If you cannot see it, feel it, touch it, smell it, then it is not there."

We're blind to a spiritual world. "How can you explain that God controls thunder and lightning when we know meteorologists can predict that a week out? How can you say that there's a personal force who tempts, a person who tempts people to sin, when we know that sin is just a product of our DNA and the social environment in which we live? It can,

also, be predicted, what we're going to do. How can you really believe in these kinds of things?"

At most, the spiritual world – angels and demons – are looked at as religious fancy. This is one of the great parts of *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis' classic book. When an elder demon is speaking to a younger demon and giving advice on how to deceive people, listen to what he says. "Wormwood" – this is the elder demon speaking to the younger demon –

"I do not think you will have much difficulty in keeping the patient in the dark. The fact that devils are predominately comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, just suggest to him a picture of something in red tights. And persuade him that, since he can't believe in that, he therefore cannot believe in you."

Modern culture has talked us out of not only thinking about demons and angels, but even talking about them without thinking, "Is this just a little out there? Are we just imagining this?" Spiritual explanations are primitive. Spiritual realities are not pervasive. In other words, even if we acknowledge that there's a spiritual world, oftentimes we begin to think, "Well, that just deals with séances and Ouija boards and occult practices and this or that." Or maybe, as Christians, we think, "Well, that happens in many third-world contexts overseas, over there," and we just can't grip the idea that there are spiritual forces all around us in middle-class America.

This is an extremely dangerous way to think; to think that they are not pervasive; to ignore the fact that the conflict waging in the spiritual realm has huge effect on what we watch on TV, and how we respond to what we see in a movie, and how, husbands, you speak to your wives; and how, parents, you speak to your children; and how we carry our lives and spend our money. That has everything to do with the spiritual world. Even if we acknowledge there's a spiritual world, in our context, we so disconnect it from the natural world that we think, "Well, they just don't have anything to do with each other."

We don't see how the spiritual world infiltrates our politics and our businesses and our neighborhoods and our homes and everything we do. We've, actually, exported this distinction all around the world in the way we've done missions. Lesslie Newbigin said that "Christian missionaries have been one of the most secularizing forces in the entire world." We've gone into third world context, and you know what we've told them? We've told them that it is not spirits who make the crops grow; it is scientific agriculture. So, we got fertilizers and fungicides and pesticides and hybrid seed, and we showed them their religion has nothing to do with agriculture. It belongs in the realm of science. What we should have said is this is a God-created and God-sustained world, and He has designed ways for this world to operate, and we experience the most, the best of His gifts in this world, when we operate according to the way He has designed it. So, we seek Him, and we work in the context of how He, as a perfect designer of this world, has made us, but we disconnect the two. As a result, we see no need in our lives on a daily basis for the supernatural power of God. We even reduce sin to psychopathy and psychological problems that need to be dealt with in the context of social environments, and we miss out on the spiritual world around us.

Then, some even say spiritual powers are not prevalent in Scripture. What I want to show you, tonight, in the Bible is that there's an active, prevalent, pervasive spiritual world all over Scripture, from the very beginning – Genesis 3, the fall of man – to the middle, with Jesus in Matthew 4, to the very end – Revelation 20 when Satan is judged.

Catch this. If you do not believe in the spiritual world, then you are denying the reality of the Bible. Even deeper, if you deny that there is a spiritual world around us, you are denying the truthfulness of Jesus Christ Himself. Christ was inundated in the spiritual world from the very beginning; an angel announced His consummation as well as His birth. He was tempted by the devil – Matthew 4, Luke 4. He was served by angels after His temptation. He could have called down legions of angels from the cross. Angels were present at the tomb when the stone was rolled away. They were present when He ascended into heaven. To undermine the reality of the spiritual world is to undermine the very reality of the birth, life, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ Himself.

So spiritualities are pervasive. We need to avoid two errors here. C.S. Lewis talked about it. "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight."

Error number one is empty rationalism. Either to deny the spiritual world as religious fancy or to compartmentalize it. This is where we need to realize, particularly in this context, that we are far more secularistic, humanistic, and materialistic than we would like to think. We tend toward empty rationalism. The other extreme to avoid, though, is an excessive fanaticism. Yes, there are spiritual realities, but if we are not careful, we will over-analyze them and overreact to the spiritual world, causing all kinds of misunderstanding and misconception.

I want to be point-blank honest here. After studying this for months in preparing for tonight, I am convinced that there are all kinds of fiction, superstition, fantasy, nonsense, nuttiness and downright heresy when it comes to ideas about spiritual warfare in Christian circles. We need to be careful. Yes, not to confine ourselves to an empty rationalism that ignores the spiritual world, but we also need to be careful not to indulge ourselves in excessive fanaticism.

David Powlison wrote a great book on counseling as it relates to spiritual warfare. I want you to listen to what he said. I just want to read you a little excerpt. He said:

"Some people really do see a demon behind every bush. Cynthia, a woman I counseled, once cast demons out of her toaster when it failed to work. More seriously, she and her husband Andrew had a remarkable and remarkably destructive way of arguing with each other. For the first five minutes they warmed up with normal person-to-person bickering, but at a certain point, when the fighting turned nasty, they shifted gears and wheeled in heavier artillery. They would bind, rebuke and attempt to cast out demons of anger, pride and self-righteousness from each other. In Cynthia's words, "I saw the demon looking out of his eyes, glittering and murderous. So I said, 'Demon of anger, I bind your power in Jesus' name!' Then I claimed the power of Jesus' blood as my cover from all my demonic assault coming through my husband.'" The result, he said, not only did Cynthia and Andrew reinforce their hostility – they trampled the name of Christ through the mud of their superstition, hostility, fear and confusion. Needless to say, the real devil, who aims to dishonor God and conform us to his evil ways, could only be pleased at the personal and interpersonal wreckage he brought about in this situation."

I want us to study this very honestly tonight, because I am convinced that there's a great deal of confusion in the church here and around the world regarding spiritual warfare. We need to stay away from both of these two extremes, both of these errors.

### **We are involved in a spiritual war.**

Foundational truth number one: there's a spiritual world. Number two: we are involved in a spiritual war. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. This is a war of conflicting kingdoms. We've already looked at this passage – 2 Corinthians 4:4. The picture there is a kingdom of God and a kingdom of Satan. Jesus talks about how His kingdom is not of this world in John 18. Ephesians 2 talks about the ruler of the kingdom of the air. There's a kingdom of God that coexists with a kingdom of darkness, and it is not a peaceful coexistence. There's tension there.

History is the story of this tension. We need to realize that, from the very beginning, the Bible, the very beginning of human history is a drama of war and peace and conflicting kingdoms from Genesis 3 on. In the middle of pagan nations, following after the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the god of this age, little "g" god, devil, God calls out a people to Himself to be a light in the middle of darkness. Yet, even the most bright lights among His people still fall. Abraham still deceives and lies, and Moses still struggles with unbelief, and he dies. Noah, who had faith in God when no one else did, still gets drunk, and he dies. David, the man after God's own heart, commits adultery and organizes murder, and he dies. Over and over and over again you see the brightest lights among the people of God still infiltrated with darkness.

Until we get to the perfect man. He comes on the scene, and there is no sin in Him. He conquers with His life. He conquers with His death. He conquers with His resurrection. He shows us the kingdom of light, so that all who trust in Him can be delivered from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light through Him, but even those who trust in Him still have a sinful nature that wars within them, and the conflict continues. Yes, there's coming a day when the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of Christ, and He will reign forever, but at this moment, we find ourselves in war.

It is a continual struggle. I just want you to think real quickly with me about how the New Testament pictures the Christian life as warfare. It is a war against sin – Hebrews 12 – and a struggle against sin. It's a war within our souls – 1 Peter 2 – a war against your soul. A struggle against sin, a war within our souls, and we struggle for our faith. Jude 3 talks about how we have to contend for our faith. We have to fight for it. We struggle for the gospel. Philippians 1, "...going through the same struggle you saw I had..." in the gospel.

1 Timothy 6, Paul says we fight the good fight. Paul comes to the end of his life and ministry, and he writes in 2 Timothy, "*I have fought the good fight...*" That sums up my life. Fought. Kept the faith. He says to New Testament Christians in that same book, we are soldiers. "*Endure hardship like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*" We are soldiers. The New Testament talks about how we have weapons. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world. 2 Corinthians 6, in the middle of that passage, Paul talks about "*...weapons of righteousness in the right hand and the left...*" Then, back in the Old Testament – this is a passage we're going to look at a little bit later - war is raging in the heavenlies. In this picture, Daniel's prayers are affecting an entire battle between angels that is going on in the heavenly realms.

The point is we are in wartime, not peacetime. We need to realize this. We are in wartime, not peacetime. This is why Paul says in Ephesians 6, a passage we're going to come back to over and over and over again, "*Our struggle*" – and this shocks me. Paul says, "*Our struggle*

*is not against flesh and blood...*" It's not a physical struggle. You think about what he had been through physically. He'd been stoned and beaten and harassed and abused and imprisoned and shipwrecked. If anybody knew this was a physical struggle, it was Paul, but that's not what Paul says. He says that's not what the 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.*" This is a spiritual war, and what's going on in the spiritual realm is far deeper, far more meaningful, far more impactful, than even what's going on in the physical world. Let this soak in. You have an opponent in this world that wants to wreck your marriage and wants to rob you of your purity and wants to lead you to defame the name of the God who saved you. He wants to pull you down and destroy your soul. We're in wartime, not peacetime. There's no room to sit back and relax. Peacetime is coming, brothers and sisters, but it's not now. It's not now.

### **The basis for our understanding of this spiritual war is biblical.**

Third truth: the basis – now this is huge – the basis for our understanding of the spiritual war is biblical. It's biblical. This is where we've got to decide an answer to this question: what is going to be our authority as we think about angels, demons, and spiritual warfare? Fiction or fact? Are we going to be talking tonight about Frank Peretti or the Bible? Fiction or fact? Experience or exegesis? Don't get "left behind" on this. Not going to talk all night about what's going on over here and what's going on over here and what's going on over here. Experiences? Or are we going to look at what we do understand about Bible? Intuition or interpretation? What feels right to us or what God has declared to be right?

This is where we've got to decide, ladies and gentlemen, where is our court of appeal? This is one of the biggest challenges, because God has worked and is working in different ways in different circumstances all around the world, and we have to account for that. However, at the same time, if we do not have an objective standard of truth by which to evaluate all these different experiences, then we're going to be carried out into all kinds of ideas and falsehoods. This is where I'm convinced that so much of what passes for spiritual warfare in Christian conversations today is so outside of Scripture and so based on experience that, in the end, it's actually more pagan than it is biblical. It's accommodating the occultic worldview that the devil is raging in.

So, where are we going to find our answers? Where's the basis of our discussion going to be? Remember, the Bible doesn't answer every question we may ask. Now, this is true in all kinds of questions we might have and circumstances we might face, and it's particularly true regarding spiritual warfare. How did Satan become evil? The Bible really doesn't answer that question. How did the demon-possessed in Scripture become demon-possessed? There are a lot of questions that we're going to see and questions that we have in the world today that the Bible does not answer, but the good news is that doesn't mean we're at a loss. God is not up in heaven saying, "Man, I wish I would've remembered! If I'd have known they were going to be studying that, that night, and had those questions, I'd have put it in there." God's not saying that because – this is the good news, relax – the Bible does answer every question we need answered to live to the glory of God. It doesn't answer every question we ask, but it does answer everything we need to grow in Christ and to experience victory in this world. This is key.

I want to put my cards on the table. I am a Western Christian, born in the Western world, with Western thinking. I readily admit that I have got a lot to grow in my own Christian life. I have limited experiences. I think I've traveled around the world a good bit, but I still have not seen a lot of the things, so many of the things that God is doing around the world. There are a lot of different experiences, so admittedly, I am at a loss when it comes to experiences, but I want you to hear that even if I had spent the last 50 years traveling

around the world and experiencing every single possible thing, my goal would still not be to share my experiences with you. My goal would be to share the truth of God's Word with you, because it is the measure by which we look at each of our experiences. So, the key is to camp out here, and stick close to Scripture, and then bring Scripture to bear on experiences, stories, accounts from around the world.

The Word is authoritative. This is so key. We are an experience-driven people. I am convinced one of the most dangerous places to be is in a Christian small group Bible study. It's dangerous. Sit around, a few people with their Bibles open in their laps, all happy to be there. The leader says, "Bob, why don't you read a verse?" Bob reads the verse, and the leader says, "Well, Bob, what does that mean to you?" Bob says, "Well, guess it means this to me." Mary, on the other side, what does this mean to you? "Well, I got something totally different out of that, Bob. This is what it means to me." Bill chimes in and says, "I was just thinking about how this text relates to how I relate to my dog, and yes, this is so meaningful." Then, Jane chimes in. She says, "I got something totally different out of it," and they're all excited and walk away saying, "Wow, what a great Bible study!" The reality is they never studied the Bible. They studied each other the whole time, and there was nobody in the room that was standing up and saying, "You know, Bob, Bill, Jane, Mary, it really doesn't matter what it means to you. I want to know what it means. Like who wrote it? Paul? Well, let's ask Paul. Paul, what does this mean?" They're walking away saying, "Look, we've learned so much about the Bible." They've learned nothing about the Bible. They've learned about themselves, and they haven't learned about God.

We're an experience-driven people, and so we've got to make sure to let the text be our starting point. What does it say? What does it mean? Then, save our questions for later, until we have looked at the text. Does that make sense? How are we going to approach the text, then? This is just an overview from the *How to Study the Bible Secret Church*. I just want to remind you that there's a process when we come to the Bible of observation. We explore the text. We listen to the text. We listen thoughtfully, repeatedly. We're looking for different things – patiently, imaginatively, meditatively, purposefully. We talked about this at Secret Church. We listen to the text.

Then, we look at the text. We look for things the Word emphasizes and repeats and connects and communicates. That's observation. We start there. What is the text saying?

Then, we move to interpretation. What does the text mean? Interpretation – we examine the context. In order to understand a text, we've got to see the context that surrounds it. We have to travel to their world in order to see what the Bible is going to say to our world. We have to start there. So, we consider the literary context, because how truth is communicated in Gospel narrative is very different than how truth is communicated in the Song of Solomon. Very big differences. Consider the literary context. The historical-cultural context. Things that are going on in 2 Kings aren't the same things that are going on in Revelation, so we need to take that into consideration. We need to consider the theological context and not just pick little words or verses here or there and bring it out and start to make all kinds of assumptions about it.

You could take Psalm 14 where it says there is no God and say, "Well, obviously Scripture teaches there is no God." Just rip it out of its context. You've got to be careful not to do that. Principles to remember: we are examining the author's original intent. The Holy Spirit through a human author at a certain time at a certain place. A biblical text can never mean what it never meant. You can't just take it out and create some whole new meaning for it. We've got to see what's going on here. Context shapes our understanding of meaning. The rule of context is context rules. We've got to see the context.

This is where I want you to think about dangers to avoid – two particular dangers to avoid. Number one is fragmentation, and by that I mean isolating texts from their context. Now, this is a danger even in the way this whole Secret Church booklet is designed. You have all these different texts from different places. We've got to be really, really careful, because if we're not, we'll take one verse from here in the Old Testament, one verse from the Gospels here, one verse from the Epistles here. We'll put them, line them up next to each other, and we'll just connect all the dots, one to one to one to one, and think they're talking about the exact same thing at the exact same time in the exact same place, and we isolate the texts from their contexts, and we can do that and make the Bible say anything we want it to say.

We've also got to avoid flattening, importing a text from one context into the context of another text. I'll give you an example of that, especially in spiritual warfare. Oftentimes, what people will do is they'll take Mark 5, story of the demon-possessed man. Then, they'll import that whole story and what it's talking about when it comes to demon-possession into Ephesians 6, and what Paul is talking about when it comes to spiritual warfare. They just assume that Paul is talking about exactly what is going on in Mark 5, when the reality is there are some major differences. So, we've got to avoid both of these dangers.

Observation – what does the text say? Interpretation – what does the text mean? Then, application – we implement the text. How can I put this text into action? That is where we identify timeless truths; relate the timeless truths to today. Now, we bring it into our world, based on what it said in that world, and we practice the timeless truths.

So, here's the deal. When we come to God's Word to learn about spiritual warfare, first, we need to listen to the text. Then, we need to grasp the context. Then, we can start asking our questions, but we can't let our questions drive from the beginning because, if we're not careful, we'll start looking for all the answers that we want in Scripture. Does that make sense? This is so dangerous, so subtly dangerous, and the danger is we can totally misuse the Bible in this way. We can think we're embracing truth when we are deceived the entire time. Is this not a glaring tactic of the adversary? To convince us that we're being biblical when we are taking Scripture and twisting it to accommodate ourselves and to give us the answers that we want.

### **The enemy in this spiritual war is formidable.**

Okay, fourth foundational truth: the enemy in this spiritual war is formidable. He's a lion looking for someone to devour. Lions prowl for one reason – they want to kill. We need to realize that, if our adversary was a man, if he possessed nothing but human strength, ingenuity or cunning craft, then we might consider defending ourselves with human strength, but he is not. In our flesh, we are no match for our foe. The reality is, if you were to face the devil on your own, you would be outsmarted and overpowered in less than a second. Let that soak in. If you were to face the devil on your own, you would be overpowered, outsmarted in less than a second. You have a formidable foe.

Now some say, "Why even think about the enemy? Why not just focus on God?" There's a grain of truth to that, but listen to 2 Corinthians 2:11, the end of this passage, "*...in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.*" We need to open our eyes. If you're playing football, isn't it good to know the strategy of the other team? What they're going to be doing? If you're a quarterback on a football field, then obviously, you don't want to just keep your eyes all the time fixed on where the defensive backs are and the linebackers are. You'll never be able to connect with your receivers. You've got to have your eyes fixed on your receivers, but you had better know where those defensive

backs and linebackers are going to be when the receivers come running across the field, or else you're never going to complete a pass to them.

We need to open our eyes. We need to get on our knees. This battle is spiritual, and as a result, it must be fought in spiritual ways. Prayer. We must know who he is and we must know how he works. We need to know who he is and how he works.

We need to know that Satan has – I am convinced – two primary objectives. Number one is to destroy God's people. Satan wants to destroy God's people, and ultimately, to the end that he defames God's glory. He wants to defame God's glory. Spiritual warfare is ultimately a battle for glory. That's the end of Psalm 96.

### **The scope of this spiritual war is universal.**

The scope of this spiritual war is universal. It affects every language. Every language is affected by this war. Every people, every nation, every tribe, every life. Every life in this room, every life on this 6.8 billion member planet affected by spiritual warfare.

### **Involvement in this spiritual war is inevitable.**

This is a cosmic spiritual war, which means that involvement in this spiritual war is inevitable. It's inevitable. We sometimes think that spiritual warfare and demonic activity is something that happens when something weird starts to go on. Reality is spiritual warfare is happening when you are sitting alone at your computer or when you pick up the remote on your TV. When you wake up in the morning, and you turn to your spouse. When you look in your child's eyes. When you walk to class, and you sit in your desk at work, spiritual warfare is happening. Not just at isolated weird times. The battle is continual. The battle is fierce, and spiritual retreat only leads to spiritual defeat. You cannot ignore this war, ladies and gentlemen. The Bible does not say ignore the devil, and he will flee from you. You take that tactic, you will fall. You'll fall.

### **The stakes in this spiritual war are eternal.**

Two more truths. The stakes in this spiritual war are eternal. Casualties in this war do not merely lose a limb or an eye or life. Casualties in this war lose everything, and the stakes here are either an eternal heaven or an eternal hell. The God over this world wants people to be saved, 2 Peter 3:9. He does not want anyone to perish, but the god of this world wants people to burn in hell, in a lake of fire. How we fight this battle has eternal implications for men, women, boys and girls, in every nation, tribe, people and language.

### **The outcome of this spiritual war is irreversible.**

Which leads to one last foundational truth – and this is the good part. The best foundational truth. The outcome of this spiritual war is irreversible. It's irreversible. Brothers and sisters, Satan has been defeated. This was prophesied at the very beginning of this for us in Genesis 3, "...he will crush your head..." It was fulfilled in Christ. I love Colossians 2:15, "...having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." Isn't that a good verse?

Satan has been defeated, and Satan will be destroyed. We know the end of the story. "...The devil...was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur..." – this is what's going to happen – "...where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever," (Revelation 20:10). This is going to happen. Do you know what this means? This means that we do not fight this war for victory; we fight from victory. There is a huge difference between the two. Let that truth soak in, because if it's not clear in your mind, then you will struggle to experience victory in this life.

If you are thinking, confused, defeated, trying to figure out how to live this Christian life – if you don't lodge this in your mind, then you will not find yourself on the front lines risking it all for the glory of His name. However, when you know He's the victorious King, then you will risk it all, and you will stand firm against the devil's schemes. You will resist the devil and he will flee, because you know you're fighting from victory. Memorize this verse. 1 John 4:4, *"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."* That's a fact.

The Spirit of Christ who dwells in you is greater than the one who is in the world. *"For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God,"* (1 John 5:4-5). Child of God, you have the victory. Satan is a defeated foe.

Think about it this way on the morning of April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee met with General Ulysses S. Grant to sign an agreement marking the end of the U.S. Civil War. The morning of April 9<sup>th</sup>, the war had ended. Peace had been accomplished, but interestingly, just south of where we are tonight, from Montgomery to Mobile the battle still raged. Even though the Civil War was technically over, the battle at Fort Blakely still took place. The fighting was just as real. Soldiers were just as committed to destroying their foes. The guns and bayonets were just as devastating, and death was just as brutal. The war had been decided, but the fighting was still going on. The fighting was just as deadly as it had always been, because peace had yet to be enforced to its ultimate end.

I don't think this is a perfect picture, but it does capture a bit of the picture of where we find ourselves now. Brothers and sisters, the victory has been accomplished. Satan has been defeated. What continues to be at stake, though, are the lives of those who are still fighting. In the same way that peace had yet to be enforced in lower Alabama, Jesus' victory has yet to be enforced completely in the world. One day He is going to come and enforce His victory, finally and completely, and evil will be totally abolished.

Yet now, we find ourselves in the middle of guerilla warfare, and the strategy of the adversary is to prevent people from experiencing the pleasures of peace that have been accomplished for them. So, we fight this battle, not ultimately for victory, but knowing that our victory has already been won. It's already been accomplished on your behalf, both now and for all of eternity. So, with that kind of confidence, I think it's safe to say we're ready to fight. So, let's look at angels.

## ANGELS

### What are angels?

What are angels? What are angels? Angels are spiritual beings without physical bodies. We're going to just think, generally, about angels for a minute. Mentioned many times. Over half of the books of the Bible mention angels. 108 appearances in the Old Testament – 108. 165 appearances in the New Testament. They're all over, Old Testament and New Testament. Angels have many names. Messengers, angels, ministering spirits, holy ones.

What are angels? First of all, they're spiritual beings. Hebrews 1 talks about how they are ministering spirits. They're spirits, not material beings with physical bodies like you and me. So, they can't be seen by us unless, either God gives us a special ability to see them, or God gives them some sort of bodily form through which they appear to people in Scripture, which we'll see, but they're spiritual, not physical. They're created spiritual beings. Psalm

148:5, *"Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created."* Referring back to the beginning, all His angels, all His heavenly hosts. Angels have not always been there. They were created by God.

Spiritual beings, created beings. Angels are personal spiritual beings. They have moral capacities. We see this, and we'll talk about this more in a second with demons because they were angels who sinned. 2 Peter 2 talks about it. So, they have a capacity to make moral decisions. They have intellectual capacities. 1 Peter 1 talks about how they speak, how they look into things. They have emotional capacities. Job 38 – *"On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone - while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?"* Luke 15 – there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. They have joy. They have emotional capacities. Angels are powerful spiritual beings. Psalm 103 talks about how they are mighty ones who do his bidding.

They're powerful, but they're limited in different ways. Angels are limited in space – get this – angels are not omnipresent. They don't necessarily have physical bodies like us – they're spiritual, but that doesn't mean that they're just automatically everywhere. They are still limited in space. You see in Luke 1, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth. He wasn't in Nazareth at one point. He was at another point. Not omnipresent, limited in space. Limited in knowledge. Angels don't know everything. They don't know everything. Not omnipotent, not omniscient. Not omnipresent. So, they're powerful, but limited.

Angels are single, unmarried spiritual beings. *"At the resurrection, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven,"* (Matthew 22:29-32). Scripture always describes angels in masculine gender, but they don't really have gender. There is not reproduction in angels. They're single, unmarried spiritual beings. They're immortal spiritual beings. Here in Luke 20, it says, *"They can no longer die, for they are like the angels."* So, that doesn't mean they've been there forever like God. They're not eternally existent like God, but once created, they will be there forever. They're immortal. Created ones created so they can never die.

Angels are versatile spiritual beings. They can appear in a physical way – an angel of the Lord, Luke 1, appeared to Zechariah, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. So, it appeared physically. They can appear in dreams and visions. Matthew 1, an angel comes to Joseph in a dream, a vision. They can appear in other forms. Daniel 10, look at this picture, *"...a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude."* That is really cool!

Matthew 28, an angel who came to the tomb. *"...An angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow."* Revelation 4 gives us another picture. So, they appear in other forms.

### **When were angels created?**

When were angels created? We don't know exactly, but we do know definitely before the seventh day of creation. *"The heaven and the earth were completed in all their vast array,"* Genesis 2:1 says. So, definitely before the last day of creation. Probably on the first day of creation, when God created the heavens and the earth. It makes sense that He created the inhabitants of the heavens at that point, and we have a picture of earth being formless, the Spirit of God hovering over the water. Most scholars would say that they were probably created on the first day of creation. You go to Job 38, and God talks about how *"the*

*morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy*" when the earth was created. So, probably at the very beginning.

### **How many angels are there?**

How many angels are there? How many angels are there? Multitudes. *"Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel..."* "A great company." Multitudes. Legions. Matthew 26 – you know at the cross, we've got a picture of legions of angels. That's a word that was used to describe a division of the Roman army. It would usually be about 3,000 to 6,000 troops, but in Scripture it's really used, whenever you see "legion," it's really used to describe a vast number, a big number. Myriads – Revelation 5 – *"numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand."* So, the answer is a lot. A lot of angels there are. Here's the deal: the number is fixed. They're not procreating, and they don't die so from the very beginning till now, same number of angels.

Now, some have asked, "Are they as numerous as the stars?" Possibly. Some have looked at Revelation 12 where it talks about how *"his tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth."* This is the picture – and we'll talk about this more in a minute – when a third of the angels were swept away with Satan in his rebellion and fallen angels. So, some have said that originally the number of stars in the sky corresponded to the number of angels. It's possible, but that is a lot to build off of that verse.

Others have asked if there are guardian angels for every one of us based on Matthew 18. *"I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."* So, some have said there's a guardian angel for every person in the world, a guardian angel for every child in the world, a guardian angel for every Christian in the world. So, the number of Christians would correspond to the number of angels, and since there is a set number of angels, that means we're pretty much set with the number of Christians. So, once we reach the max angels, then this is not good. So, maybe that's not the way. I think, due to an absence of much to go on in Scripture here, I would be very hesitant to say that there are guardian angels for every one of us. The way I would picture angels is more in a zone formation than a man-to-man. So, the reality is there are a lot of angels who stay around the throne of God at all times and are worshipping, and are really not involved in bringing messages or have anything to do with us particularly. So, I think we're trying to build too much there.

### **How are angels organized?**

How are angels organized? We don't know exactly, but we do have some hints. We see a picture of cherubim, which is the highest order or rank of angels. Cherubim, literally the responsibility of the cherubim was to protect and proclaim the glory of God. They were given the task of guarding the entrance to the Garden of Eden. *"...He placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flashing sword back and forth..."* (Genesis 3:24). The cherubim were placed over the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament. *"Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you. There, above the cover put between the two cherubim"* – two angels – *"over the ark of the Testimony I will meet with you,"* (Exodus 25:21-22). I'll show my glory to you. Psalm 18 talks about how God mounted the cherubim. So, sometimes they're pictured as his chariot. So, you've got cherubim.

You've got seraphim. Literally this is what it means – ablaze with adoration of God. Isn't that a great picture? Like don't you want your life to be ablaze with adoration of God? What an incredible image! Continually worshipping the Lord. They're only mentioned one time, and that's in Isaiah 6 – seraphs.

Then, we see living creatures – mighty representatives of God's creation. We've already looked at this passage. It's Revelation 4, where it gives, basically, a picture of strong, mighty creatures in creation to represent these angels.

Then, you've got in Scripture the archangel who is – anybody know? Michael. Archangel Michael. That term, archangel, indicates some kind of authority over other angels. In Daniel, he's called one of the chief princes, Michael. Then, Jude calls him the Archangel Michael. Revelation 12, which we'll look at later, pictures Michael and his angels fighting against the devil. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4, that the Lord is going to return from heaven with the archangel's call. Can you imagine that day? "Michael, it's time." What a picture! Come, Lord Jesus, quickly!

Gabriel, God's messenger. Only two angels are mentioned by name in Scripture: Michael and Gabriel. In Daniel, he's mentioned there in Daniel 8. Luke 1, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth as we already saw.

So, when you come to angels, you've got two main categories: holy angels, and then evil angels. Holy angels, Mark 8, 1 Timothy 5, talk about elect angels. Then, you've got evil angels. The evil spirits, demons that were cast out. We're going to talk about demons more in a second, but these are the two classes. Holy angels and evil angels. So, even demons are classified as spirits or angels.

Now, we'll talk about that more in a minute, but what about the angel of the Lord? Sometimes Scripture talks about an angel or "the" angel of the Lord. What does that mean? In Genesis 16, the story of Hagar, it says the angel of the Lord told Hagar, "*Go back to your mistress and submit to her.*" Sometimes the angel of the Lord is identified as the Lord. This picture in Genesis 31 says, "*In breeding season I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw the male goats were mating with the flock were streaked, speckled, or spotted, the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob.' I answered, 'Here I am.'* And he said, '*Look up and see.*' So, the angel appeared, and then he said later in the passage, "*I am the God of Bethel, were you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me.*" So, here the angel of the Lord is identified as the Lord.

Other times, angel of the Lord is distinguished from the Lord. That's the picture in 2 Samuel 24. You see him as distinct, different. So, the picture is sometimes in Scripture identified as the Lord, sometimes distinguished from the Lord. The picture just varies.

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