

The background of the cover is a night sky featuring the Milky Way galaxy. A bright starburst with a vertical beam of light is positioned in the upper right quadrant. The bottom of the image shows a dark silhouette of a mountain range with a glowing light source on the right side, possibly a city or a fire, creating a lens flare effect.

# WARFARE

*Winning the Spiritual Battle*

TONY EVANS

# Introduction

**D**ays after the tragedy of 9/11 struck our nation's soul, members of the Special Forces known as the Green Beret were asked to pack their bags, leave their families, and head straight into the heart of warfare. While each of us back home struggled to come to grips with the devastation that came about so suddenly, these men set out to do something about it.

They flew there with one goal in mind: stop the enemy before the enemy could make another attack on innocent lives.

The Special Forces knew that if they could get to the root of the attack in a limited amount of time, they could win the immediate war of protecting citizens on America's soil. They could protect individuals, families, churches, and communities, but only by letting go of what they once knew concerning conventional warfare and by embracing a strategy that would work.

One man, Mark Nutsch, was chosen to lead the twelve men into battle. Despite having no combat experience, his confidence and ability to think outside of normative approaches during the vetting process won him the assignment. Little did the military leaders know at the time of choosing him that Mark's experience growing up on his

family's ranch, working as a ranch hand in college, and riding horses in rodeos would be one of his greatest assets.

After all, this wasn't a war fought with militaries lined up and facing each other on opposite sides. Nor was it even fought in the trenches. Rather, to excel in this war, combatants would need to battle the elements, ride horses over rough and dangerous terrain, and outwit their opponents who knew the landscape like the back of their own hands.

To win this battle, Mark and his team of eleven other brave men would have to fight according to the rules of the enemy themselves.

Their campaign was supposed to take six weeks, but due to weather, they sought to complete it in three. It was supposed to take multiple teams of Green Beret, but due to the elements, topography, and lack of entrance points, they were given only one team of twelve men. It was supposed to rack up a high level of casualties on the American side due to the risks involved, but they walked away with none.

Because these men chose to adapt to the environment and allies surrounding them and work within the strategies at hand, they accomplished what few, if any, thought they could. On horseback, they battled tanks and troops armed with missiles.

And won.

Maybe it was Mark's lack of previous combat experience that opened him up to adapting his strategy to the battle at hand more so than someone else possibly could have. We'll never know for sure. But one thing we do know is that it was his willingness to set aside conventional approaches that

allowed him to approach this battle unlike any other that had been fought in the history of our nation.

It also allowed him to lead his team of twelve into the quickest, most decisive victory in the history of our nation.

Two thousand years ago, another team of twelve followed another unconventional leader. He didn't ride a horse; He rode a donkey. His battle didn't last three weeks, but three days. He didn't fight for a nation; He fought for a kingdom.

And won.

In doing so, He secured for each of us the victory that is ours to claim.

Yet only as we are willing to follow Him by laying down our own logic, perspective, approach, and understanding of how to fight this war will we discover the fullness and effects of that victory in every area of our lives. It is in following Christ as our Captain that we can win this war. It is in studying His battle plan that we can discover how to carry out our own. It is in conforming our hearts and transforming our minds to His that we will gain the strategic insights we need to live out the victory He has already secured for us.

See, this battle is unlike any other. This battle has already been decided. The outcome has already been secured. Jesus Christ gained the victory through His death, burial, and resurrection. But in order for us to experience the manifestation of that victory in our own lives, we need to learn how to maneuver through the mines left behind from an enemy still bent on making our lives miserable along the way.

It's true that many Christians don't even know they're at war. Others, however, can see clearly the results of the battle

in their lives, because they have become casualties of spiritual warfare. Some suffer emotional wounds from spiritual warfare. They are discouraged, depressed, downtrodden, and defeated. Others have taken fatal blows to their marriage or family. Divorce, conflict, and abuse are some of the battle scars they bear. Still others have been morally wounded in the battle. They cannot control their passions and make poor moral choices. For some Christians, the wounds have been inflicted on their finances. They are losing the financial battle because they are losing the spiritual one.

I could list more casualties, but I assume you get the idea. Since we all are at war, and since there is so much at stake both here in history and in eternity, we had better learn what spiritual warfare is about and how we can fight successfully.

## THE NATURE OF THE BATTLE

The essence of the war we're talking about is spiritual. Because this warfare is first and foremost spiritual and not physical, the degree to which you and I will be successful is the degree to which we are prepared to understand and fight this battle on a spiritual level. While waged in the invisible, spiritual realm, spiritual warfare is manifested in the visible, physical realm. In other words, spiritual warfare is a battle between invisible, angelic forces that affects you and me. You and I can't see the cause of the war, but we see the effects—the kinds of problems I mentioned above—all the time, day in and day out.

It's hard enough to fight an enemy you can see. It's much

harder to fight someone you can't see. Everything you do in the visible, physical realm is caused, provoked, or at least influenced by something in the invisible, spiritual realm. Your five senses are not the limit of reality, and until we address the spiritual root of a problem, we will never fix the physical effects of that problem.

Not only are your physical senses limited, but they often provide little help in spiritual warfare. This means that if you are going to wage successful spiritual battle, you need a "sixth sense"—a keen awareness of the spiritual realm. In order to understand spiritual warfare, we have to address it through the lens of the spirit, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

## THE LOCATION OF THE BATTLE

Where in the universe is this great battle called spiritual warfare being fought? Paul tells us it is "in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12), which means the spiritual realm. In the Bible, the word heaven describes three levels of existence (see 2 Cor. 12:2). The first heaven is the atmosphere that surrounds the earth, the environment in which we live. The second heaven is what we commonly refer to as outer space, the stellar heavens where the stars and planets exist. This is also a realm in which angels operate, because in the Bible, angels are called stars (Job 38:7). When you see the stars at night, they should remind you of spiritual beings called angels and the reality of the warfare we are engaged in. The third heaven is the throne room of God, the place we normally think of when we hear the word heaven. It is

about this heaven that the Bible has the most to say. In fact, the third heaven is an incredibly busy place because it is the control center of the universe.

In the book of Ephesians alone, we find numerous references to heavenly places in addition to that in 6:12. Understanding these passages helps us know how to tap into the heavenly places and thus wage victorious spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” This verse tells us that God resides in the heavenly places, and so do all of our spiritual blessings. This is important because if you are engaged in a spiritual battle and need help to win, the help you need is with God the Father, who is in the heavenly places. But if you don’t know how to access heavenly places, you won’t know how to access the heavenly help you need to win the battle in earthly places.

You may be thinking, *But Tony, I’m facing Satan here on earth.* Yes, but your blessings are in heaven. So unless you learn how to open your arsenal of spiritual weapons in the heavenly places so you can use them down here, you’ll be a casualty of the war.

According to Ephesians 1:20, when God the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead, He seated His Son “at His right hand in the heavenly places.” Not only are the Father and your blessings in heavenly places, but so is Jesus Christ. So if you need Christ’s help in earthly places, you’d better know where He is hanging out and how to obtain His help in your warfare.

But it gets even better: God also “raised *us* up with [Christ], and seated us with Him in the heavenly places” (2:6, emphasis added). You and I as believers are also in heavenly places. Paul is telling us that when you accepted Christ, you were transported to another sphere. Even though your body is limited to earth, your spirit that should be controlling your body is operating in a wholly different realm.

Few Christians understand that. The most real part of our existence is what happens in our spiritual lives, not what happens in our bodies. We are residents of heaven—in our spirits now and someday in our bodies, too. Once you understand how the heavenly sphere operates, you can begin changing what happens on earth.

What else is in heavenly places? According to Ephesians 3:10, spiritual rulers and authorities are there. These are angels. Why is this important from the standpoint of spiritual warfare? Because it takes an angel to beat an angel, and 6:12 tells us that Satan and his demons are also “in the heavenly places.”

## OUR RESOURCES FOR THE BATTLE

All this means that if your problem originates in the heavenly places, then you need a solution that originates in the heavenly places as well. Most of us are vaguely aware of angels because they’re not part of our physical world. But we need to understand that the angels of God and the demons of hell are the warriors in the cosmic battle between God and Satan.

When you hear believers say they are being attacked by the devil, they probably mean they are being harassed by his foot soldiers. Satan is a limited being, just like any other created being. He is not present everywhere, all-knowing, or all-powerful. Satan is not God, but he has a whole host of evil angels called demons he can use for spiritual attacks. Anything that hell can bring against you results from satanic activity in the same realm in which God operates, called the heavenly places.

You and I are no match for the power and deceptiveness of Satan and his army. We need the power of God to neutralize and eventually overcome Satan's attacks against us. We can be thankful that God has established His throne in heavenly places, pitting His kingdom against the kingdom of darkness. The kingdom of darkness has its own king, Satan, and he wants to be in charge of the universe. Yet when it comes to the universe, there's no question that God's kingdom and His King, Jesus Christ, are firmly in charge. And Jesus' eternal victory is already assured. Still, God has allowed us to choose in our individual lives who will rule over us.

## THE REASON FOR THE BATTLE

Revelation 12 depicts a day when the invisible warfare in the heavenly places will break out in a very visible form. Verse 7 shows us who the enemy is in this conflict: "And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war." The

archangel Michael and the holy angels are fighting Satan and the angels who rebelled with him. The battle is angelic, but they are fighting over the earth. Thus, the war in heaven directly affects what is happening on earth.

We are in the midst of an angelic conflict, a satanic rebellion, in which Satan is seeking to bring this whole world under his rule. That means when you were born into the kingdom of God, you were born into a war. You were born a warrior. You are surrounded by a spiritual enemy, but the battle is not for land or anything physical. This cosmic battle is for *glory*. The issue is: Who is going to get the glory in this universe? Who is going to be worshiped? Who will have notoriety? Who will get to call the shots?

Satan has essentially said to God, “You cannot have all the glory in creation. I want some of the glory for myself.”

God’s response? “My glory I will not give to another” (Isa. 48:11).

Of course that answer didn’t sit well with Satan, so he set about to steal what was not rightfully his—glory. The battle is for glory. Understanding that is half the fight. That’s why Paul told us, “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31; see also Col. 3:23).

Glory—it’s what the battle is all about.

# The Origins of Our Battle

Touring Israel with others is one of my favorite activities. Every so often, our national radio broadcast ministry, *The Urban Alternative*, organizes a group to visit with us, and I spend time teaching through the biblical scenarios that took place at various sites. Israel is truly a miraculous, breathtaking place. I can also honestly say I've never felt safer than those times when I was in the Holy Land. That statement may surprise you. After all, we witness horrendous bombings, rumors of wars, and great conflict on news outlets concerning this region. Therefore, "safe" isn't exactly how most of us would assume we would feel there. Yet the Israelis live with the realization that they are in a constant state of conflict. They know that war could break out at any moment, even though everyone is talking about peace. And because of this, the Israeli government goes to great lengths when it comes to protecting visitors.

I found out after one of our flights to Israel that there were two plainclothes Israeli security men on the plane, ready to deal with anyone who would try to disrupt our safe travel. When we got to Israel the first time many years ago, two people asked us almost fifteen minutes' worth of questions about our luggage. Officials checked some of our bags. This was before an in-depth level of security had become more normative at airports.

One of the officers said to me, "I'm sorry to detain you, but over here we don't take chances. Your safety is our greatest consideration, and your enjoyment is our greatest desire."

On the streets of Israel, civilians are practically surrounded by Israeli soldiers and various security people. We were told that Israel doesn't have a high crime rate, and I can see why. The nation lives in a constant state of military readiness because its leaders understand that they are living in a potential warzone.

Even with this readiness, Israel still suffers some casualties. But imagine how much more the Israelis would suffer if they let down their guard and started living as if they didn't have an enemy in the world.

The reason there are so many casualties among believers in spiritual warfare is that we have lost sight of the fact that we are in a perpetual state of warfare, which demands constant alertness. And so we let down our guards. We open ourselves to attack. We forget that we are warriors, not tourists, in God's kingdom on earth.

An important principle to remember in life is this: just as God's kingdom is spiritual in nature, so also is Satan's. We

shouldn't be surprised, therefore, that these two kingdoms clash in the spiritual realm. You don't have to be a Christian for very long to discover that the Christian life is a battleground and not a playground. This is because we are waging war in a conflict with a spiritual foe. One of Satan's strategies, though, is to get us to forget that we are fighting a spiritual battle and instead to focus on the physical, tangible challenges we face. Because so many Christians have been kept naïve of the real conflict at hand for so long, they assume people are their only problem. The Word of God teaches that what's really going on in our lives, families, churches, and the world at large is a battle that sits outside time and space, but that determines what happens in time and space. It's a spiritual battle. And although we live in a physical world, we live in a war zone. Recognizing this reality is the first step toward victory.

## A KINGDOM PERSPECTIVE

We don't have all the history on the origin of this warfare, but we have enough to picture what happened and why. If we can grasp and react properly to all that the Bible teaches us about this subject, we will be alert and prepared, and we will experience a greater sense of security and peace.

But before we explore that history, let's first establish the framework of *kingdom* and how it relates to spiritual warfare. If you're like me and you grew up in America, you were regularly reminded to whom you belonged each time you said the Pledge of Allegiance or participated in the singing of our national anthem in school or before sporting and

civic events. Our country didn't want us to forget that we are Americans. We recited the pledge regularly, allowing it to sink in, enabling each of us to fully understand that no matter who we were or what our background was—our history, gender, culture, or skin color—we belonged to this kingdom called the United States of America.

Even though the pledge had nothing directly to do with what was going on at that particular event or in the classroom, America wanted us to know that it was only going on, and we were only able to participate in it, because we belonged to its kingdom.

In the same way that our culture and our country wants us to be regularly reminded about our citizenship in this earthly kingdom, there is another kingdom—a greater and perfect one—of which we are a part: the kingdom of God.

Now, if you're an American citizen, it's most likely because you were born here. If you're a citizen of the kingdom of God, it's because you have been born again into His kingdom. The reason you need a full comprehension of the kingdom is because it not only affects you, but also is the key to understanding the Bible. The central theme that unifies the entire Bible—from Genesis to Revelation—is the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom.

If you don't understand that, then the Bible is simply disconnected stories that are great for inspiration but seem to be unrelated in purpose and direction. The Bible exists to reveal God's movement in history toward the establishment and expansion of His kingdom. Understanding that increases the relevancy of this several-thousand-year-old

manuscript to your daily living because the kingdom is not only then, but now.

Throughout the Bible, the kingdom of God is His rule, His plan, His program. God's kingdom is all-encompassing. It covers everything in the universe. In fact, we can define the kingdom as God's comprehensive rule over all creation. It is the rule of God and not the rule of man that is paramount.

Now, if God's kingdom is comprehensive, so is His kingdom agenda. The kingdom agenda, then, may be defined as *the visible manifestation of the comprehensive rule of God over every area of life*.

That has serious implications for us. The reason so many of us believers are struggling is that we want God to bless our agenda rather than us to fulfill His agenda. We want God to approve our plans rather than us to accomplish His plans. We want God to bring us glory rather than us to bring Him glory.

But it doesn't work that way. God has only one plan—His kingdom agenda. We need to discover what that is so we can make sure we're working on God's plan, not ours.

The Greek word the Bible uses for "kingdom" is *basileia*, which basically means a "rule" or "authority." Included in this is the concept of power. So when we talk about a kingdom, we're talking first about a king or a ruler. We're talking about someone who's in charge. Now if there is a ruler, there also have to be "rulees" or kingdom subjects. Additionally, a kingdom includes a realm, a domain over which the king rules. Finally, if you're going to have a ruler, rulees, and a realm, you also need kingdom regulations—guidelines that govern the relationship between the ruler and the subjects.

These are necessary so that the rulees will know whether they are doing what the ruler wants.

God's kingdom includes all of these elements. He is the absolute Ruler of His domain, which encompasses all of creation. Likewise, His authority is total. Everything God rules, He runs—even when it doesn't look like He's running it. Even when life looks like it's out of control, God is running its "out-of-controlness."

God's kingdom also has its "rulees." Colossians 1:13 says that everybody who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior has been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, your allegiance has been changed. You no longer align yourself with Satan but with Christ.

To be absolutely clear, there are no in-between kingdoms and no gray areas here. There are only two realms in creation: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. We are subjects of one or the other. Everything visible and physical is always controlled or derived from that which is invisible and spiritual. Satan wants to get us to skip the divine perspective because he knows that we will never be able to solve our visible and physical problems until we address them from the divine realm. Heaven rules earth. What happens up there determines what goes on down here. So if you are not in contact with heaven, then you ought not be surprised if you are in a quandary down here on earth.

One of the greatest kings in history, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, learned this truth the hard way. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that disturbed him deeply, so he asked the

prophet Daniel to interpret it for him. Daniel told the king he would lose his kingdom and be driven into insanity until he learned that “it is Heaven that rules” (Dan. 4:26). What Daniel prophesied came to pass (see v. 28). God’s kingdom is lived from the perspective of heaven, not earth.

Likewise, spiritual warfare is to be fought from the perspective of heaven, not earth.

## GROUND ZERO

With a kingdom perspective now in place, we are ready to explore the history of our battle. To understand the origin of spiritual warfare, we have to go far back before time, into eternity past, when God created a body of beings called angels. He created them like Himself, in that they are spirit beings, for God is spirit (John 4:24).

We know that angels are magnificent beings from their appearances in Scripture. When a person saw an angel, he or she was usually overcome and fell to the ground. Angels are beings of great light, just as God’s manifestations of Himself in the Bible are often accompanied by a bright light (see Acts 9). All the angels are awesome creatures, but one angel in particular was glorious.

When God created this new order of beings to worship and adore and magnify Him, He decided to create one as a special masterpiece—Lucifer, the “brilliant” or “shining one” or “star of the morning” (Isa. 14:12). Ezekiel 28 goes into more detail describing him.

We must start here because the conflict we’re talking

about originated in the angelic realm before the creation described in Genesis 1. Spiritual warfare began with Lucifer's rebellion against God in heaven.

In Ezekiel 28:1–10, we're told about the king of Tyre, a human ruler who came under God's judgment because his heart was swelled with pride. He even tried to make himself like God. Then in verse 12, we're introduced to the power behind this rebellious and prideful king. It was Lucifer himself, the great being who came to be called Satan, the devil, Beelzebub, the accuser of the brethren, and so many other names and titles. Lucifer was the spiritual power influencing the king of Tyre, because, as we will see, a spiritual power always influences earthly actions because a spiritual battle is raging all around us.

Ezekiel also tells us what Lucifer was like before he rebelled against God. By understanding what he was like before his rebellion, we'll understand better why he rebelled:

You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. (Ezek. 28:12–13)

This creature shone like the brilliance of the noon-day sun. He didn't have to buy diamonds to wear. He was

a diamond. He was covered with every kind of precious stone. Lucifer was God's master creation. He was glorious and perfect in every detail. And he could sing! The Hebrew word "sockets" in verse 13 could be translated "pipes." Lucifer didn't just play the organ; he was the organ. When he opened his mouth to sing, he sounded like a million-dollar organ. And why not? After all, he was created to lead all the other angels in the worship and praise of God. Lucifer was blameless and flawless, a masterpiece.

Notice also that Lucifer occupied the most exalted place of all God's creatures. He was "in Eden, the garden of God." Verse 14 says, "You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire." Lucifer was near God's throne; he walked in God's holy presence. His access to God was awesome, greater than that of any of the other angels. Also notice Lucifer's job title, as it were: "the anointed cherub who covers" (v. 14). The cherubs, or cherubim, are the honor guard of the angels, the angels who have the responsibility to proclaim and protect the glory of God. They are the highest rank in God's hierarchy of angels.

Lucifer was at the top of the list. He was the leader. He occupied the highest possible position that God could give to one of His creatures.

He had all of this, but then came that terrible day when, like the queen in the children's fairy tale, Lucifer stood for too long in front of a mirror. As Lucifer stood observing himself, he said, "Lucifer, you are something special! Look at that jasper. Look at these diamonds. You don't have to be number two up here. Look at all your glory. You don't have

to lead the other angels in worshiping God. You deserve some of that worship yourself.” Mirror, mirror on the wall was the start of the great demonic fall.

Ezekiel 28:15–17 tells us what happened next. First, Lucifer lost his perfections, his place, and his position because “unrighteousness was found in [him]” (v. 15). “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty” (v. 17).

Lucifer’s great perversion was that he took the gifts of God and made them an end in themselves. He was lifted up with the greatest of all sins: pride. He rebelled against God because he forgot something very critical—his own creatureliness.

It’s mentioned a couple times in Ezekiel 28:

“On the day that you were created.” (v. 13)

“From the day you were created.” (v. 15)

Lucifer forgot he was a creature. He forgot that his diamonds didn’t show up by themselves. He forgot that his position as the anointed cherub didn’t come because he woke up one day feeling “cherubic.” Lucifer forgot that the only reason he was so beautiful was that God created him that way. Lucifer stared into the mirror too long.

The angel who became Satan began to worship himself and wanted the rest of creation to worship him. That’s what makes pride such a terrible sin. Pride is self-worship. It is not just feeling good about ourselves. Pride makes us feel independent of God so that we think we don’t need Him. We think we are who we are because of what we have done. When this shining angel chose to act on his pride, he began

a plan of rebellion, a *coup d'etat*, against the throne of God.

Lucifer went to the angels and offered them the option of following him. He did this “by the abundance of [his] trade” (Ezek. 28:16). What was his trade? His manipulating efforts among the angelic hosts.

Lucifer promoted himself, and one-third of the angels in heaven bought his platform and his plan (see Rev. 12:4). One third of the angels went with Satan and said, “Yes, you’re right, we don’t need God either.”

Lucifer led a revolt of angels, but he failed because he found out that glory belongs to God alone. God says in Isaiah 42:8, “I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another.” The punishment Lucifer received is recorded briefly here in Ezekiel 28. He was thrown out of heaven and cast “to the ground” (vv. 16–17). Lucifer and the demons were evicted from heaven because God will not have any challengers to His authority.

Satan’s pride was the cause of his rebellion, and his judgment was its culmination. He was no longer Lucifer, the shining one.

## SATAN’S PLAN

To understand the content of Satan’s rebellion, the details of his plan, we need to look at Isaiah 14. We might describe the nature of the devil’s rebellion as negative volition. That is, Satan made some very bad decisions in his will. We pause here to remember that God created the angels with volition, the ability to choose. He did not mandate their loyalty and

obedience as if they were robots, just as He did not make us robots. Satan had a will, and according to Isaiah 14, he exercised it five times when he said, “I will.”

Isaiah 14 begins with God’s pronouncement of judgment against a human king, in this case the king of Babylon (vv. 4–11). Then in verse 12 we read this statement: “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations!” This can be no one but the angel formerly known as Lucifer. Why did God cut Satan down to the earth? God answers that in Isaiah 14:13–14. Satan reared up in rebellion and tried to tell God how things were going to be. Let’s examine Satan’s five volitional statements one at a time.

### ***“I Will Ascend to Heaven”***

“But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven’” (v. 13a). Satan didn’t mean he wanted to take a tour of heaven. He already had access to the highest spot in heaven, the throne of God. He was already walking among the “stones of fire” (Ezek. 28:14). He was already on the mountain of God.

So Satan was not talking about visiting heaven, but overtaking it. In other words, he wanted to ascend to heaven with a view to occupying God’s throne.

### ***“I Will Raise My Throne”***

Satan’s hostile intentions are obvious from his second boast: “I will raise my throne above the stars of God” (Isa. 14:13b). Job 38:7 says the stars refer to angels. Satan wanted to rule over all the angels. You may be thinking, *Wait a*

*minute. Wasn't Satan already in charge of the angels?* Yes, he was the number one cherub, the highest-ranking angel in heaven. But Satan wasn't in charge the way God was in charge. Lucifer was saying, "Being the top angel isn't what I want. Every time I go down to the other angels, I have to tell them what God wants me to tell them. Every time I lead the angels in worship, I have to lead them to Him. Every time I meet with the other angels, the subject of our meeting is how great God is and why He deserves all the majesty and glory and worship. I'm tired of being the middleman between God and the angels. What I want is to sit on the throne, give the orders, and receive worship and glory."

Satan wanted the angels discussing him in their committee meetings. He wanted them figuring out how to serve him and make him look better. And he didn't want to answer to God anymore.

### ***"I Will Sit on the Mount"***

Satan's third boast was, "I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north" (v. 13c). The Bible says that this mountain is the center of God's kingdom rule, where He controls the affairs of the universe (Ps. 48:2; Isa. 2:2).

Satan didn't want to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," but, "My kingdom come, my will be done." He wanted to be managing the kingdom.

### ***"I Will Ascend Above the Clouds"***

Then Satan said, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds" (Isa. 14:14a). He was not talking about ascending

above the clouds you see as you fly in an airplane. Many people have ascended above the clouds in airplanes. There's more to this boast than that.

The Bible associates clouds with the glory of God (Ex. 16:10; 40:34). His glory often appeared as a cloud. So clouds are those things through which the glory of God is manifested.

Satan wanted glory. He wanted praise. He tempted Jesus by showing Him the kingdoms of the world and saying, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4:9). Satan wanted to be worshiped. He still wants to be worshiped.

That's why Satan cannot hang out when we're worshiping God. He can't stand it because we're giving God that which he so desperately wants for himself. Not only that, but when we worship God, Satan is reminded of what he used to do.

Worshiping God is Satan's old job description. He used to bring God glory. But then Satan tried to share what can't be shared. He wanted to divide something that is indivisible—the glory of God. God lives for His glory, for the demonstration of His greatness. Glory means "to show off, to advertise, to put on display." God is consumed with His glory because there is no one else like Him in the universe.

The reason you and I can't get stuck on ourselves is that there is always somebody better than us, better looking than us, smarter than us, better at business than us. But God is by Himself. There is no one like Him. Nor will there ever be anyone like Him. He will share His glory with none of His creatures.

### *“I Will Make Myself Like the Most High”*

Here is Satan’s fifth and last rebellious claim: “I will make myself like the Most High” (Isa. 14:14b).

This is really the statement of a fool. Here is Satan, creature that he is, looking up at the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present God and saying, “I’m going to be like Him.”

For Satan to be like God would mean there would be two Gods. But that isn’t going to happen. God says, “Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me” (Isa. 43:10). “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me’” (44:6). “I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God” (45:5). Not a lot of room for God-making here. God cannot replicate Himself.

When Satan said he was going to become like God, he was saying he envied the independence God has. God is totally independent. He is answerable to no one outside of Himself. And God is all-knowing. Satan tempted Eve by saying that if she ate the fruit, she would have knowledge like God’s (Gen. 3:5).

This idea of being like God was Satan’s sin, and it was hideous. One reason it was so hideous is that he wasn’t tempted to do this by anyone else. There was nobody around to tempt him. He came up with this plan all on his own.

You and I can say somebody tempted us. That doesn’t exonerate us, but at least we didn’t come up with the sins we commit all on our own. Yet Satan had no outside pressure. He wasn’t fighting a spiritual battle against a clever enemy. He rebelled on his own.

You may wonder why God allowed Satan to rebel against Him and live to tell about it. Why didn't God crush him? We'll get into this in detail below, so let me just say here that one reason God permitted Satan's rebellion was to show the angels and us that when we don't live God's way, it doesn't work. Satan was determined to do things his way, and God let him. But the devil and his angelic and human followers will spend all eternity being reminded that rebellion against God cannot work and leads ultimately to destruction.

Yes, God permitted Satan to carry out his rebellion, but He took control of the results. Satan raised himself up against God, but God slammed him to the ground. Satan learned that although he could control his decision, he couldn't control its consequences. We need to learn that too. You may do your thing, but after you do your thing God takes over. While He gives freedom to us in our choices, God always controls the consequences.

Both Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 address the consequences of judgment God carried out against His anointed cherub when Satan corrupted himself and sinned against God. When "unrighteousness was found" in Satan (Ezek. 28:15), God expelled him from "the mountain of God" and took away his place amid "the stones of fire" (v. 16). "I cast you to the ground," God told him (v. 17).

We know that the mountain of God has to do with His throne, the place from which He rules. Thus, Satan lost his privileged place near God's throne. He still has access to God's presence, as Job 1 reveals. But now he can come to God only as a "visitor." Satan has no place in heaven anymore.

The devil also lost his position as the “covering cherub” (Ezek. 28:16). The stones of fire are the angels. Satan was removed from his exalted role as head of the angels. He was also cast down to the ground, which Isaiah 14:12 tells us is the earth. Satan fell from heaven to earth, and he certainly didn’t suffer his punishment happily. Revelation 12:12 warns those who dwell on the earth that Satan has come down with great anger, because he knows his time is short.

Isaiah 14:15 refers to Satan’s ultimate sentence: “You will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.” Satan’s destiny is eternal fire. Jesus stated this explicitly in Matthew 25:41. Speaking of His judgment on the Gentile nations at the end of the Tribulation, Jesus said He will pronounce this sentence to those on His left hand: “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.”

The devil’s final judgment will be executed at the end of the millennial kingdom. “And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

When Satan is thrown into the boiling cauldron called the lake of fire, the place of eternal torment, all those people who adopted Satan as their god will live forever with him. Hell was never made for human beings. It was created for Satan and the one-third of God’s angels who rebelled with him. But many people will go there because Satan is the god they wanted.

Satan was decisively and eternally judged for his sin. The final portion of his sentence has not yet been carried out, so right now he has access to the earth and retains some of his influence. This is crucial to our understanding of spiritual warfare, because he is now our sworn enemy.

## A DEMONSTRATION OF GOD'S GLORY

When God permitted Satan's sin—and then judged him and his rebellious angels—He did more than just pronounce their curse. He decided, in His eternal wisdom, to demonstrate something vitally important to these rebellious heavenly creatures.

Satan attacked God's throne and trifled with His glory, so God said to Satan, "I am going to show you something. I am going to demonstrate to you and to the angelic world My power and glory. I am going to unfold before your eyes a plan that will demonstrate I am not to be trifled with." Satan was then expelled from heaven and demoted to the earthly realm. That's the situation when we come to Genesis 1 and the beginning of creation. This is where things get interesting, because this is where spiritual warfare really began.

Notice the familiar statement in Genesis 1:2: "the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep." To put it another way, earth was a wasteland. Everything was sort of floating together in a formless mass. Later, God had to separate the water from the dry land.

How did the earth become that way? It likely happened when Satan was thrown out of heaven and down to the earth

(see Ezek. 28:17). Whatever Satan takes over becomes a garbage dump, including our lives.

Some Bible teachers and theologians believe that Satan's rebellion and judgment occurred between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, so that God's perfect creation became fouled when Satan fell. I believe Satan's fall happened before Genesis 1:1, somewhere in eternity past. But here is when he was thrown down to the earth.

Either way, the earth became a place of judgment because it became the holding cell for Satan and his angels until their sentence is to be carried out.

The point is that wherever Satan resides, wherever he's in control, he creates chaos and garbage. That's why when Adam and Eve yielded to Satan, they were kicked out of Eden and the earth became a weed-filled wilderness.

Satan and his demons, the fallen angels, were limited to earth and its atmosphere as their primary realm of operation. They are still spirit beings, so they have access to the spiritual world. But their primary sphere of operation is earth.

God then decided to fix the wasteland called earth to demonstrate something very important to Satan and his demons and to the angels in heaven. Therefore, "The Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). God began to bring order out of the chaos. He created light to counter the darkness. He separated the waters from the dry land and began to dress the earth and fill it and the sea with all kinds of creatures.

Now let me show you what happened when God began

to create. In Job 38:4–7, God asks Job where he was when God created the earth. God says when the angels saw His creative power, they “sang together” (v. 7).

Here were the angels of heaven, perhaps thousands of years after the fall of Satan had taken place. They saw light come to the dark earth, and they rejoiced. God was going to do something. What was He going to do?

God was going to make a creature of lesser stature than the angels to demonstrate to all the universe that even though this creature did not have angelic ability, angelic power, or angelic experience, if this lesser creature would trust and obey God, he would go further than an angel in heaven who refused to trust God.

Here then is the connection between Satan’s rebellion and spiritual warfare. That lesser creature was mankind—you and me. God was saying to Satan, “I can take a creature of less beauty and ability than you, but who trusts Me, and I will do more with this weaker creature than you can do with all of your power.”

In Psalm 8, David looked into the sky and was overwhelmed with the thought of God. He wrote:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;  
What is man that You take thought of him,  
And the son of man that You care for him?  
Yet You have made him a little lower than God,  
And You crown him with glory and majesty!

You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;  
You have put all things under his feet. (vv. 3–6)

Verse 5 can also be translated, “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels” (KJV), and that’s the translation and interpretation I believe is called for in the context.

This is just like God. He came down to Satan’s domain and said, “This earth is a wasteland. Let Me put My creative handiwork in it.” God began to create, and all of a sudden, the earth was filled with light and life. Then, with Satan listening, God said, “Let Us make man in Our image” (Gen. 1:26)—just as He had made Lucifer and the angels in His image in that they were spirit beings. And God announced to Satan, “I am going to put man in charge of your house. He will have dominion over the earth, and rule over the birds of the air and the fish of the sea.”

That explains why the serpent came to Eve and tempted her to doubt God. Satan wanted the planet. Adam and Eve gave it to him by their sin. And guess what God is in the process of doing today through His people? He is taking this planet back from Satan. This is His plan: to display His power and glory to the angels of heaven and to Satan and the demons of hell.

Here’s another key to God’s plan. Satan and the angels who followed him spurned God’s goodness and grace. So God wanted to show them the glory of His grace when it is received by repentant sinners. God permitted sin in order that His grace might be shown to be greater (see Rom. 5:20). But this display of grace did something more. It allowed God

to express His love while satisfying His demand for justice at the same time.

God can't just skip sin. Yet God loves us. How can He satisfy His justice that must deal with sin and also satisfy His love? God did so by putting our sins on Jesus and punishing Him, thereby satisfying His holiness that demands that sin be paid for. Christ's death freed God to show His loving and forgiving grace to sinners who come to Him, confess their sins, and receive Jesus as Savior. This is the manifold wisdom of God.

God also permitted sin to demonstrate that there is no meaning or hope in life apart from Him. He permitted Satan and us to have the ability to choose so that He could secure our obedience and service out of love, not out of fear. God doesn't want people to love and serve Him because they're afraid He is going to smite them if they don't. What God did in creation was to parallel man's situation with that of Satan. Satan was created a perfect being with a free will and the ability to choose. Adam was created a perfect being with a free will and the ability to choose.

Lucifer's heavenly homestead was called Eden (see Ezek. 28:13). Adam's earthly homestead was also called Eden. Lucifer was to oversee all of God's angelic creation; Adam was to oversee all of God's earthly creation. Lucifer had direct access to God in heaven; Adam had direct access to God when they walked together in the garden.

Mankind would parallel Satan and his angels in another way. The Bible says there are two classes of angels: elect

angels and fallen angels. There will be two classifications of mankind: saved and unsaved, elect and fallen.

God created mankind to rule the earth. Satan came to Adam and Eve to take over earth. That's one major reason why God had to become a man in the person of Jesus Christ, because a man had to take the earth back from Satan. What we're experiencing on earth in terms of spiritual warfare has to do with something that is much bigger than we are.

Friend, if you want to correct the effects of Satan's rebellion in your life, you must learn that God will go to enormous lengths to guard and preserve His glory. God will spare nothing to preserve His glory. If you try to interfere with God's glory, if you try to take from God that which belongs to Him alone, you are in trouble. A lot of people in the Bible had to learn that the hard way.

Remember King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan. 4:28–37). If he were here, he might tell you, "Don't ever do what I did, standing on my balcony talking about 'Look at this great Babylon that I have built.' Don't ever do that, because my nails started to grow, and hair started growing out all over me. I crawled like an animal for seven years, but I learned my lesson. When I got my sanity back, I let it be known that there's only one God. He will bring you down to the dirt on your face, if He has to, to teach you this lesson."

This is why the serpent who tempted Eve was sentenced to crawl on his belly (Gen. 3:14). The serpent was used by Satan to steal the glory of God in the lives of Adam and Eve. And when you steal the glory of God, God will put you on

your face, so to speak. You'll be crawling in the dust until you give Him back His glory.

Ask King Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:20–23). Herod took the podium to speak, and the people said, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” (v. 22). Herod liked that. He said, “Yes, I am a god.” But he was immediately eaten by worms and died because he did not give God the glory. There is no room in the universe for two Gods.

The Bible tells us to humble ourselves before God (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). Pride is one of the preeminent weapons of the enemy. Be on guard against it. It brought Satan down. It has the power to bring you down too.

This is spiritual warfare. This is our battle. You were born a warrior, whether or not you want to be one. If you want to position yourself for victory, you must rightly understand the history, nature, and strategy of the enemy.

# WHERE DO YOU NEED VICTORY?

You feel stuck—or even held back—in your spiritual life. You want more for your life, but every time you reach for more of Jesus, you're knocked down again. Whether it's marital challenges, financial distress, or the recurring pain of old wounds, the Enemy finds a way to keep you discouraged and disabled.

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