

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA, NY**

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***“Know Your Enemy: The Power Behind the Throne” (part 2)***

**WE ARE IN A SPIRITUAL WAR**

Last week we began a series called “Know Your Enemy: The Real Axis of Evil.”

We saw how the Bible teaches that we have real enemies, and we are in a real war. But it is not a military war: a war between nations. It is not a political war: a war between democrats and republicans. It is not economic war: a war between capitalists and socialists. It’s not even a philosophical war: a war between secularists and the religious. We are in a spiritual war. This war is every day of our lives, it is to the finish, it is a war unto death. In fact it is this spiritual war that triggers all the other wars and conflicts we see every day in society.

St. Paul says in **Ephesians 6:12**, *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers the principalities, the rulers of darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

Who are the enemies in this spiritual war? God’s Word tells us: 1) Satan, 2) the flesh (our sinful human nature and its corporate manifestation – the world), and 3) death (which includes all sickness since if it wasn’t for our white blood cells and immune system, or various medications and antibiotics prescribed by our physicians, the bacteria and viruses in our bodies would ultimately kill us).

**SATAN IS REAL**

Now last week, we began to look at our first enemy and saw how Satan is a real being. The Bible testifies to his existence throughout the Scriptures, but more importantly Jesus recognized his existence. Indeed, the Bible says in **1 Jn. 3:8** that Jesus was revealed to destroy the works of the devil.

So what does this have to do with us today? A lot. For if there is a Satan and he is opposed to God, do you think he is going to play dead? Do you think he’s not going to bother you? Do you think that he doesn’t have a plan for your life?

I mean look around. Who or what do you think is behind all those wars we just mentioned? Who or what do you think is behind the violence, the crime, the drugs, the abortion, the suicide, the sexual perversion, the false religions, the occult, the poverty and the political corruption? Why do you think in virtually every culture there is the belief in some invisible evil power, and physical depictions of evil beings and spirits? Why do you think there is such fascination and involvement things like in voodoo, witchcraft, séances, ouigi boards and the like? Even in cultures that never were exposed to the idea of a Satan, one can find manifestations of supernatural evil: the totem poles of the Native peoples of North America or the fire gods of the Natives in South America, or the evil spirit gods of Asia and Africa.

Should we be surprised that the AMA (American Medical Association) some years back warned people not to get involved in the occult because of the psychological and physical harm such activity can cause?

You see we will not be able to understand the war we are in until we expose the enemy. And if we are going to expose this enemy we need to find out where Satan came from. Remember last week, I said people often ask the question, if God is so good, why did He create the devil? Well, frankly, that’s the wrong question to ask. We’re going to see that God did not create the devil. So where did the devil come from?

Please turn with me in your Bibles to **Ezekiel 28:12-18**.

### **SATAN’S ORIGIN: FROM PERFECTION TO CONDEMNATION**

Ezekiel was a prophet of the Lord, He had been called by God to preach to the people of Judah but the Lord also gave him messages to preach to the surrounding nations and their leaders. And there was one particular leader who became an abomination before God, and that was the King of Tyre.

We read that the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel telling him to speak a lamentation to the King of Tyre. But then as you hear Ezekiel it is clear he is not just speaking about the King of Tyre. In fact, we’re going to see that the prophet Ezekiel is seeing beyond the old King he is looking at who was really the power behind the throne. **Now let’s see what Ezekiel said:**

*“Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. “You were in Eden, the garden of God; (at this point it is clear that Ezekiel is not speaking of any mere mortal.)*

*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. You were the anointed cherub who covers, (anointed cherub – a member of the special order of angels who were considered guardians of God’s throne). The description of garments bedecked with jewels denotes this angel’s exquisitely beauty. Recall the jewels worn by the high priests, or the New Jerusalem of Revelation where John sees all the color of various jewels and gold.*

So this angel is in an incredible environment. More important, he is on the holy mount of God: *“And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God;”* (The place of God’s authority, rule, government. In other words, this angel was right there at the place of authority. He was the anointed cherub that covers. You could say he was the prime minister of heaven. ) But then something happened.

*“You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you. By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; Therefore, I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.”*

This anointed cherub was created in perfection and beauty but he allowed his beauty and the authority given to him by God to convince him that he didn’t need God. So who was this anointed cherub who rebelled against God?

**SATAN’S CHARACTER: CORRUPTED BY PRIDE AND CONSUMED WITH POWER**

Please turn to **Isaiah 14:12-14**. Here, the same thing happens to the prophet Isaiah that happened to Ezekiel. God calls on Isaiah to pronounce judgment upon the King of Babylon but it becomes evident that he too, looks beyond this king and sees who really is the power behind the throne.

**Isaiah 14:12-14** *How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn!* (the word here is “Lucifer” which literally means “light bearing one” – it’s where we get Satan’s original name) *You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! "But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God (reference to angels – see below), And I will sit on the mount of assembly, in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'*

So what happened? *Lucifer*, the most beautiful angel, the anointed cherub who was in charge of the worship and adoration of God, was corrupted by pride. His heart was lifted up because of his incredible beauty and he was consumed with power to the point that he thought he could be in charge of all creation. Note his five “I will” statements.

You see angels are like people in that they are moral beings – they have the ability to choose between good and evil. Lucifer chose evil. He chose to rebel against God. But it wasn’t just Lucifer. In **Rev. 12:3-4** the Apostle John sees a great red dragon whose *“tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to earth...And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”*

That’s why Jesus said in **Luke 10:17**: *“Behold I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”*

You see God didn’t make Lucifer as the devil. It was pride that made Lucifer the devil. And this Lucifer, this son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night. The word, Satan literally means “adversary.” So he opposes God, seeks to thwart God’s will and makes war on the saints.

Now if Satan can’t get at God directly, who do you think he is going to attack? Those whom God loves. Why does Satan have you as an enemy? Because we’re all made in the image of God. And so wicked people have always known that if you can’t get at somebody, hurt somebody that somebody loves and you’ve hurt that somebody anyway. So Satan gets at God by seeking to divide, depress and destroy the creatures of God.

And yet, if Satan were to walk into this church we would be overwhelmed by his beauty and voice. You see he still has his beauty but it is a blemished beauty, he still has wisdom but it is a corrupted wisdom.

As St. Paul’s says in **2 Cor. 11:14-15**: *“for even Satan disguises himself as angel of light. There fore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.”* In other words, Satan at first glance can fool us and so too can certain so called “ministers of the gospel.” That is why it is so important to know the Word of God.

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, May 1, 2005 Liturgical Year “A”

So Satan is beautiful on the outside, but on the inside he is hideously ugly. His character is deceitfully wicked. That’s why the Word of God calls Satan the following: a deceiver, a murderer (Jn. 8:44), a liar (Jn. 8:44), the ruler of darkness (Eph. 6:12), the evil one (the tempter (I Thess. 3:5), the accuser (Rev. 12:10), the enemy (Mt. 13:39), the prince of demons (Mt. 12:24), the destroyer (Rev. 9:11), and a devouring lion (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan is also identified as the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31), and the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4). There is nothing good about this angel.

Now Satan isn’t just hideously beautiful, he is brilliantly stupid. You see, Satan still thinks he can win. He has the audacity to believe he can overthrow and defeat God. Well, you and I now that’s not going to happen. The battle begun in heaven by Satan, will be won on earth by Christ.

### **SATAN’S DEFEAT: CONDEMNED TO JUDGMENT AND THE LAKE OF FIRE**

Don’t make the mistake some do and think that Satan is somehow coequal, coeternal with God. That’s the error of dualism. The belief that good and evil eternally coexists. That is not what the Lord teaches. Satan is a created being. There was never a time when God was not, there was a time when Satan was not. Lucifer became Satan when he fell. The same God who spoke Lucifer into being is the same God who will speak him into oblivion. And so we don’t have to wonder who is going to win. **Read Ez. 28:18**

From the stone of fire to the lake of fire that is where Satan is headed. From the highest place to the lowest place. And God will shame him on this earth where he has done his reign of terror.

Satan says, “I will ascend.” Satan is all about power and might. But Jesus said, “I will descend.” Jesus is all about service and sacrifice. Satan made war in heaven. Jesus came to earth to make peace. Satan said to the Father, “Not your will, but my will be done.” Jesus said to the Father, “Not my will, but your will be done.”

And while on that cross shedding His blood for us, Jesus bowed his head and said, “It is finished.” And Satan and the hosts of hell yelled out, “Ah ha, he is finished!” But that’s not what Jesus said. He said, “It is finished.” What is finished? Satan is finished, death is finished, hell is finished. How? Through the death of Jesus on that cross. The payment of sin is paid in full. For the same one who bowed his head and died on the cross is the same one who rose again and walked out of the tomb. **Hebrews 2:14-15** tells us that Jesus took upon Himself our flesh and blood and died so that ***“He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death.”***

The truth is Hell was not created for us. Hell was created for Satan and his angels. They are the ones already destined for hell. God doesn’t want to send any human being to hell. We are made in His image. That means God made us for Himself. He made us to know Him and to worship Him and to love Him. But the only way we can stay protected is trusting in Jesus. That’s why it is so important to make sure that we are saved by the cross of Christ. Nothing else, no one else can save us Satan’s grip or from the wrath to come. Let us pray...