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**Presentation Transcript**  
**Waging Spiritual War – Part 1**  
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We're beginning a new series today. The title is *Waging Spiritual War*. I'm really excited about this one. It's about the war that's being waged on humanity by our adversary, the devil, and how we can win our part of that war with God's help, how we can attain victory in Christ, and join with God in eternal life in His eternal Kingdom.

This first presentation is called *Enlisting*. We're going to talk about the concept we agreed to when we were baptized – that's our enlistment – and any deeper implications of that agreement as well.

On the Day of Pentecost – the first one after Jesus ascended to heaven – we are told that 120 believers of Jesus were gathered here in anticipation of something new – something special. And they were *not* disappointed. On that Pentecost service on the Pentecost day, the Holy Spirit descended visibly on each one of them. It looked like fire had come down on them. And they began to speak in languages of the time, even though they were not fluent in them. They must have gone outside, because when the people of Jerusalem heard this, they rushed to see what the commotion was all about. And there in the streets they saw this amazing thing happening.

Of course, they struggled to understand how someone who didn't speak Greek, and whose hair appeared to be on fire, could speak Greek fluently. Visitors from other nations, with their various languages could all understand what these Jews, who spoke only Hebrew and Aramaic, were saying. This caused an incredible commotion. They struggled to make sense of it. Some thought the disciples might be drunk. And about that time, standing with the other eleven disciples, shouted and quieted the crowd. He said, "Men of Judea, do you really think these people are drunk? It's nine in the morning! No, what you're seeing here has been prophesied for a long time. This is what Joel the prophet was talking about when he said that the Spirit of God would be poured out on humanity."

So he reflects back to something they were familiar with – the prophet Joel. And he connects that with what they're looking at right then. And this was astounding to these devout Jews for two reasons. One, they thought they were already saved – that they were God's people, after all. And that word *everyone* – that was a new concept to them. To be a Jew and to be God's people – that was a closed set, as far as they were concerned.

Peter, then, explained to them that they had unwittingly assented to the killing of the Messiah – the One who was prophesied, the One they had prayed for all their lives – and that, in spite of their terrible error, with its profound blindness and foolishness, God, three days later, raised Jesus from the dead. And he said, "All twelve of us here saw Him alive again. We testify that to all of you." And then he said, in Acts 2:36:

**Acts 2:36** – *Let all the house of Israel, therefore, know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus, whom you crucified.*

Well, this rocked them. It shook them to their foundations. The people were in disarray. There were confused, ashamed and guilty. And the crowd cried out to the disciples, "What should we do?" And Peter answered – he lifted his voice so all could hear:

**V-38** – *“Repent, “ he said, “and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will likewise receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. I added likewise because he was explaining to them what they were looking at.*

So we read later in the account, in Acts 2:40, that Peter adjured them to save themselves from this *crooked* and perverse *generation*. So that would mean a complete change of thinking and a complete way of living differently – a disconnect from the ways of the rest of society and a clinging to God in a new way of life.

Now, I was baptized on December 13, 1964. And I remember some things about that day. I remember *knowing* that I came up out of the water of baptism a new creation. I didn't feel any different, but I had learned in the Bible that when I came up out of that water, the old Bill had died and a new Bill had come to life. I was free. I was free from my past sins. And I had made a promise, and my eternal life hung on a surety of my word to God and God's word to me that I was not my own any longer, but I was *His* and He was mine. I knew that I had to try to live sin-free, because that's how Jesus lived, and He is now my model for Christian life. I remember knowing that I was now, by going under that water, part of the body of Christ, which is the church. I knew that the church was not a corporation, but a body of believers identified by the works of the Holy Spirit.

But that was about all I knew. Although those things are just the tip of the iceberg, that's how God starts with most of us – with the fundamentals. Those fundamentals can be summed up by the concept of God calling us into a relationship with Him. We learn about our sins, our

responsibilities to God, our contract that we made with Him. And we enact that contract because we want to go on living with God into eternity.

It kind of reminds me of many people who enlist in the military because they want all the benefits – you know, they want a skill, they want an education, they want a salary, they want life experience – possibly even a career – but they have no idea what combat is like, or what the enemy is like, or what the enemy wants to do, or what kind of commitment is necessary to defeat that enemy – no idea how high the stakes are.

I think back to the sixties, when many young people demonstrated and even rioted because they wanted the US to get out of Viet Nam. And they finally won out. The politicians, as they so often do, caved to minority opinion. So we left in defeat. I can still see in my mind's eye the helicopter on the roof of a building, people scrambling into it, lifting off with some US personnel as the lines collapsed below and the enemy surged forward. But there's something most of those young people, who are now my age, didn't acknowledge – or didn't know about. After we left Viet Nam, the Communist governments of South Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos murdered 2 ½ million of their own people. So, was I in favor of the Viet Nam War then? Well, I have never been in favor of any war. War is the worst thing that can happen to people. The point, though, is the similarity between the Viet Nam protesters and newly baptized Christians in that neither one of them, generally, had a clue – or *has* a clue – about what is or was to happen.

I think most of us in God's church joined up for the benefits. We knew it meant changing the way we lived our lives, but we didn't grasp the full import of it, and didn't see the bigger picture. And that isn't a criticism. It's completely okay. That's where God starts with most of us. He has to start somewhere. He can't just shovel the whole enchilada into us all at once. It takes time. So that's where He starts.

And it's a good place for Him to start with us. But there's more to it than just saving our own lives. That is just the tip of the iceberg. No enlistee understands combat until he gets there. God wants us to move past an experience to wisdom and understanding. But He has to do that in stages.

Let's meet the enemy. If we're going to talk about warfare, it's good to meet the enemy, isn't it? Let's start with Jesus' statement in Luke 10:18.

**Luke 10:18** – *And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."*

Okay, so here are the indisputable words of Christ. There *is* a devil. He was in heaven. Now he's not. And we can know that He's speaking this as past tense. When He was alive on the earth, this had already happened. And we can go back in prophecy to Ezekiel 28:14 and following to learn more about that downfall, but we won't take time to do that here. You can go look that up, if you're interested.

So what else can we know about this devil? Well, Jesus characterized him in two ways. He said that he was a liar and the father of lies. He begot lying. In other words, he invented it. There had never been any lies told until he told one. And He said he is a murderer. So he can't kill God or Christ or the angels. They are immortal. So who would be left for him to kill? Well, he wants to kill us. He wanted to be God and take God's place, and we're the ones that are going to get to be in God's family, not him, so he resents us.

Let's look at something else in Revelation 12:7. Now we've gone ahead into the future now. Right? Revelation is at the end of the Bible.

**Revelation 12:7-9** – *Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

So, the devil, our enemy, is also identified as the *deceiver* of the whole world. Paul referred to him as the god of this world even. He can't destroy or dethrone God, but he has supplanted Him on earth – taken God's place. We'll understand a lot more about what that means as we go, but let's read on for now. Verse 10:

**V-10** – *And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”* And that is likely where we are now. It's certainly shorter than it was when John wrote these words in 91 AD, at any rate. We don't know where we are in relationship to that final date when God designates that Christ will come to the earth, but we're closer. And things are getting worse, just like they're prophesied.

So, we know that the devil is the accuser of the brethren. We're accused day and night before God. And for what are we accused? We're accused for the sins we commit. Can't you just hear it now? “He calls himself a Christian, yet look at how he behaves – the things he thinks about and the things he does.” God has a steady diatribe of that going, it seems like, in His ear from the devil.

Now, in the same scripture where Jesus identified Satan as a liar, He also identified the believers around as the children of the devil. He said the devil was their father. And He said that because

they had been deceived by the devil. He isn't really their father. God is. But they have bought into his program and they think like he thinks. So they have, in other words, believed his lies.

Now, we can read in Revelation about the devil and his efforts to create division between the nations and at the same time push toward one world government, called the beast – probably as a solution to all the division. So he creates the problem, then he offers his solution to it, which is even worse than the problem to begin with. Jesus said it was going to get so bad that, if He didn't come back and stop it, all humanity would disappear from the earth. The devil would win. He would cause us to blow ourselves off the planet.

So what is God's effort against Satan? Well, let's see. It's the sacrifice of Christ to pay for our past sins so we can't be accused. Right? That's one thing that happens. And it is the church – an army of people who are faithful to God, even if it means dying for Him. That's the kind of commitment we don't think about when we enlist, but becomes obvious as we go along. Remember it in Revelation 12:11?

**Revelation 12:11** – *And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.*

And so that brings us to this point of truth: The church is an army. In God's eyes they are His army. Notice what He says in Revelation 12 again. John said he saw:

**V-1-6** – *...a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. He said: She was pregnant and crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. Then he saw another sign we're told – a great red dragon that drew down a third of the stars of heaven to earth with him. And he saw that dragon expectantly and greedily standing before the woman, waiting to eat the baby as soon as it was born. She gave birth to a boy, and we're told that this boy was to rule the earth – clearly a reference to Jesus Christ – and the child was miraculously caught up to God, and the woman escaped, fleeing into the wilderness. So the dragon – the devil – didn't get Jesus. And when the dragon saw that he had lost the child, he chased the woman, but she, once again, escaped on the wings of a great eagle – which is symbolic for God's protection.*

**V-17** – So, John then tells us the dragon became even more furious and went off to attack the rest of her offspring. And who would that be? Well, it says: *...on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*

So yes, the war is going on, and we need not be naïve or oblivious to it. God's church is the focus of God's love and protection. He helps us, in that way, defeat the dragon. We are His army and each of us is called to be a soldier in His army, which is the body of Christ, the church. How many scriptures have we read about the armour of God and the weapons of our warfare. It's all in there and we're going to cover every last one of them before we're done with this series. I only

mention that to impress upon you the fact that, while we might not think it's that way, to God, there is a battle going on. It's not that kind of war that we are to fight like humans fight in this world. Let's look at 2 Corinthians 10:3 and 5.

**1 Corinthians 10:3-5** – *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh – okay? No M4 rifles or F36 fighter jets. That's not the kind of weapons we have, because that's not the kind of war we fight. An M4 rifle does no good at all in the kind of battle we have to fight. For the weapons of our warfare are not flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds. What is that? Well, he explains it. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God – so that would be the lies that the devil tells, wouldn't it – arguments raised against the knowledge of God – and take every thought captive to obey Christ.*

So our weapons are to believe the truth of God and to repudiate his lies. This scripture tells us not only what kind of weapons we use, but where the battle is going to be fought. It's in our minds. So this battle is about our behavior, but it's also about more than that.

I received an email from a man recently in response to a question I asked him. Now this man...I never thought of this until just now, but because of his age, he could be considered a millennial. He's educated. He has a good job. He's married. He's in the Church of God, but he doesn't think like most of the people that you and I know as millennials. Most of the millennials I know, I really like, so I'm not ragging on them. I'm just saying that, just because of your age, it doesn't necessarily mean that you fall into a category created by people. Here what he said: "Lately I have been pondering the philosophy/ideology that is driving the self-destruction of Western society. Since the sixties, and especially the nineties, proponents of post-modernism and Christian theory have weaseled their ideas into the social consciousness of Western culture, and are trying to install their ideas in the place of the institutions God has given us, namely marriage and the family. They've already destroyed the idea of marriage to most people in Western culture and I fear the family is not far behind." You know, we just finished a series on the fundamentals of marriage – the organizing principles of it – as our attempt to maintain those principles out in the open. Then he continues: "This has especially come up lately with the post-modernists critical theorists using the pandemic and racial unrest to push their radical ideas to destroy the family. For the last twenty years or so, they would promote alternative concepts to a family, but now they are arguing that the family is a racist institution, is oppressive, and should be abolished. The more they are able to destroy the family, the harder it is for us to relate to God, especially if people start seeing Him as an oppressor." Then he makes this observation: "If you were in Satan's shoes, and you knew that God would forgive any sin that mankind repented of, how could you win? He has to get us to reject God by destroying our ability to relate to Him and making us reject Him by believing we are right and God is wrong, or seeing Him as our oppressor instead of our Redeemer."

So why did I read this to you? Well, because when we say the battleground is in our minds, it

isn't just about living a godly behavior out in our lives. It's about retaining God's values in our hearts. Very important! We're going to go into this a lot more later. In the weeks to come, we're going to delve deeper into all of this.

So, did you hear anything new today? If you've been a Christian for a long time, it's quite likely you didn't, but we have to set the stage so that the whole point of this series has to be set in its context before we can understand it. Otherwise, when we get to the point of the series, it won't make sense to you.

So, okay, that's it for enlisting in the right army – the very first step. Next time we'll talk about boot camp – fundamental training for Christian warfare.

Don't forget to check out our Website and look for that series on *Marriage – the Organizing Principles*.

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.