

War Zone

Part 1 – What War?

ILLUS – It's been estimated that between 1945 and 1989, around 20 million people were killed in 91 wars. In the same book, (also 1945 and 1989) it lists 208 coups and revolutions. One country (Bolivia) had 192 coups between 1825 and 1981.

Ever since God created this planet, it's been a war zone – and right now we're in the middle of a battle.

This is the first in a series I've entitled War Zone – and we're going to examine what the Bible says about this amazing battle that we're in.

But before we start, I want to warn you, you'll need to do some thinking.

There's a lot of information about this war in the Bible, and we're going to be moving fairly quickly.

Today we'll establish a foundation from God's Word, so this message is called What War?

We're asking, "What war?"

And why is there a war?

Ezek 28:11-19 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, (12) "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. (13) You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. (14) You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. (15) You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. (16) By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. (17) Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you. (18) You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore I brought fire from your midst; it devoured you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. (19) All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; you have become a horror, and shall be no more forever.'""

This is an interesting passage of Scripture.

But who is it talking about? There are three possible interpretations for these verses.

The Literal Interpretation

This interpretation says that Ezekiel was talking about a literal man – the king of Tyre.

That's okay – much of what the prophets in the Bible said applied to the people of their time.

Unfortunately, there are some things that couldn't possibly apply to the king of Tyre.

For instance, the king of Tyre wasn't in the Garden of Eden.

So that leads us to:-

The Historical Interpretation

Verse 13 it says, "You were in Eden, the garden of God."

Obviously, unless the king of Tyre was a few thousand years old and had somehow survived the great Flood, he couldn't have been in the garden of Eden.

So another possibility is that this passage is talking the first man – Adam.

He was in Eden and God drove him out because of his sin.

Ezek 28:15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.

But as we'll see, not everything here applies to Adam either – so that leads us to:-

The Spiritual Interpretation

Verse 14 says, “You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.”

ILLUS – Now what's a cherub? Most of us probably think of a cherub as being a cute little baby angel. It's got a pudgy little face, wide innocent eyes, curly hair, and flaps around naked with a couple of teeny-weeny little wings.

Wrong! A cherub is an angelic guardian, a very powerful angel.

So who is this passage of Scripture talking about?

There were four persons in Eden – God (it's not Him), Adam (it's not him), Eve (it's not her).

That leaves only one person.

Who was in the garden of Eden with God, used to be perfect, and was an anointed cherub? Satan.

And in this passage of Scripture we see in symbolic language an account of the circumstances that led to Satan's downfall.

Let's note some things:

- We're talking about someone who had a very high standing with God [“anointed cherub ... you were seal of perfection ... full of wisdom ... perfect in beauty ... on the holy mountain of God ...”]
- He was not created as an evil being but became that way [You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created – v 15]
- He was removed from his favoured position because of pride and rebellion [Your heart was lifted up – v 17]

A parallel passage in Isaiah 14:3-17 gives a similar account of the downfall of Satan and how he was cast down from his high position because of his rebellion against God.

In Isaiah, he is called by his original name: Lucifer.

Then when he rebelled against God, he became Satan, which actually means adversary.

Here are two other Scriptures that give us the same insight into Satan's history.

2 Pet 2:4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

Jude 6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;

What these verses clearly point to is that once, long ago, there was no Satan and there were no evil angels.

But there was a rebellion in heaven against the authority of Almighty God.

This is confirmed in:

Rev 12:7-9 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, (8) but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. (9) So

the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Who does it say is the dragon? (v 9) The serpent, the devil, Satan.

Let's read further.

Rev 12:12-17 "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." (13) Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. (14) But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. (15) So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. (16) But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. (17) And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Whatever your views on end times these verses are quite clear in their pronouncement that there is a spiritual war of astronomical proportions taking place right now.

And like it or not, **you** are in it.

So there's a great war that's taking place right now, and there are no innocent bystanders.

You might be thinking: "But what's this war got to do with me? I never asked to be in it. Why does the devil want to fight me?"

Why You're In This War

1. Made in God's image

Gen 1:27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Every person on this planet bears the image of God.

No matter how distorted and marred it may have become every human was made in the image of God.

But Satan is God's absolute enemy – he hates God.

So he also hates whatever is made in the image of God – that's you and me.

That's right; you are a target of his hatred simply because you are human.

Satan hates every human being on the planet.

If Satan were to have a Mission Statement, this is what it would be:

To steal, and to kill, and to destroy. (John 10:10)

That's the devil's Mission Statement; that's his plan and purpose for every human being.

You don't need to read your Bible to confirm this; all you've got to do is read your newspaper, watch the news.

Everywhere around us, there is crime, lives destroyed by drugs and alcohol, there are broken families, there is hatred, mistrust.

This is all evidence that Satan is implementing his Mission Statement without mercy.

Thank God for the rest of that verse in John 10, because Jesus' Mission Statement is that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly.

There's another important reason why Satan hates us.

2. You are a threat

If you are a Christian, you are a very real threat to Satan's kingdom.

Rev 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Rev 19:19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

Rev 13:1,4-6 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. (4) So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (5) And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. (6) Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

Rev 13:7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Are you getting the message?

Satan makes war with the saints – God's people.

Why? Because if we are faithfully fulfilling the Mission that God has given to us in Matt 28:19-20, we are a threat to his kingdom.

He doesn't want us to get serious about the Mission.

He certainly doesn't want us to fulfil its goal in making disciples of all nations.

And so, he will do everything in his power to prevent that.

That's why he not only hates all humans, but he has specifically declared war on active, obedient Christians.

Do you want to prevail against the devil?

If you do, here are some things that you need to know.

What You Need To Know

1. The battle is spiritual

It's not a physical battle.

Your family might drive you nuts, your neighbours might want to do you harm, but they're not the real enemy.

Eph 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Our real enemies are evil spiritual powers; that makes it a spiritual battle.

So it's not a battle with weapons like guns and tanks and bombs; we're not fighting people.

We can't go out there and buy a gun that'll shoot the devil.

This battle is taking place in the spiritual realm and therefore you have to use spiritual weapons.

2. There's no neutral territory

ILLUS – Just imagine you're sitting in your home, and you hear a knock-knock at the front door. You call out, "Who's there?" And a voice answers, "Me." "Who's me?" you ask. "I'm the devil," comes the reply. Then there's an evil laugh. "Mwa-ha-ha-ha." You ask, "What do you want?" And the devil says, "I've come to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." And you say, "But I'm Swiss." "You're what?" says the devil. "I'm Swiss," you say. "You know, neutral." The devil says, "Oh, okay, I guess I'll just go somewhere else then."

How likely is that?

You might think you can be neutral, but it's impossible.

You can't sit on the fence; you've got to be on one side or the other.

Mat 12:30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

Jesus was saying that if you're not actively on His side, you are one of His opponents.

You are His enemy.

The distinction between the opposing sides is so sharp that Jesus gave this warning.

Mat 10:34-36 Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

(35) For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; (36) and a man's enemies will be those of his own household.

What!!! Is that gentle Jesus meek and mild speaking?

Every person is required to make a decision – to make a choice as to whose side he will fight.

God's side – or the devil's side?

You're on one or the other – if you haven't decided to follow Jesus, you are already following the devil.

3. It's a battle for supremacy

It's all about supremacy over the hearts of people.

Rev 13:7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Satan has authority to make war with the saints (Christians) and to try to overcome us if he can.

Overcome! What does that mean? – “to be victorious, both in military and legal combat ... surpass, overcome, be stronger ... presupposes achievement in physical or spiritual combat.¹”

This battle is all about rulership; who's going to be the boss in your life?

Becoming a Christian is just the beginning of your real fight against evil – because Satan has declared war on you.

He's still fighting for supremacy in your life.

He has been granted the right to make war on Christians, to try and gain power over us.

But if you have not submitted your life to Christ, he does not need to make war on you, because he already has authority over you.

He's still going to try and mess up your life as much as possible.

But guess what? Satan might have declared war on us – but we've declared war on him too.

Rom 8:37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

More than conquerors is one Greek word: *hypernikao* – it means to super-conquer.

If we wanted to give that a literal translation, we might say “Yet in all these things we super-conquer through Him who loved us.”

The word means “to come off more than victorious, to gain a surpassing victory²”

It was a term used to denote complete and utter victory.

So what does super-conquer mean in practical terms?

ILLUS – How would it be if you were in the ring with the World Heavyweight Boxing champion? You're in one corner. He's in the other. And you're thinking, “What in the world am I doing here? I'm gonna get killed!” Even if, by some strange accident, you managed to win, you'd still come out seriously hurt. Then just before the bell rings, there's an announcement: The authorities have agreed to let someone else fight in

¹ NIDNTT Vol 1, p 650

² Wuest, Kenneth *Word Studies In The Greek New Testament* Vol 1 Romans p149

your place, and here he comes. The crowd goes nuts. He's 8 feet tall, his arms are bigger than the boxing champion's legs, he's got a chest that's absolutely unbelievable. He steps into the ring, the bell dings, and he walks towards the champ. Now it's the champ's turn to think, "What in the world am I doing here? I'm gonna get killed!" One punch, and the champ is down and out for the count. The newcomer walks back over to your corner and says, "There you go, little fellah. I got him for ya."

That's what it means to super-conquer.

A conqueror is someone who comes back from battle with black eyes, a broken arm, and so on.

But a super-conqueror is where Jesus fights the battle and we come back untouched, unscathed.

So let's finish with three important points.

1. We're not on the winning team – we're on the won team (W-O-N – past tense)
2. We're not waiting to see who is going to win – it's already settled.
3. We're not trying to gain the victory – we're enforcing the victory in our lives, in this world