

1. The Hidden World Beyond Our Reality **Spiritual Warfare: Overcoming Evil**

YouTube Video Link: <https://youtu.be/v56Y1tev8uk>

The Unseen Realm

As many of you know, I grew up a fisherman, the son of a fisherman, from the port of Harwich on the east coast of England. I learned to respect the sea, and although I do not miss the hard work of fishing, I miss being beside the water. In ancient times, the sea was synonymous with the unknown and the unfathomable, and for good reason. Did you know that recent estimates show that while our oceans cover around 70 % of the Earth's surface, only a tiny fraction of it has been explored? An estimated 80% of our oceans have not been mapped with high-resolution technology, and vast areas of our seas remain unseen by humans.

Just as there is much we do not see or understand in the natural world, even more remains unseen in the spiritual realm. Nevertheless, it affects us in significant ways. The Scriptures awaken us to this truth. Throughout this study, we will gain a deeper awareness of spiritual realities and of our authority in Christ to witness God's kingdom manifesting in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

Seeing Beyond the Physical Realm

In my younger years, I was a commercial dragnet fisherman working with my father off the coast of England. We occasionally came across unexploded mines left in the shipping channel from World War 2. These magnetic mines lay on the seabed and were unseen but still posed a threat. We once discovered the largest of the Second World War German magnetic mines, a sizeable 12-foot-long mine still in good condition, containing 1500 pounds of high explosive. Designed to split ships in half with an upward blast, we had pulled it up in our nets. It swung just inches above our deck as the waves rolled the boat. It was made of stainless steel and appeared brand new. The chains in front of our net had pulled it from the mud in one of our familiar fishing grounds. Once we removed the mine from our net, we had to carefully get it over the side without incident, a delicate task to be sure! We called the Coastguard to come out so that they could detonate it. Later, we heard that when the tide receded, before it could be detonated, people were walking on the secluded beach and wondering what this 12-foot monstrosity was that was standing on the beach at low tide! The bomb disposal squad secured it with a long rope and, at the next high tide, towed it out to deeper water and blew it up.

Just because you may not be aware of something dangerous doesn't mean it cannot affect you. Electricity in a light plug is invisible, but if you stick your fingers in a live socket, you'll soon realize that there are powerful forces that are unseen yet dangerous. Natural gas is odorless and invisible, and if there is an accumulation of it in your house, it can be deadly. Gas companies add a dreadful smell so that we can detect if there's a leak.

I use the unexplored depths of the sea as an analogy for the unseen spiritual world. There is a spiritual realm that is just as tangible as the world we inhabit. I believe it to be more substantial than what is visible. Why do I say that? Because the world we live in is temporary and fleeting, a

shadow of what is to come. Some spiritual realities, though unseen, can cause consequences in the physical realm. Jesus spent His ministry undoing the effects of spiritual bondage, bringing healing and freedom to those who were oppressed. As you and I become more aware of spiritual realities, we can learn to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and exercise authority in Christ over this unseen realm.

In the Old Testament book of 2 Kings, there is a story about a king reigning in Aram who was furious because his actions and intentions were somehow being revealed to the armies of Israel. He could not understand how Israel knew about the plots he had devised (2 Kings 6:8-10). He suspected that he had a spy among his leaders. The truth was that Israel had Elisha, the prophet of God, who knew the very words that the King of Aram spoke in secret to his generals (2 Kings 6:11-12). Elisha was acutely aware of the unseen realms and maintained an intimate and powerful prayer life that provided him with this unique insight. When the King of Aram heard of Elisha's gift, he was so enraged that he sent his army to the town where Elisha lived, hoping to kill or capture him. The Book of 2 Kings reveals how Elisha's servant had his eyes opened to the spiritual forces at play in this event.

¹⁴Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. ¹⁵When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. ¹⁶"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them" ¹⁷And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." **Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.** ¹⁸As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, "Strike these people with blindness." So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked (2 Kings 6:14-18).

When Elisha's servant observed the size of the Aramean army surrounding the city, he began to lose heart. Things appeared hopeless when viewed solely from an earthly perspective. However, all was not as it seemed. Spiritual forces of God encircled Elisha and Gehazi, his servant, which the young novice was unaware of. Elisha prayed that God would open his servant's eyes to the unseen spiritual realm around them. Suddenly, at Elisha's prayer, he saw beyond this physical world to the reality of the spiritual forces of God that had previously been hidden from him, revealing angelic beings who were far more powerful than the Aramean army. The enemies of Israel were defeated in one display of God's power in response to Elisha's prayer. Believers in Christ, as servants of the Living God, also have angelic hosts to serve us:

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14).

How much do you look to heavenly help when you are in need? God sends angels to serve us even before we come to faith in Christ and, of course, afterward as well. The Scriptures indicate that angels assist and protect those who will inherit salvation. This shows that God is working ahead of time on behalf of those who choose to follow Him. Even when we were babies, the Scriptures indicate that we have an unseen protector, an angel who watches over us. Jesus spoke about this:

See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in Heaven (Matthew 18:10).

Have you ever been aware of God's supernatural protection in your life? Briefly share your story.

We do not pray to angels for assistance; instead, our prayers are directed to the Father. Angelic beings receive their direction and orders from the Lord. Faith in God connects us to this unseen realm, just as faith opened the servant's eyes and prompted Elisha to reach out to God in prayer. I believe that all Christians have an angel watching over them (Acts 12:15) who is sent to serve the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14). Many Christians resemble Elisha's servant, unaware of God's power and supernatural resources. Most believers have a limited understanding of this unseen realm. We tend to focus on the material world and the mundane. We are, for lack of a better word, "preoccupied" with the minutiae of daily life. How often do we reach out to God in prayer and trust Him for divine resources and intervention? Although God is sovereign and all-powerful, He chooses to partner with His people through prayer and faith in God.

Before coming to Christ, an old friend from my hometown of Harwich in Essex, England, was involved in occult spiritual matters. Brian was unaware of the dangers he invited into his home. After his family played with an Ouija board a few times, they began to hear voices and see spirits. His children became accustomed to seeing disembodied spirits that deceived them into believing they were spirit guides. The family knew the spirits by name and were deceived into thinking that "white magic" was harmless until one night when chaos erupted, and demons began to manifest to them. They were terrified and came to realize they were engaged in something very dark and far from harmless. The demons they encountered in their home horrified them all.

These manifestations continued all day until Brian found the address of the local evangelical church pastor, Harry Hughes, and began walking to his house for help. During the journey, he heard audible voices warning him, "If you go to his house, we will kill you all." Concerned for his family's safety, Brian disregarded the threatening voices and went to see Harry Hughes. Harry arrived and cleansed his house, praying and asserting authority over every evil spirit within their home while removing all occult tokens present. He then led the family in prayers of repentance and renounced every evil hold that dark spirits had over them. They concluded their time of worship by dedicating their home to the glorification of Christ and God's Word. When Brian and his family committed their lives to Christ and repented, renounced, and abandoned all involvement in the occult, their lives were completely renewed, and no demonic activity occurred in their house after that moment. This incident opened their eyes to spiritual realities and changed the direction of their entire family.

How Does the Unseen Realm Impact Us?

In a later study, we will discuss the protective armor of God, which is given to believers in Christ to aid them in their spiritual warfare against the enemy. For now, let's focus on the natural "fence or hedge" (Job 1:10), the barrier that prevents the enemy from making inroads into people's lives. When Satan challenged God to remove Job's protection so that he could provoke and test him, he stated:

¹⁰"Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has?"

You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. ¹¹But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face" (Job 1:10-11).

In this instance, we observe how Satan sought to undermine the testimony of God's faithfulness in the life of a righteous man named Job. For reasons unknown, God allowed the hedge of protection to be lifted and granted Satan permission to attack Job. Of course, this plan of the enemy backfired, and God did reward Job, although Job did suffer loss. We are reminded of the authority and omniscience of God in this story. The enemy strategizes ways to breach the natural barrier that safeguards our souls from fear, bondage, and servitude to demonic forces. To protect us, there exists a "spiritual hedge" of protection placed around us. Even though we may not be aware of it, that does not make it any less real. When we dabble in the occult or drugs, this "hedge" is gradually eroded or cut back, allowing one to see and experience things that are typically hidden.

Our enemy, Satan, grants occult power to those who obey his whims. This power can be alluring to those who seek it, but it always exacts a price. Every form of evil supernatural power carries a hook, ensnaring individuals in satanic bondage. When we allow the enemy to pursue his will, oppression and darkness inevitably follow. Drugs that induce altered states of reality are another means of undermining the spiritual barrier.

Satan never offers such experiences without drawing those searching in darkness closer to him and ensnaring them in fear. If we are open to being used by God, He empowers His people to operate in supernatural power. However, when God directs His people to act under His authority, there is never a hook. To be used by God brings joy to the heart. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is always liberty and freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17), unlike with the enemy.

Chip Ingram, author of *The Invisible War*, states, "There is a visible and an invisible world that intersects, and we live in that intersection."¹ When people are ill or even dying, they sometimes perceive things in the unseen realm.

[Share a time when you sensed something in the unseen realm. Have you ever been conscious of a spiritual battle where you needed to assert your spiritual authority or call upon Jesus?](#)

Paul the Apostle witnessed and experienced numerous supernatural events as he lived as a Spirit-led believer in Christ. One such experience he shares with us is:

¹I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell (2 Corinthians 12:1-4).

¹ Chip Ingram, *The Invisible War*, Published by Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI. Page 39.

Paul discusses an experience he had with the Lord. He mentions that he isn't even sure if he was in his body when he was taken to the third Heaven or Paradise. Genesis 1:1 states that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The term "heavens" is plural and raises a significant question: If God's abode is in the third Heaven, where are the first and second heavens? What happens there?

I do not believe that the third heaven exists in a distant galaxy. It is not a physical place like Earth. Some say the first heaven comprises the physical heavens of galaxies, stars, and planets, while the second heaven is the unseen spiritual world that intersects with Earth. There is no way to prove this point purely through Scripture. However, what is clear is that there exists an unseen realm beyond the five physical senses. Call it what you will- the first or second heaven. I think it suffices to understand it as a different dimension of space-time, where, if God were to open our spiritual eyes like the servant of Elisha, we would see powerful angelic beings and perhaps evil demonic powers seeking to influence humans to do their bidding.

In another place, Paul the Apostle wrote to the church in Ephesus, warning about a spirit he referred to as the prince of the power of the air:

The Prince of the Power of the Air

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:1-2; emphasis added).

Who is the prince of the power of the air? Why do you think he is called this? We can logically assume that Paul is discussing the unseen world from which Satan carries out his work of deceiving humanity. The devil is referred to as a spirit with the rank of a prince, inhabiting a spiritual dimension of power in "the air," an atmosphere or realm where he is active. In another instance, Jesus calls Satan “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31), and the apostle John tells us that the physical world in which we live is under satanic control: “We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Some believe that Satan resides in a very real place called Hell, but I think that he is not yet confined to that awful place. Revelation 12:7-13 speaks of a time that I believe is still in the future when there will be a war in the heavenly realms; it will be a time when Satan loses and is cast down to Earth.

⁷Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. ¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down (Revelation 12:7-10).

The context of the passage suggests that he has been accusing us before God up to now, which aligns with the earlier passage in Job we read. This spiritual realm serves as the setting for a battle

between God's angelic beings and Satan's demons and princes. The conflict centers on supremacy over Earth and every human born. There's a war for your soul, and Satan prefers that we remain unaware of this ongoing battle. His influence remains unchecked if we are ignorant and oblivious to the spiritual realm, as well as to heaven and hell.

The English author C.S. Lewis wrote a book titled “The Screwtape Letters.” It is fictional in format and focuses on Christian theological issues, primarily addressing the temptation tactics of the evil one. In this imaginative work, Lewis writes from the first-person perspective of a senior demon named Screwtape, who is tasked with training a junior demon named Wormwood to prevent men and women from finding Christ. If they do come to Christ, the trainee demon's role is to obstruct the Christian's ability to enact anything meaningful that would impact Satan's kingdom. In the preface of his book, Lewis articulates his thesis, stating:

People can fall into two equal and opposite errors about demons. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe in them and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist and a magician with the same delight.²

On page thirty-one, Uncle Screwtape writes to the junior demon Wormwood, saying:

I wonder you should ask me whether it is essential to keep the patient [the person that the demon is seeking to destroy] in ignorance of your own existence. That question, at least for the present phase of the struggle, has been answered by the high command. Our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves. Of course, this has not always been so. We are faced with a cruel dilemma. When people disbelieve in our existence, we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism, and we make no magicians.

On the other hand, when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and skeptics...I do not think that you will have much difficulty in keeping the patient in the dark. The fact that “devils” are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that (it is an old textbook method of confusing them), he, therefore, cannot believe in you.³

For those who do not believe in Christ, Satan tries by every means to prevent them from receiving and ultimately responding to God's Word by believing the Gospel. For Christians, Satan aims to keep us unaware of God's power and authority to overcome all the enemy's power (Mark 16:17-18). Scripture refers to Satan as the god of this age:

The **god of this age** has **blinded the minds of unbelievers**, so that **they cannot see** the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The enemy employs various strategies to keep you blind to the gospel and unaware of God's power within you and through you to impact this world. By our actions, we choose whom we listen to

² C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Published by HarperSanFrancisco, Zondervan Publishing House. Page IX

³Ibid, Page 31.

and obey: Satan or the Lord. If we continue to listen to Satan's voice, with his doubts and unbelief, we will not live fruitful lives for God.

What methods does Satan use today to obscure or dull the understanding of unbelievers? Has he employed any of these strategies in your life? Share with one another.

God's Protection Over His People

The Unseen Realm is also where God's angels are at work. There is a very interesting story in the Book of Numbers about a man named Balaam. Balaam was a man capable of entering the spiritual realm and pronouncing blessings or curses upon people. When the Israelites traveled from Egypt to the land that God had promised them, they had to pass through the land of Moab, whose king was Balak. Balak believed he needed help to overcome Israel, so he summoned Balaam, the seer, to curse Israel so he could defeat them. God initially instructed Balaam not to go, but Balaam refused to accept this, swayed by the lure of greed and the promise of reward. Eventually, God permitted him to go, with the condition that he was only to speak what God would tell him. However, on the journey, his heart began to dwell on the prospect of a great reward and how he might attain it (2 Peter 2:15). On the way, God sent an angel to confront Balaam. Here's where it gets interesting! It says that God opened the mouth of his donkey so it could speak to Balaam! When the donkey carrying Balaam saw the danger posed by the angel ahead on the path, it tried to steer Balaam away, crushing his foot against a wall in the process.

²⁶Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or the left. ²⁷When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat her with his staff. ²⁸Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?" ²⁹Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now." ³⁰The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" "No," he said. ³¹**Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD** standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown (Numbers 22:26-31; emphasis added).

I know it is an unusual passage of Scripture, but is it hard to believe that the creator of the universe can allow an animal to speak back to its master? And perhaps even weirder, Balaam talked back to his donkey! Maybe he imagined that he must be hearing things! No one can read this story and say that God does not have a sense of humor! It was merciful of God to allow Balaam's animal to speak a warning to him. In this case, even though Balaam might have considered himself spiritually sensitive, his greed had dulled his spiritual senses to the point that God used a donkey to speak to him. I hope I never become that deaf to the Lord's instruction. I hope there are video replays in heaven, Hah!

Did you know that animals are often spiritually sensitive? I'm sure that all of us with dogs or cats have noticed our pets looking around the room at something invisible to the physical eye. Animals are known to sense a spiritual presence. They may be observing angels who continuously watch

over us: **The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them (Psalm 34:7).**

Believers in Christ are told that God's incomparably great power is available for us to use under His direction and guidance (Ephesians 1:17-19). So, why do we not see more of God's power at work among His people? The Book of James tells us, **"You do not have, because you do not ask God" (James 4:2).** God waits and longs for His church to operate in more of His power. Satan fears God's people relying on the Father through prayer more than anything else. We need to have hearts that are sensitive to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to move and direct us as we go about our daily lives. It is so easy to react to situations and to be deaf to the instruction of the Lord instead of asking God what He is doing. In everything we experience, we should try to discern whether we are encountering something of a spiritual nature. In these days, where there is so much occult and demonic activity, we must learn to listen to the Father.

The Lord exemplified a life of obedience to the Father while seeking to bless those around Him. Our challenge lies in recognizing and understanding what God is doing within us and in our surroundings. The more we grow in our dependence on God's Word and the Holy Spirit, the better we can overcome the adversities the enemy seeks to impose on our lives and those around us. The enemy's primary tactics against us are fear, deception, manipulation, and temptation to sin. We must decide which voice to listen to and obey: Satan's or Christ's. Jesus reminds us that Satan is a defeated foe.

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

Where was Satan defeated? At the Cross of Christ. What Satan believed was a victory turned out to be his greatest defeat. He who knew no sin became sin in our place (2 Corinthians 5:21). We have entered into His victory over Satan through our faith in Christ. John the Apostle wrote, **"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8).** We, who belong to Christ, are no longer in bondage to Satan and sin. We are delivered and set free from servitude to dark, unseen spiritual forces. Paul the Apostle writes, **"For he [God] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13).** An unseen world intersects with this one, but we, who belong to Christ, are no longer under Satan's dominion—Christ has overcome him at the Cross. What a triumph! Jesus said, **"I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Revelation 1:18).** Let that resonate in your spirit!

Prayer: Father, I ask for a deeper awareness of what You are doing on Earth. May my perspective of the world align with the lens of Your Word and protect me from unseen evil forces that seek my downfall. Let Your kingdom come on Earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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