

## 1. The Unseen Realm

### The War Against Satan and Demons

To introduce our topic, I would like to start with one of my fishing stories from my younger days as a commercial fisherman with my father outside the east coast port of Harwich, Essex, England. The net we were towing along the seabed caught on something substantial. Inch by inch, we heaved up the net with our two-ton winch straining at the weight. Our fishing boat, the *Why Worry*, leaned heavily over as she creaked and groaned with the derrick and mast taking the strain. When the end of the net came to the surface, there was the biggest of the Second World War German Magnetic mines, a sizeable 12-foot-long mine still in good condition with 1500 pounds of high explosive. Designed to blow ships entirely in half by the upward blast, it was now swinging to and fro just inches above our deck as the waves rolled the boat.

With a heavy clunk, we rested the mine on the deck. It was made of stainless steel and looked brand new. The chains in front of our net had dragged it out from the mud in one of our familiar fishing grounds, a place we fished countless times. Once we cut the mine out of our net, we had to get it over the side again without incident, a delicate task since it could explode. We had heard of boats disappearing along our coastline but never knew what had happened to them.

With the whole boat leaning over, we gently lowered it back into the sea and carefully cut through the rope loop, releasing it from our vessel. Then to our amazement, the mine stood up in the water, the top part of it still showing! We had not realized how shallow the water was and how little water was under our boat where we let it go. We called the Coastguard to come and detonate the mine. They put it on a long rope on the next high tide, towed it out to deeper water, and blew it up. We heard later that when the tide had gone out, people were walking on the secluded beach and wondering what this 12-foot monstrosity was that was standing up on the beach at low tide!

### Seeing Beyond the Physical Realm

Like trawling a net in waters where two world wars were fought, some things in life can be unseen but deadly. Just because you may be unaware of something dangerous, it doesn't mean it cannot affect you. Electricity in a light plug is unseen, but stick your fingers in a live socket, and you'll soon realize that there are powerful things that are unseen but dangerous. Natural gas is odorless and invisible, and if there is a lot of it in your house, it can utterly destroy your home. The gas companies add a horrible smell so that we'll know if there's a leak.

The unexploded mine brought home the truth that just as we had gone over that familiar fishing ground again and again with no mishap, there are some things in life that one cannot see but which can affect our lives in ways we don't realize. There is a spiritual realm that is just as real as the world we live in. I believe it to be more real than what is seen. This world is only temporary and passing, a shadow of things to come. Some things that happen are spiritual and unseen but have consequences in the physical realm.

In the Old Testament book of 2 Kings, there is the story of a king reigning in Aram who was angry because his actions and intentions were somehow being made known to the armies of

Israel. He could not understand how Israel knew everything he was doing and anything he plotted (2 Kings 6:8-10). He thought that he had a spy among his leaders. His problem 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 had an intimate and powerful prayer life that gave him this unique insight. When the King of Aram found out about Elisha's gift, he was so enraged that he sent his army to the town where Elisha lived, hoping to kill or capture him.

<sup>14</sup>Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. <sup>15</sup>When 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. <sup>16</sup>"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them" <sup>17</sup>And 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.** <sup>18</sup>As 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 looked at the size of the army of Aram surrounding the city, he began to lose heart. Things looked hopeless when seen only from an earthly perspective. However, all was not as it seemed. There were spiritual forces of God around Elisha and Gehazi, his servant, which the young novice to the things of God was unaware of. Elisha prayed that God would open his servant's eyes to the unseen spiritual realm around them. All of a sudden, at the prayer of Elisha, he saw beyond this physical world to the reality of the spiritual forces of God previously hidden from him, and he saw angelic beings of God that were much more powerful than the army of Aram. The servant saw the troops of heaven protecting and surrounding the prophet of God, available to serve him in whatever way the prophet prayed. The enemies of Israel were defeated with one display of God's power at the prayer of Elisha. We, too, as servants of the Living God, have angelic hosts protecting us:

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

How much do we use or value heavenly help when we are in need? God sends angels to serve us even before we come to faith in Christ and, of course, afterward, too. The Scripture is written in the future tense. Angels help and protect those who *will inherit salvation*. That means that God is working ahead of time on behalf of those who choose to follow Him. Even when we are babies, Scripture indicates that we have an unseen protector, an angel that watches over us:

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).

We do not pray to angels to help us; instead, our prayer is directed to the Father. Angelic beings take their direction and orders from the Father. Faith in God connects us to this unseen realm, just as it is faith that opened the servant's eyes and caused Elisha to reach out to God in prayer. I

believe that all of us who are Christians have an angel watching over us (Acts 12:15), sent to serve the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14).

**Question 1. Have you ever felt that something invisible was protecting you through something you experienced? Share with one another any stories that you may have.**

Many Christians are like Elisha's servant, unaware of God's power and supernatural resources. Many believers in the West have no room for the supernatural and are oblivious to angelic beings and demonic spirits in the unseen realm. How often do we miss seeing God's power displayed, and Satan's kingdom displaced because we do not reach out to God in prayer and believe 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 he came to Christ, Brian Gough, an old friend from my hometown of Harwich in Essex, England, used to be involved in spiritual things of an occult nature. He was ignorant of the dangers he invited into his home. His family began to hear voices and see spirits in their home after playing with an Ouija board a few times. His children became accustomed to seeing disembodied spirits who deceived them into thinking they were spirit guides. The family knew the spirits by name and were duped into believing that "white magic" was harmless until one night, all hell broke loose, and demons started to manifest to them. They were frightened and realized they were involved with something very dark and not at all harmless. The things they saw and heard in their home horrified them all.

These manifestations went on all day until Brian looked up the address of the local evangelical church pastor, Harry Hughes, and started walking to his house for help. On the way, he heard audible voices telling him, "If you go to his house, we will kill you all." Concerned for his family's safety, Brian ignored the threatening voices and went and saw Harry Hughes. Harry came and cleansed his house, praying and taking authority over every evil spirit in their home and removing every occult token there. He then led the family in prayers of repentance and renouncing every evil hold that dark evil spirits had on his family. They finished their time of worship by dedicating their home to the worship of God and His Word. When Brian and his family committed their lives to Christ and repented, renounced, and abandoned all involvement in the occult, their lives were wholly renewed, and no demonic activity occurred in their house from that moment.

**Question 2. Have you ever had a supernatural experience where you sensed great evil? How did you respond?**

### **How Does the Unseen Realm Affect Us?**

In a later study, we'll talk about the protective armor of God, given to believers in Christ to help them against the warfare of the enemy, but for now, let's talk about the natural "fence or hedge" (Job 1:10), the barrier keeping the enemy from making inroads into people's lives.

**6One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. 7The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the**

LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." <sup>8</sup>Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." <sup>9</sup>"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. <sup>10</sup>**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. <sup>11</sup>But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." <sup>12</sup>The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger" (Job 1:6-12 Emphasis mine).

In Job's case, Satan wanted to destroy his testimony of God's faithfulness, and for reasons not known, God allowed the hedge of protection to be removed and gave permission for Satan to attack Job. The enemy strategizes how to break down that natural barrier that protects our soul from fear, bondage, and servitude to demonic forces. When we play around with the occult, this "hedge" is gradually eroded or cut back, and one can see and experience things that are generally not seen.

Our enemy, Satan, gives occult power to those obedient to his whim. Occult power can be attractive to those seeking such things, but it never comes without a price. Every form of evil supernatural power comes with a hook, trapping one to satanic bondage. When we give room to the enemy to do his will, oppression and darkness are always the results. Drugs that promote alternate states of reality are another means of eroding the spiritual fence or barrier.

Satan never gives such experiences without bringing those searching in the darkness closer to him and bound in fear. If we are open to being used by God, He will enable His people to move in supernatural power, but when God moves His people to act under His authority, there is never a hook. It brings joy to the heart to be useful for God. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is always liberty and freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17), unlike the enemy.

Chip Ingram, the author of a book called *"The Invisible War,"* states, "There is a visible and an invisible world that intersects, and we live in that intersection."<sup>1</sup> When people are sick and sometimes dying, they see things in the unseen realm.

**Question 3. Share an occasion when you were by the bedside of a loved one that saw something in the unseen realm, or have you heard a story of someone who saw something supernatural?**

Svetlana Stalin, the daughter of Josef Stalin, the evil leader of Russia from 1922-1953, accompanied her father at death's door and said that she would never again sit alongside an unbeliever who was dying. She said that he went into hell, kicking and screaming. Voltaire was said to have died crying out in torment. Speaking for those who do know God, C.M. Ward said, "No Christian has ever been known to recant on his deathbed."

Paul the apostle saw and experienced many supernatural occurrences as he walked as a Spirit-led believer in Christ. One such experience he tells us about:

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

<sup>1</sup>I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. <sup>2</sup>I 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. <sup>3</sup>And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— <sup>4</sup>was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell (2 Corinthians 12:1-4).

Paul is talking about something that he witnessed. He declares that he doesn't even know if he was in his body at the time when he was caught up to the third Heaven or Paradise. Genesis 1:1 says that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The word *heavens* are in the plural and raise a big question: If the abode of God is in the third heaven, where are the first and second heavens? What goes on there?

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

In another place, Paul the apostle wrote to the Church at Ephesus, warning of a spirit he called 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).

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 talking about the unseen world from where Satan does his work of deceiving man. 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 in which he is active. In another place, 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 inhabits a very real place called hell, but I think that he is not yet in hell. Revelation 12:7-13 speaks of a time that, I believe, is still in the future where there will be a war in the heavenly realms and will be the time when Satan will lose and be cast down to Earth:

<sup>7</sup>Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. <sup>8</sup>But he was not strong enough, and they **lost their place in heaven**. <sup>9</sup>The 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 <sup>10</sup>Then 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 passage's context indicates that he has been accusing us before God until this point, which tallies with the passage in Job, which we read earlier. This spiritual realm is the venue of a spiritual battle between God's angelic beings and Satan's demons and princes. The struggle is for supremacy over the Earth and each person born. There's a war going on for your soul, and Satan would rather have us unaware that such a battle is taking place. His work goes unhindered if we are ignorant and oblivious of the spiritual realm, heaven, and hell.

The English author, C.S. Lewis, wrote a book entitled “*The Screwtape Letters*.” It is fictional in format, focusing on Christian theological issues, primarily about the temptation tactics of the evil one. In this imaginative book, Lewis writes in the first person as a senior demon named Screwtape, tasked with training a junior demon named Wormwood to keep men and women from finding Christ. If they do come to Christ, then the trainee demon's job is to hinder the Christian's ability to make any difference in their lives to affect Satan's kingdom. In the preface of his book, Lewis explains his thesis, saying:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which people can fall about the demons. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

For those who are not believers, Satan seeks by all means possible to keep them from receiving and ultimately responding to God’s Word by believing the Gospel. For those of us who are

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

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, Page 31.

Christians, Satan seeks to keep us unaware of God's power and authority to overcome all the power of the enemy (Mark 16:17-18). Scripture calls Satan 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).

Satan has many strategies to keep you blinded to the gospel and from knowing God's power in you and through you to impact this world. We choose by our actions whom we listen 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.

Question 4. What methods does Satan use today to blind the minds of unbelievers? Has he used any of these strategies in your life at any time?

### God's Protection for His People

The Unseen Realm is also where God's angels are at work. Balaam was a man who could move into the spiritual realm and place a curse on people. When the Israelite people were traveling from Egypt to the land that God had given them, they had to pass through the country of Moab, whose king was Balak. He was afraid he would lose any battle against Israel due to the Israelites easy victory over the Amorites. Balak felt that he needed some help to overcome Israel, so he sent for Balaam, the seer, to curse Israel so that he could defeat them. God told Balaam not to go at first, but Balaam would not hear the word *no*, and he pleaded until God said go, with the restriction that he was only to speak what God would give him. On the way, though, his heart began again to think of the promise of high reward and how he could get it (2 Peter 2:15). In God's protection of His people, He sent an angel to cut off Balaam's head. When the donkey carrying Balaam saw the danger of the angel on the path ahead, he tried to steer Balaam away, crushing his foot against a wall in the process. Balaam couldn't see the angel and beat his donkey twice by the time we enter the story:

<sup>26</sup>Then 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. <sup>27</sup>When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat her with his staff. <sup>28</sup>Then 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?" <sup>29</sup>Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now." <sup>30</sup>The 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. <sup>31</sup>**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).

I know it is a weird passage of Scripture, but is it hard to believe that the creator of the universe can allow an animal to speak back to his master as he is hitting him? Balaam was oblivious to what his donkey was doing to save his life. God opened the donkey's mouth to show Balaam how his heart had become full of greed. The Lord would not allow His people to be cursed. If he continued to give in to a spirit of greed, the Lord was ready to give His angel permission to cut

off his head. Often, like Balaam, we go headlong into situations in ministry or work where there are unseen spiritual forces at work. If we are not sensitive spiritually to God, demonic forces can influence us (Matthew 16:23). How merciful the Lord was to speak to Balaam through his donkey. Wouldn't you like to have been a fly on that wall watching the spectacle of Balaam having an angry conversation with his donkey!

This story is another example of something happening in the unseen realm humans (Balaam) were completely unaware of. It is interesting to note that the donkey was more aware of the invisible realm than Balaam was. I'm sure all of us with a dog or cat have noticed the animal looking around the room at something not seen with the physical eye. Animals are known to sense a spiritual presence. They may be looking at angels that continually watch over us that walk with the Lord.

**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 God's direction and guidance (Ephesians 1:17-19). Why do we not see more of God's power working in the people of God? 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 move in more of His power. Satan fears God's people walking in dependence on the Father through prayer more than anything.

We need to have a heart sensitive to the Holy Spirit to be moved and directed by Him as we go about our daily lives. It is so easy to react to situations and beat our donkey rather than asking God what He is doing. We turn to blaming and shaming people instead of understanding if we are going through something of a spiritual nature. These days, where there are so much occult and demonic activity, we must learn to listen to the Father. Jesus said, **"Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to me"** (John 6:45). When God speaks to our hearts, it always aligns with His word, and Jesus was and is our model in all things. He said,

**I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does (John 5:19).**

The Lord modeled a life of obedience laid down to the Father and sought to bless those around Him. That's why He could say, **"Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father"** (John 14:12). Our difficulty is knowing and seeing what God is doing in us and around us. The more we can grow in our dependency on God's Word and Holy Spirit, the more we can overcome what the enemy wants to do in our lives, families, and neighborhoods.

The enemy's main tactics against us are fear, deception, manipulation, and temptation to sin. We must choose the voice we will 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 thought was a victory was his most significant defeat. He who knew no sin *became sin* in our place (2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ's substitutionary death on the Cross was for us that we sinful human beings might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). We have entered into His victory over Satan by 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 world, but we that belong to Christ are no longer under Satan's dominion—Christ has overcome him at the Cross. What a triumph, what a Savior! Jesus said, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! **And I hold the keys of death and Hades**" (Revelation 1:18). Let that soak into your spirit!

Prayer: Father, I pray that I may have a greater awareness of what you are doing on Earth. Let the way I view the world be according to the lens of Your Word, and don't let me be influenced by unseen evil forces that seek my fall. Let Your kingdom come on Earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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