

War of the Worlds
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We are in a sermon series called The Necessity of an Enemy. I remind you that the call to follow Christ is a call to a lifetime of war! And we have three main enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil. We need to know who we're fighting and have a strategy for each enemy. Not all of our battles are with demons. Some are and that's why we need to understand spiritual warfare.

But we also have another enemy to fight called the flesh. Pastor Anthony preached a brilliant message on that last week! Our flesh is not just our bodies – it is the unrenewed part of our soul – our self-centeredness – that wants to:
 live for self rather than God
 go my way rather than God's way
 live by my truth rather than God's truth.

We are in a lifelong battle between the spirit and the flesh. And there's only one way to deal with the flesh. Romans 6:11 says:

Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You can't improve your flesh or make it better – You must die to it! Dying to self overcomes the flesh! Spiritual warfare overcomes the devil.

But many believers do not understand that our struggle is not just with the devil and our flesh, but also a third enemy called the world. So I'm preaching a message today called War of the Worlds. In John 17:14-18, Jesus prayed for all believers, including us.

I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

Jesus said that His followers are not of this world. That means they do not belong to this world and are hated by the world. Being 'not of this world' also means we do not get our standards or our morals or our beliefs from the world. We do not think as the people of the world think. We do not talk as the people of the world talk. We do not live as the people of the world live. If we do, we can never do the world any good!

Jesus said we are not of this world – but we are sent into the world as ambassadors of another kingdom, the kingdom of God!

The word “world” is not speaking of planet earth – but the current order of things on the planet. The Greek word is cosmos, which is the opposite of another Greek word – chaos. Vine’s Bible Dictionary says that cosmos is an arrangement or order. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament say that cosmos speaks of human order. On the surface, that might not sound bad. But 2 Corinthians 4:4 says that Satan is *the god of this world*.

Mankind was created to rule on the earth. But when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden – called the fall of man – they forfeited their rule to Satan. The domain originally delegated to man fell to Satan, who became what is now called “god of this age” and the “prince of this world.”

The cosmos – the present order and systems that rule the world - are under the destructive rule of Satan. When you understand this, you will never blame God for any of the disorder and evil in our sinful, confused, diseased, tragedy-ridden, and tormented world! 1 John 5:19 says:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

That’s why we are in the war of the worlds! Satan is in control of all worldly systems including the political system, education system, entertainment, and media – none of these things are wrong in themselves, but when Satan becomes god of them - they are designed to pull people away from God’s truth and light into Satan’s deception and darkness.

The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says that one of the ways the word cosmos was used in ancient times was to describe the order of rowers in an ancient rowboat. To get anywhere, they must all row in the same direction. And Satan – as god of this world – this age – this present darkness – is trying to line up everything he can to row towards him and away from God. Satan wants to order the world – which always ends up in disorder. He disguises it as a manmade order – but he is god of it.

He is working overtime to get politicians, educators, entertainers and media all rowing in the same direction.

He works to get politicians to legislate against the laws of God.

He works to get judges to rule against the ways of God.

He works to get educators to teach against the truths of God.

He works to get entertainers to mock the people of God.

He works to get the media to distort the things of God.

When the god of this world has all these people rowing in the same direction – it’s a powerful force.

That’s why in the war of the worlds it feels like we are always rowing against the current and always running against the wind. Because of the power of the world’s systems rowing together.

For example – think of the world’s agenda to legalize marriage between people of the same sex. There was a time not long ago when that would have been unthinkable. But some politicians began to row in that direction – and some judges began to decide cases in that direction – and some university professors began to teach in that direction – and the media, movies and TV began to promote in that direction – and mock those rowing in the opposite direction – and when you get all those forces rowing in the same direction – it’s a powerful force!

That’s why the god of this world has been successful in normalizing and popularizing behavior that the Bible calls sin. The god of this world can make something that is not true seem true. That’s why we need people of faith in politics – in courtrooms – in classrooms – in movies and on TV. We need people of faith to take a stand and be light in the darkness! Philippians 2:14-16 says:

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.

Jesus said we are the light of the world. But too many people are trying to reach the world by watering down the Bible and trying to be friends with the world – but James 4:4 says:

Don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

We are not called to befriend the world order but to overcome the world. How to we win the war of the worlds?

1- We win the war of the worlds through faith!

The Bible tells us how to overcome the world in 1 John 5:4-5.

Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — even our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

It takes faith in Jesus to overcome the world.

It takes faith in God’s word to overcome the enemy’s words.

It takes faith in the Holy Spirit to overcome demonic spirits.

And through faith we can and will win the war of the worlds!

But the reason we seem to be losing this war is that many Christians are buying into the world’s wisdom which is not God’s wisdom. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says:

The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Everywhere you look today you see deception and people falling away from the faith. The enemy is working overtime to keep unbelievers away and lead believers astray from the truth of God's Word and from faith in Jesus! In order for it not to happen to us, we must be grounded in God's Word!

2- We win the war of the worlds by renewing our minds with the word

Romans 12:2 says:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

The Message Version says: *Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.*

The spirit of this world is working overtime to eliminate the truth of God from our culture and replace it with deception. By the way: if you're getting more input from the world of mainstream media and social media than from the word of God – then the resulting deception, fear and discouragement in your life is self-inflicted! Colossians 2:8 says:

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Unfortunately, many believers have been taken captive by the world. I was sad to see the results of recent Barna Research which shows that only 6% of Americans have a biblical worldview. For the purposes of the research, a biblical worldview was defined as believing that absolute moral truths exist; that such truth is defined by the Bible; and firm belief in six specific religious views:

- that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life;
- God is the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the universe;
- salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned;
- Satan is real;
- a Christian has a responsibility to share their faith in Christ with other people; and the Bible is accurate in all of its teachings.

The data found, among other things, that while 51% of American adults said they have a "biblical worldview, only 6% of American adults do. That means many people who call themselves Christians do not have a biblical worldview. They believe in things like reincarnation and salvation by works. They believe that Jesus is not the only way of salvation. Many believe there is no devil or no hell.

One of the most striking insights from the research was the influence of worldly thinking on people's behavior. Adults with a biblical worldview possessed radically different views on morality and made vastly different lifestyle choices. When comparing those with a biblical worldview with those who don't: The people with a biblical worldview were 31 times less likely to accept cohabitation as a lifestyle
 18 times less likely to endorse drunkenness
 15 times less likely to condone gay sex
 12 times less likely to accept profanity
 and 11 times less likely to describe adultery as morally acceptable.

Less than one-half of one percent of those with a biblical worldview said that abortion was acceptable. The research also showed that less than 1 out of 3 born again Christians believe in absolute moral truth. The surveys found that few Americans turn to their faith as the primary guide for their moral and ethical decisions. What are they turning to? Basically, themselves or the world.

Only 13% of people make decisions based on the principles taught in the Bible. Without a biblical foundation, people turn to the world's philosophies: 'If it feels good, do it,' 'everyone else is doing it' or 'as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else, it's permissible.'

The result is a mentality that values relativism and tolerance and self above the truths of the Bible. This is why we must win the war of the worlds by transforming our minds with the word of God. That only happens when you believe that the Bible is true, authoritative, and applicable to every area of life.

That's why we must be grounded in the truth of God's Word! We must choose to believe it and obey it! We can't allow the spirit of the world to cause us to doubt God's Word. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Notice that those strongholds are arguments, pretense and thoughts. A stronghold is a deceived way of thinking or reasoning that becomes established in your mind unless you demolish it. So, we must demolish the world's lies with the word of God!

That's why we must guard our hearts and guard our children! Many Christians who allow their children to be too familiar with the world and more influenced by our culture than the word of God.

Far too many parents have given up their role as gatekeepers for their children

and they are allowing the world and even demonic influences into their homes. How you ask? The main culprits are the TV, the internet, music and video games. These things are great and to be enjoyed when used in moderation and when someone is filtering what children are watching. But it's so easy to let TV be the babysitter.

Parents, you are the gatekeepers of your home. You decide what comes in or not. You need to take the time to be aware of what your child is watching, what video games they're playing, what music they're listening to. You need to know who their friends are. All these things are influencing them 24/7.

There are times you may need to say, "Not in my house. You will not watch that. You will not listen to that. You will not hang out with that crowd. You will not go out of here wearing that. I love you too much to allow that in this house or in your life." Don't be mean about it, but be firm. Explain why.

Turn the TV off and spend some time together as a family. Don't leave all biblical education to the church! Teach your children at home. Unfortunately, that is not happening much. Most young people today – even those raised in church – do not have a biblical worldview! Approximately 70 percent of those raised in the church disengage from it in their 20s. One-third of Americans under 30 now claim "no religion." Just 1 out of 10 of our country's born-again teenagers believe in absolute moral truth - a statistic that is nearly identical to that of non-born-again teens.

Christian families and churches must prioritize this matter if the Christian community hopes to have any distinctiveness in our culture. The virtual disappearance of a biblical worldview is probably the biggest cause of the weakening of the Christian Church in America today!

3- We win the war of the worlds by loving God more than the world!

1 John 2:15-16 says:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world-the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-comes not from the Father but from the world.

We must differentiate between the people of the world whom God loves and the worldly system that is opposed to God and which we must not love. You see, God does not want to take us out of the world; He does want to take the world out of us! And that will only happen when we love Him more than we love the world!

James 4:4 says:

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

The adultery he is talking about here is having a relationship with the world that is closer than your relationship with God. Staying free of the world's ways is not about legalism, it's about love!

4- We win the war of the worlds by dying to the world.

Paul said in Galatians 6:14 *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

Paul mentions the double effect of the cross: the world is dead to me, and I am dead to the world. The world of which Paul speaks here is the world he knew before he was saved, his Pharisaic traditions, his zeal for the law, in short, the world in which he had lived. To all this now he was dead. He had been separated from it by the cross of the Lord Jesus. It had no more appeal to him nor influence upon him. What happened to Paul must happen to us. The cross must do it's work in us for us to die to the world. How do you know when that's happened?

Colossians 2:20 says:

Since you have died with Christ, and He has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world, why do you keep on following the rules of the world as though you still belonged to it.

You know you have died to the world when you no longer feel like you belong in it and when you no longer submit to the ways of the culture.

5- We win the war of the worlds with the power of God.

Winning this war is not something we can do in our own strength! 1 John 4:3-4 says: *The spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, is already in the world. You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*

It's interesting that the names of the Holy Spirit show what He does and everything He does counteracts the works of the devil and the world.

- The Holy Spirit is greater than an unclean worldly spirit.
- The Spirit of truth is greater than the world's deception and lies.
- The Comforter is greater than the spirit of heaviness.
- The Spirit of wisdom is greater than the world's confusion.
- The Spirit of grace is greater than a spirit of condemnation.
- The Spirit of life is greater than a spirit of infirmity and death.
- The Spirit of adoption is greater than an orphan spirit.
- The Spirit of the fear of the Lord is greater than a spirit of fear!
- The Spirit of joy and gladness is greater than a spirit of depression.

Greater is the Spirit of God in us than the spirit that is in the world!
And with faith in Christ, with our minds renewed with the truth of God's word, when we love God and are dead to the world - and with the power of the Holy Spirit - we can win the war of the worlds in Jesus' name!