

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Ephesians—Real Reality, Pt. 2

Selected Passages

Keywords: Spiritual Warfare, Angels, Demons, Divine Warrior, Satan, Heaven

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: In this second part of an introduction to Ephesians we learn that there is much more going on than what we can observe. Through an examination of many biblical passages we find warfare, resistance, rebellion and victory.

I. Introduction.

- A. Not written to the church in Ephesus only.
 - 1. Encyclical.
 - 2. Ephesus was the largest city in Asia Minor—200,000+ and that is likely why the manuscripts we have include "in Ephesus" in them.
- B. Not actually a letter.
 - 1. A sermon/homily.
 - 2. Written in a unique style called epideictic.
 - 3. Lacks the personal elements of a true letter though I will call it a letter regardless.
- C. The challenge is to read this letter rightly.
 - 1. The temptation is to read it impassively and critically, looking to draw our theological points and personal applications.
 - 2. Example is Ephesians 1:3-14 (note the theologically rich terms).
 - a. 3 "in Christ."
 - b. 4 Election.
 - c. 5 Predestination.
 - d. 5 Adoption.
 - e. 7 Redemption.
 - f. 7 Forgiveness.

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- g. 11 Inheritance.
 - h. 13 Gospel of salvation.
 - i. 13 Saving faith.
 - j. 13 Sealed with Holy Spirit.
3. However, to read it properly is to see the bigger picture Paul is painting in this sermon of his. It is one that is designed to transform us.
- a. And we need that transformation.
 - b. May I ask something of each of you? Begin to pray, as a family or as individuals, the prayers Paul prayed in this book?
 - c. 1::17-21 and 3:14-19.
- D. This leads me to my next point that I began last week. The book has an apocalyptic aspect to it.
- 1. Here I began to talk about "real reality" and how we tend to see things like only one half of an orange.
 - 2. There is a whole realm of reality that we often are ignorant of or we are confused about.
 - 3. What Paul does in this book is unveil, just a bit, the mystery of the unseen.
- E. Today we will get into how the bible shows us the "unseen" world.

II. The Real Reality.

- A. What Ephesians does is open our eyes to the full cosmic stage that includes both heaven and earth and both the seen and unseen.
- 1. To open our eyes requires us to realize that there are a lot more beings than we realize. A whole lot more. They are suprahuman beings. We know them usually as angels and demons.
 - 2. In Ephesians 6:10-18 we have the well known passage about spiritual warfare.
 - 3. In the Old Testament we find a common image being painted of God. He is portrayed as a warrior.
 - a. Exodus 15 celebrates the victory of God over the Egyptian army.
 - (1) He is called a warrior in 3 because He hurled the army into the sea (4).

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- (2) vs 6 we see that He shatters the enemy.
 - (3) His kingship is proclaimed in vss 1 and 18.
 - (4) And it even anticipates the temple where the people of Israel will gather to sing God's praises.
- b. This is then seen in the official hymn book of Israel.
- (1) Psalm 24.
 - (a) This is a psalm that describes how the people were to enter the temple to celebrate and worship YHWH.
 - (b) Notice that it begins with an absolute statement about God as king and creator.
 - (c) That is not just a fact. It is in a sense a victory shout. It is Israel being instructed to shout out that YHWH is Lord over all.
 - (d) In vs 2 the statement of Him founding the earth upon the seas is a statement of the chaos that was at the beginning of creation and how God, personally, brought order and stability to it all.
 - (e) Now see the divine warrior imagery that flows from these proclamations.
 - i) He is the King of Glory.
 - ii) He is YHWH, strong and mighty.
 - iii) He is YHWH, mighty in battle.
 - iv) He is YHWH of the hosts/armies.
 - (f) Therefore we are to come to the Temple and worship Him and celebrate Him in a proper manner.
 - (2) Psalm 46.
 - (a) Here the people of Israel declare God as their place of safety.
 - (b) He is their true, divine warrior-king and He dwells with them in the Temple (4-5).
 - (c) He is the destroyer of nations.

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(d) He is the exalted above the nations.

(e) He is the Lord of hosts.

4. And this is what is going on in Ephesians.
 - a. In chapter 6:10 he calls us to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.
 - b. Notice that this was first said in 1:19. These two phrases function in what is called an *inclusio*. Essentially they are bookends
 - c. In 1:20-23 Paul makes it clear that Jesus Christ is exalted over all other "rule and authority and power and dominion." Those terms relate not to earthly powers but the spiritual beings who are at odds with God.
 - d. And in 6:11ff Paul tells us to put on the armor of God so that we can withstand the rulers, powers, world forces of darkness and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.
 - e. And what Ephesians teaches us is that Jesus is already exalted over these spiritual forces that exist in this current age and that we, as the people of God, are to orient our hearts and lives around that truth.
 - f. We are to be a people in rebellion. We are to, in the power of the Holy Spirit, embrace our roles and proclaim like Israel did in the Old Testament that He is our Lord and our King. He has conquered the enemies and we live in light of that truth.

B. Who are these powers and authorities?

1. Three times they are mentioned in Ephesians (1:20-23; 3:10; 6:10-18).
2. They are not just something Paul came up with, nor are they ideas unique to the New Testament world. They have a very strong Jewish history .
3. These were beings, created by God, who were in rebellion against God. Their job was to oversee humanity and to ensure the righteousness and justice prevailed. But they rebelled and instead drive and push the nations to evil, injustice and chaos.
4. We don't have a clear picture of everything about them in the bible but we do have many places that make mention of them that helps us get a sense of them.
5. Deuteronomy 32:8-9.

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- a. Part of a song Moses made the whole nation learn.
 - b. Here is where a complex sermon gets more complex. If you have the NASB or NIV it reads at the end of vs 8 "the sons of Israel." But if you have the ESV then it reads, "the sons of God."
 - (1) This is due to their choices in Hebrew texts. ESV is likely the correct one. It is interesting that in the LXX it reads "angels of God."
 - (2) That phrase, "Sons of God" always, in the Old Testament, refers to angelic beings (both good and evil).
 - c. What is going on in this passage is that Moses is saying that all of the nations that exist or ever existed He placed archangels over them. In other words, there are angelic beings appointed to each nation.
 - d. We see an example of this in Daniel 10.
 - (1) In chapter 9 we see Daniel making a prayer of confession on behalf of Israel. Gabriel, the archangel, came to him in a vision and gave him instruction on what was to come with the Messiah and the end of times.
 - (2) Now three weeks later, while he is still mourning over the vision (2-3) and Gabriel again comes to him. Notice what he says in vs 12-13 and try to get your head around it.
 - (3) Then read vs 20-21.
 - e. What you have in this passage is what is going on all over the world. These angelic powers at war. They are all created by God and subject to Him.
6. Psalm 82 shows us a bit more about them and their responsibilities and failings.
- a. They were to promote true peace (shalom), well-being and justice but they don't (2-5).
 - b. Because they did not obey God they would be judged (6-7).
 - c. Notice how they are referred to as "gods." This is not uncommon in the Old Testament.

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- (1) There is only the One True God. But these beings created by God are also referred to as gods. In the New Testament they are called powers and principalities.
 - (2) Again we see this in Psalm 29:1.
 - (a) The ESV again does a better job translating. But literally the Hebrew is " **יְיָ בְנֵי אֱלֹהִים** " which is "sons of God" again.
 - (b) Now, what is going on in this Psalm? David is telling the angelic beings, both good and bad, to do proper worship and homage.
 - (c) Why? Because He alone is the Most High God, He is their creator and sustainer as well.
 - (3) Also Psalm 96:4-5.
 - (4) 1 Kings 20:23-30.
 - (5) Genesis 6:1-6 is the great rebellion.
- C. When we come to the New Testament we see similar ideas.
1. 1 Corinthians 2:6-8.
 - a. Paul shows us here that the "rulers of this age" are not interested in bringing about God's "shalom" or peace but rather they oppress mankind.
 - b. They instead stand behind or over mankind and manipulate ideas and plans so as to kill Jesus Christ.
 - c. But, because God's wisdom is far greater, they did it in ignorance and actually achieved God's plan.
 - d. As a result they are described in vs 6 as those who are "passing away." They are defeated, yet not yet gone.
 2. 1 Corinthians 15:24-26.
 - a. In this classic passage on the resurrection we see that the work of God is not yet done.
 - b. What Jesus Christ started when he died and rose again shall be fully accomplished when he raises all from the dead.

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- c. We live in that inbetween time. If we are wise we keep this promise before us. If we begin to believe this age then we lose hope and conform ourselves to this age and its desires.
3. Colossians 2:13-15.
 - a. The certificate of debt is the reality of our failure to stand up to God's law. We are guilty, all of us.
 - b. Notice then how he connects the "disarming" of the rulers and authorities by Jesus' death and resurrection.
 - c. This was God's plan and purpose in the death of Jesus. He would defeat the sin that grips us and the powers that enslave us.
4. Paul shows this all the more in 2 Corinthians 4:4.
 - a. Satan seeks to dominate humanity. Which is why John says that the whole world lies in the lap of him in 1 John 5:19.
 - b. How does he do this? Primarily through deception and accusation. The first to unbelievers and the second to both unbelievers and believers.
5. It is interesting that though the cultures in the day of Paul saw that there were many gods, Paul shows that at best they are these spiritual powers under the sovereign rule of God.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 8:4-6.
 - b. Galatians 4:8-11.
6. Colossians 2:8.
 - a. This shows us that there are not "neutral" patterns in our social lives.
 - b. Rather these are being manipulated by these powers to bring mankind into enslavement and conformity to this age.
7. Ephesians 6:11-12
 - a. Note that this comes at the end of a teaching related to marriage, parenting, and employment.
 - b. I won't go into great detail here but it is worth noting that in vs 12 the term "world forces" or "cosmic powers" or perhaps "powers" literally means "world-graspers".

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- c. There is a sense of how these powers are seeking to grasp and take over that which is not their's to have. Very much like Genesis 6.

III. Conclusion.

- A. We need to be wise and aware so that we do not wander into silly or dangerous speculations.
 1. This stuff can fascinate us to the point of self-destruction.
 2. We can also ignore it to our great peril. Look at any marriage where the man and woman are not actively striving to conform the marriage to God's standard and you see the cost of ignoring the lies of these powers.
- B. Understand also that we do not actively engage these powers.
 1. That is not how we are to live, calling down curses upon them or challenging them.
 2. We fight them by simply conforming ourselves by faith to what God calls us to be. We are rebelling against the power of this age by not being conformed to it.
- C. Recognize that these powers exist but then move on in a greater faith and obedience to Jesus Christ.
 1. Realize that they are present and at work.
 2. But even more importantly, remember that they are under the sovereign control of God.
 3. Give thanks that through Jesus Christ we have victory.
- D. We will learn more of this in the weeks to come.

Small Group Questions

- What stood out to you in this sermon? Where were you challenged to perhaps adjust your thinking?
- In all honesty, how often are you considering the reality of the spiritual world and these forces?