

**Spiritual Warfare #2;
What Are We Fighting for and Against?**

**2001 Feast of Tabernacles; First High Day, A.M.
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On this first High Day of the Feast of Tabernacles, brethren, I set up with the last message the topic of the series that we are going to be covering. It is, brethren, "Spiritual Warfare" that we are engaged in, and hopefully, in that introduction that I gave in the last service, I verified to you that the very calling of a Christian is one to war. The calling of a Christian is one of a soldier who engages in a great battle for salvation. And so we looked at a broad overview of the principles to substantiate the fact that Christians are called to be soldiers in the army of Jesus Christ and that the very battles that we are engaged in are life and death, and it is, brethren, a war against very defined enemies.

We also talked about the principle of having a cause for fighting, and that it is an absolute necessity for people, and for an army, to know what they are fighting for, and to be in agreement, to be motivated, to have a hope—to have a goal—in mind for victory. And I put those things in context, then, of even the recent events that have taken place within this very country that have challenged us in the very same way.

Well, now, in this service, we want to expand upon those principles of warfare and go into a little bit more depth about our motivation for that cause—our hope—because it relates directly to the reason we are here celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, which is a representation of the return of Jesus Christ and His Millennial reign on the earth. What is it, brethren, that makes *our* spiritual warfare worthwhile? What is it that is so valuable to us that we would be willing to sacrifice so much—even everything in the flesh—to achieve that goal? You see, brethren, if the ultimate objective that we seek is not compelling enough, we will never be willing to pay the ultimate price—somewhere along the way, you see, we will bail

out. We will say it is not worth it, and take a different direction. The only way that we have a chance to stand firm to the very end is if we believe in that cause so much that we will make a concerted effort, and the determination in our minds and hearts, that nothing is going to prevent us from achieving that goal.

Many people have endured phenomenal trials in the name of their compelling causes. Think about the history of the peoples in different nations around the world, in different ages, who have been willing to sacrifice themselves totally for what they believed in. Now, as unpopular as it is, even think about the terrorists—the suicide bombers—who were willing to give up their lives, literally, by crashing airplanes into landmarks in the United States. Now, these were committed people, were they not? They obviously believed in their cause, as misguided as they were. But they had religious fervor like you wouldn't believe. They were wrong and they were deceived in thinking that they are going to receive some great reward in the afterlife—Satan has deceived the whole world into believing all kinds of things—and yet these men were certainly committed, and they proved it by giving up their lives. And so, human beings for centuries have adopted causes because of things that have been very compelling to them, and there have been many, many examples, then, of men and women who have been willing to stand firm for what they believed in and have paid the ultimate price. It's a real shame that most of their causes have been in vain because they were deceived, and they were not really working in the name of God at all, and yet, there is no question about it: human beings, in and of themselves, are certainly capable of attaching themselves to an ideology that they love, respect and are willing to sacrifice for.

My question, brethren, is how compelling is your cause? And do you love this Way of Life that you have been given by divine revelation, through the very Son of God, so much that you are willing, also, to make the ultimate sacrifice? Or, is there a limit to our devotion and our dedication, so that at some time in the future, before the return of Christ, we might hit our stalling point and find that we have reached a point that we are not willing to cross, and will turn back? Or, are we so compelled by the promise of eternal life in God's Kingdom, that our orientation, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is that we will give the last full measure of devotion to this cause? Time will tell in each one of our lives, brethren.

And because I stand up here and present this material, please don't think that I am asserting that I have proved anything. I have proved nothing. I consider that I have been tested very little in my short life. Oh, some might look and say that the decisions I have made to be faithful are significant. I don't consider them that significant. I consider that the greatest of my trials are yet to come, and the real proof of my faith and my conviction is going to be known, even as it will be for each one of you.

What is our hope? What are we fighting our spiritual warfare to achieve? It is very appropriate to talk about that hope, because it is the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles. Let's turn to Matthew 25 and verse 31. Matthew 25 and verse 31:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world . . .

What a glorious picture that is. It is something that is going to happen, brethren, it *is* going to be a reality. That King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, *is* going to come back to this earth in great power and glory, and He is going to establish that Kingdom. It will be a Millennial reign by Jesus Christ of a thousand years upon this earth, and the Law of God will be that world-ruling Law. There will be no other law—there will be no other ideology or accepted practice. Only the very perfect Law of God—that Law of love—will dominate under the reign of Christ. And there are some, at His coming, who are going to receive a great reward, and they will be a part of the Family of God, serving in great offices of responsibility in that world-ruling Government.

Notice Zechariah 14—one that we read before. Zechariah 14 and verse 16—a prophecy for the very time of Christ's reign in that Millennium that we picture at this Feast of Tabernacles. Zechariah 14 and verse 16:

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Even at the time of the fulfilling of that prophecy, at the beginning of the Millennium—that thousand-year reign—the Feast of Tabernacles is still going to be kept. It is not something that is temporary in nature. It didn't just apply to ancient Israel. The Feast of Tabernacles *is* going to be kept when Christ returns, even though the very meaning of what the Feast of Tabernacles pictures is going to be fulfilled even simultaneously while they are keeping it. Imagine that. They will be in the midst of that thousand-year reign of Christ and will be celebrating an annual festival commemorating the very promise and fulfillment of that Millennium—even that which is also the fulfillment of the weekly Sabbath, which also pictures the fulfillment of that thousand years under Christ, which is the rest of God. That Millennial rest is comparable to that seventh day—that which we picture and renew every single week in keeping the Sabbath day holy.

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

What is that Kingdom going to be like? Isaiah 11 and verse 6—the scripture that you all have read many times. It is one of those that gives us such hope concerning the value of that Kingdom. What hope would it be, brethren, if we expected a kingdom that was going to be an oppressive, evil empire—one where there would be all manner of evil allowed and perpetrated by tyrants? We would not look forward to that at all. It would never be something that would be a part of our great hope. But no, what is that Kingdom under Christ going to be like? He is going to have all power and dominion, and He is going to rule it with a rod of iron. But what will that rulership be like as it applies to all of the subjects of the nations of the earth? Isaiah 11 and verse 6:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

It is a time when God will even change the nature of the wild beasts, which is probably comparable to the state they began with in the garden of Eden, when God first put men on the earth.

And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the [Eternal].

What a glorious picture that is, when no longer will this world live in utter deception and confusion, separated from God, paying the penalties, day after day, after day, for fulfilling the lust of the flesh—without saving knowledge. No, we are talking about a time, brethren, when the knowledge of God will fill the earth. All human beings alive on that earth will have their minds opened to receive that Truth—they will have their opportunity to come into a close personal relationship with their King and their High Priest, Jesus Christ, and He will be a loving and a benevolent ruler, even as He has shown by His very willingness to die for the sins of each one of us, and to die for the sins of all on the earth who will be called to a knowledge of that Truth.

"[F]or the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the [Eternal], as the waters cover the sea." Right now, we are in a great wilderness, brethren, because God has chosen to call only a very few in number, and we live, and we work, and we exist within the confines of a world of thousands, and millions, and billions of human beings who are absolutely destitute of the Truth, according to God's perfect will. And so we are isolated, and we are alone, and we feel the difference in what it is like to have that knowledge and yet be outcasts and not to fit in with the rest of the world and its ideologies. It's a lonely feeling, is it not? But think about and compare it to what that Kingdom will be like when everyone you pass on the street will be keeping the Sabbath, and will look forward to the keeping of the Holy Days, including the Feast of Tabernacles; when you can speak about religious things to everyone you meet; when the perfect Law of God—the Ten Commandments, the statutes, and the judgments—will be the law of the land, and all decisions in courts, and in resolutions of disputes, and problems and difficulties, will be made according to God's perfect, holy and righteous Law;

when perfect equity will be applied in the affairs of men, and only in righteousness, and judgment, and peace and harmony, and oneness. It's the kind of paradise that men hope for and dream of, and are seeking to bring about on the earth, by themselves, through their own means. But theirs, my dear brethren, is a deceptive goal—a hope, yes, but one that will never come to pass according to their own minds and their own wills, because separate from God, human beings can never achieve such a glorious and a perfect Kingdom. It will come about only through the very manifestation of the power of God.

Revelation 21 and verse 1. Revelation chapter 21 and beginning in verse 1: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . ." Remember, we talked about that in the last service? Our hope *is* for the coming of a new heaven and a new earth, and here is a description of that:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

It is a time when God is not going to be removed from man, which took place at the very time that Adam and Eve sinned and rejected God. And from that time forward, humanity has been absolutely cut off, as they were driven out of that garden, and that mighty angel with a flaming sword was set to guard the gate of that garden, and to prevent man from having access to that close relationship with God, and to prevent them from having access to the Tree of Life. And yet, God's intention was never to keep man at bay forever, because from the foundation of the world, Jesus Christ was slain—meaning that the hope of that salvation was ever in God's mind from the beginning of the creation of the earth. He intended a reconciliation with man, even that which we pictured just a few days ago in the keeping of the Day of Atonement: the reconciliation of man with God. And here is a picture, now, of the fulfillment of that final plan, when God will be unified with those who are born into His marvelous Kingdom.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they

shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes . . .

Think about the time when there will be no more sorrow and crying, when there will be no more pain, and there will be no more suffering—only happiness, and peace, and joy. It certainly is beyond the capacity of our minds to understand what that glory is going to be like.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Can you get the picture, brethren? Can you really grasp in heart and mind the glory that God is offering to you and to me, not because we are worthy of anything, but because He is merciful and loving, and He desires, even as Mr. Armstrong always said, to reproduce Himself in a great, expansive God Family—a creative Family that will live forever and ever in joy, in harmony, and peace; when the fullness of this new Jerusalem is manifested? Is that enough of a goal, brethren? Is it worth your commitment to the cause of this spiritual warfare? Can you get the vision? Can you see it so clearly in your mind—even by the leadership of God in your life, through the Holy Spirit—that you value it more than anything else, no matter what trial that you will face, and have faced, in many cases? But you will not let those deter you—you will not let anyone take your crown, because you are a warrior in the service of God, as His faithful soldier, and you recognize how valuable the gift is that He has given to each one of us, and you believe in those promises of God, and you are determined, absolutely, that you want that gift, and that you want that reward, and that you want to be there in the fulfillment of the Millennial reign of Christ, and all that we picture on this Holy Day.

What is our role right now in that plan? What is your hope, personally, within that Kingdom? Turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 2. What is it that God has

offered to those who are part of the Firstfruits harvest now? What will we receive at the return of Jesus Christ if we are successful in our battle? What is it that God has offered to us? 1 Peter 2 and verse 9:

But ye are a chosen generation [you are a chosen generation], a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

And so, who were we—each one of us—before our calling? Here sits before me, and under the hearing of my voice, people who probably never would have known each other, or have been together, at all. Many of us, according to the flesh, would never have been friends. We never would have had that feeling of love, and respect, and admiration, and desire to serve and sacrifice for one another, except that God brought us together and, by that special and unique calling, placed us within His Body through the very blood of His priceless Son. And through that calling He has offered to you, holy brethren, the potential of that reward—to be that Holy Nation, that royal Priesthood, to have offices of great responsibility for the service of those who, then, will be called in that Millennial reign, and then those who are part of the second resurrection. Those things we will go into in much more detail at the closing of this Feast.

Can we get the vision and the value of the calling that He has given to us? Is the promise of that Kingdom, and that role that you have been called to assume, worthy of the fight that is before us? Have we counted the cost and determined that whatever God will require—whatever sacrifice in the flesh, whatever pain and suffering of mind or body—it is worth that which He has offered to us for all eternity? If we have that vision, brethren, and if we value it enough, you see, then we are in the perfect position to be able to succeed—not by our own strength (we have none), but by the very power of Jesus Christ working in our lives. That's our cause in this war—that's your patriotic call to arms. And if we love it and regard it enough, brethren, it will be that which we keep uppermost in our minds as we face all manner of evil, and persecution, and trial, before the day of the return of Jesus Christ. That's our cause for this war—for this spiritual warfare.

Let's talk a little bit more, now, about the enemy. I mentioned to you in the last service that we certainly do have an enemy, and you have to know your enemy if you are going to have a chance to be victorious against that enemy. It's the very challenge that the United States is facing at this very moment: how to identify who the enemy is. If I don't know who it is that is attacking, and if I can't begin to know that enemy, how can I learn how to put up defenses? Because if we don't understand the enemy, our cause is futile. We can have the greatest of causes, and if you don't know where to look for the enemy, the enemy has the advantage.

What is the enemy that we are fighting in our spiritual warfare as soldiers of God, as Christians called to this Way of Life? Who is the enemy? Well, we all recognize Satan, the Devil as an enemy, and we are going to talk about him, because he is definitely a very key part of it, but I'm going to begin with another enemy—an even greater enemy. Do you know what enemy that is?

I couldn't help, when I was preparing these notes a number of months ago, recalling an old comic strip from the 1960s. Some of you are old enough to remember the comic strip called *Pogo*, written by Walt Kelly. Do you remember it? It had little cartoon animals living in the forest, and Pogo was a possum, and he had all manner—a menagerie—of other friends in the forest, including a porcupine friend. And the most famous *Pogo* comic strip that Walt Kelly wrote was the one that found Pogo and his porcupine friend walking through the forest, admiring the beauty, and then coming into a clearing full of the refuse and the garbage that men have dumped in the forest: old refrigerators, and appliances, and bathtubs, and all kinds of materials, strewn about in the forest—old rubber tires, tubes hanging from the branches. And Pogo's comment was, "Yep, son, we have met the enemy, and he is us." We have met the enemy, and he is us. Now, that became the mantra for the environmentalists of our time who, then, use that as a rallying cry to support the need to keep our environment clean and pure, and it identifies man as the biggest culprit threatening the environment of this earth, and to a certain extent, they are right. Of course, we realize that their motivation is very much religious, with this concept of worshiping the earth as "Mother Earth." You have heard the term, haven't you? It is pagan to the core, and yet, obviously, God did give us the earth—He gave mankind dominion over the earth to take care of it, and to prune it and keep it. And so, man has utterly failed in that, because we always abuse for our own personal gain. And yet, the quote from Walt Kelly entered my mind in preparing this sermon in the context of identifying who is our

enemy, and my dear brethren, I'm here to tell you, we *have* met the enemy, and *he is us*. What does that mean? The greatest enemy that you and I face in this spiritual warfare is the self—the natural, carnal, human nature that God gave to us from the beginning—because it is a nature, my dear brethren, that wars against the very mind of God. Human beings would not be subject to the deception of the archenemy Satan if they did not have, inherently within them, a nature that absolutely leans toward that mind of Satan.

Romans 8 and verse 6. Romans 8 and beginning in verse 6: "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God . . ." That's the nature that you have, brethren, and that I have—the carnal mind, the fleshly mind, that we were each born with. "[T]he carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Your mind and my mind, by nature, cannot love the things of God—we cannot appreciate His Law, we cannot value it, let alone keep it according to the natural mind that He gave us, because as Mr. Armstrong said for so many years: God created man in the flesh incomplete. It requires the Holy Spirit, living and dwelling within the mind of a human being, to make that being complete for the service of God, and without the Holy Spirit, the carnal mind alone within that being makes him totally incapable of loving the things of God, or fulfilling His will. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." They that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Next, turn to Psalm 58 and verse 2. Psalm 58 and verse 2: "Yea, in heart ye work wickedness . . ." That's not just talking about all these old, bad, evil people out here somewhere else, brethren, that's talking about you, and it's talking about me. By nature that is what we do—we work wickedness. What is wickedness? That which is opposed to God and His perfect, righteous Law. It doesn't just mean somebody who is especially evil, that we like to pick on. No, that's you and me.

"Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. The wicked are estranged from . . ." When? From the time that they are a few years old and begin to tune in to the wavelength of Satan? No. "The wicked are estranged from the womb." We start out that way, brethren. "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." And we don't like to think about those cute little innocent babies as having an evil, carnal, human nature. They are so wonderful, and they are so adorable, and yet, if

we believe what God recorded in His Holy Scripture, that nature, brethren, is there from the inception, and if we are honest with ourselves, mothers, you know it. How long does it take before you see the manifestation of a rebellious spirit in those darling little ones? Not long.

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear . . .

Yes, we cannot appreciate the things of God in the flesh—we hate those things of God. Oh, we pay lip service to the concepts of love, and peace, and unity, and oneness, but in practice, brethren, we can never live up to it, because, deep down inside, we are ruled by selfishness. Mr. Armstrong called it the way of "get" versus the way of "give"—and the way of "give" is something that can only come through the calling of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit working on those natural minds. Of ourselves, we are controlled in selfishness by the way of "get."

Now, little children manifest it very naturally and openly. They rip the toy out of the hands of the other playmate. "Mine!" they say. And so, we see it manifested very openly and honestly in those little children, but we like to think that when we grow older we mature, and that means that we become better people, and yet, brethren, if we are honest with ourselves, we recognize that the only thing that we do in the flesh when we get older is that we become more devious and deceptive in hiding our selfishness, do we not? We still have our own personal motivation of getting what we want, we have just come to be more sophisticated about how we go about getting it, because we not only want what we want, we want people to think we are loving, and kind, and benevolent while we are getting it. So, those are the games that we play and the deception of natural human minds.

Jeremiah 17 and verse 9. You know it by heart: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, "who can know it?" Well, men can't know it, except by a call—by having God reveal to us what we really are by nature. It's part of that wonderful revelation that you were given at your calling, when God opened your mind to the truth about what we are by nature, brethren, because you cannot even begin to fight the enemy unless you know the enemy. "We have met the enemy,

and he is us." That's the secret that Satan does not want you to know: that the greatest enemy that you face, and that I face, is the self. And Satan even plays upon that very fact to deepen the level of our deception.

I mentioned in the sermon for the Day of Atonement just past, the change that occurred within our parent affiliation, years ago, on the topic of the nature of man, and I want to go through just a couple of those quotes again, because I think it is incredibly important that we get this. Yes, the focus of attention was on those greater, more significant, limelight doctrines that were changed beginning in 1974 or 1975—the changing of Pentecost from Monday to Sunday, the change on divorce and remarriage (the corruption of the marriage doctrine, which was heinous in the sight of God)—and yet, one that came and went, and that was changed very much more subtly and without a lot of attention, was the doctrine on the nature of man. And there are many of you, I know, that have come into the church, even years after that apostasy—maybe during the years of the 1980s and the 1990s—who never even knew, for a long time, that there ever was a change. I've talked to people who knew about the changes in the other doctrines, and yet had no idea there was ever a change in the concept of the nature of man, and they had read books of Mr. Armstrong's like *The Incredible Human Potential*, published in 1978, or *Mystery of the Ages*, and the way these describe the nature of man, and just assumed that this was the way it was always taught, and it wasn't, at all. What was the original teaching? The best succinct quote I could find comes from the *Ambassador College Correspondence Course*, lesson number 21, from 1959 [1967]. And what did it say?

COMMENT: "Wicked" means SINFUL! And "sin is the *transgression* of the law"—GOD'S LAW (I John 3:4). So man is BORN with an *inherently disobedient mind*. [Did you get that? Man is born with an inherently disobedient mind.] AN *EXTREMELY DISOBEDIENT MIND*! God *ought* to know. He *created* our minds with the inherent disobedient pulls of human nature!

Who put that evil nature within us from birth? God did. God created us with those carnal natures that oppose Him. Why? For His perfect purpose, so that it requires us to build character in order to overcome ourselves, through the power of God's Holy Spirit working upon our minds, even as Jesus Christ was able to perfectly fulfill God's will in the flesh—not giving in to the whims of His carnal

mind, but using the power of the Holy Spirit to keep Himself in check, and to fulfill, perfectly, every law of God.

What was the change that took place? What did the church begin to preach, subtly, in the early 1970s? The earliest reference I found was from 1976, written even at the hand of Mr. Herbert Armstrong, whom we respect as the man whom God used to reveal the Truth. But what did he even allow under the sway of these men—the scholars who didn't hold the Truth with a right mind of integrity? What did they begin to preach, and even to get Mr. Armstrong to accept, so that he even wrote it himself in 1976? This is what he said: "We humans start out at birth all right." We humans start out at birth all right. "But soon we begin to absorb and ACQUIRE the selfish, self-centered attitude broadcast by Satan." What was the change in doctrine that happened in the middle 1970s? That human beings are neutral in nature—that we are neither bad, nor good—it's just that we soon tune-in to the negativity sponsored by Satan, and Satan is the one who, then, inserts his evil orientation into us, after the fact. That was the subtle falsehood that crept in, brethren, and it was *not* that which was revealed from the beginning. It was part of Satan's subtle work to deceive us into not being able to recognize the true enemy, because if you and I are dissuaded about the reality of our own natures, then he is in a perfect position to set us up for failure. Because if you and I have any thought in our minds that by nature we are neutral, then we are not even looking in the right place in order to battle that enemy. The only ones who are going to be able to successfully battle are the ones who recognize the enemy. And recognize, holy brethren—those of you that are called for that holy calling and are part of the Body of Christ—it is your nature and my nature that is our greatest enemy.

Satan is the archenemy, and we want to address him now, who plays upon that inherent defect of mind that God created us with, and it is defective in that we are incomplete—there is a missing element. Christ did not have the missing element—He had the same carnal nature, but He also had the fullness of God's Spirit to counteract that carnality, so that He never sinned. But He absolutely did have the pulls of that flesh every day of His life that He walked on this earth. Brethren, the only way that we have a savior is if Christ overcame the same nature that you and I were born with. Otherwise, if Christ didn't have those same kinds of pulls, you see, His accomplishment was not that great at all. The only thing that makes His sacrifice noteworthy is the fact that He, through the very power of the

mind of God working in Him, overcame the very same carnal nature that you and I possess.

So, part two of that enemy is that which you all recognize: Satan, the Devil. There is no question, brethren, that we have a powerful archenemy in him. Turn with me to Revelation chapter 12. Revelation chapter 12—probably the best chapter in the Bible that succinctly demonstrates the fullness of the corruptness, and the power and deceit of that being who seeks our destruction. Revelation chapter 12 and beginning in verse 1:

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth . . .

We are talking about a historical event when Lucifer—that great archangel who served as one of the covering cherubim in the highest angelic position at the very throne of God—rebelled. He was great and glorious—a being of light and power, which God had given to him for a purpose. And yet, he was defective, and that defect showed up in time, however long it took—perhaps as long as millions of years, we don't know, because time is irrelevant to God. But the time came when that great angelic being decided that he was worth more than God had created him to be, and wanted to be equal with God. He not only departed from God's Law and became an enemy, he influenced other angelic beings, as well, to follow him. And so he drew a third of God's holy angels (how many trillions might that be?) into his very revolt and rebellion against God. It is hard for us to really imagine what that might have been like, but it certainly happened.

"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman"—representing the Church, those called out, the Body of Christ, that Holy Nation. And they are holy only because they have been given a calling—an opportunity—not holy by their own design, according to the flesh. Not at all.

"[A]nd the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." This is a reference to Jesus Christ, the Savior, born of human beings through a flesh-and-blood mother. He was to be the Savior of mankind. And if Satan, the Devil had been able to destroy Jesus Christ, then you and I, my dear brethren, would be without any hope of salvation.

"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne." Yes, God did not allow Satan, the Devil to devour Christ—to thwart His plan for the building of that Holy Nation, that Family of God. No, God is not now locked into a battle with Satan, the Devil as though Satan were a peer, or an equal, which is what the world's religions absolutely believe. All of the Protestant religions that profess Christ by name will tell you that there is this great war, and this battle, going on now between God and Satan, as they fight for the souls of men, and so they do their missionary works around the world in all countries—third-world countries. I see them every year when I go to the Philippine Islands. I'm usually on an airplane full of missionaries from different religious groups who are all going to do their work, and to "save" these people before they die, believing that if they don't accept the name of Jesus Christ before they die, they are going to burn in hell fire forever and ever. What a deception.

If we believe that Satan is locked into a battle with God, then we must believe that Satan is winning, because I don't see people in this world drawing closer to God, even though many of them use the name of Christ. But I see a whole lot of people turning around the other way and partaking in all kinds of nefarious activities. But we recognize that which the world does not recognize, through our calling through the ministry Mr. Herbert Armstrong who taught us the plan of God, by the revelation of Jesus Christ, and that there are several different and distinct times of salvation. But I don't want to get into that, that is going to be for the Last Great Day.

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not . . .

You see, Satan has already lost the battle. That happened eons ago—that assault at the very throne of God—and God cast him back down. He was not victorious—he failed right then and there. The only thing is, you see, God has left him in office where he originally placed Lucifer, because He did give Lucifer charge of the earth as the king over this dominion, and then in Lucifer's rebellion, he became the Devil. God cast him back down to this realm, and He left him in that office, even though he had disqualified himself from keeping it permanently. But, you see, God is not going to leave an office unfilled, so He did not remove that Devil, at that very moment, and has yet to remove him, because he is still the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world. Because God was preparing his replacement in Christ Jesus, who came and qualified in the flesh by His perfect life, and by His death, burial and resurrection, so that He could assume the office of King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with dominion over this earth. And yet, the Father is the only one who knows when the right time is—when He will give that Kingdom over to the Son, and that Son will come with power and glory and take possession of that Kingdom, and Satan will be dethroned and cast into outer darkness.

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world . . ." That's what his work is, brethren—one of a master deceiver—and, boy, has he done his work well.

[H]e was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Do you have somebody of great spiritual power who hates you? You had better believe it. That being would love nothing more than to see you give up your place and to have your name stricken from the Book of Life that is in God's hand, and he will do anything that he can to get you, and to get me, to make that deadly choice.

Verse 11: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." So, here we are talking about somebody who was successful and victorious—someone who

is going to gain the mastery by the return of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Lamb, the very Holy Spirit living and dwelling within us.

. . . and they loved not their lives unto the death [This is somebody who loves the cause of that spiritual warfare so much that they are willing to sacrifice everything in the flesh to achieve the promise of that reward]. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

How many of you have been tested, and tried, and attacked by that very archenemy? I know that many of you have. Brethren, if we know who we are, no matter how small a remnant we are, and how insignificant we even appear in our own eyes, we recognize that because God has called us and given us the opportunity to hold an office in that Kingdom at the return of Jesus Christ, Satan loathes us and hates us more than any other human beings on the face of the earth. There are over six billion people on this earth right now, and he hates us the most. He already has the rest of the world deceived; he doesn't need to spend his attention there. They are just following the inclinations of their natural minds; it's very easy to deceive and to motivate them to evil. But the ones that he loathes the most are you who have been called now, with an opportunity to be a part of that Firstfruits harvest, and who are walking in that Way, fighting this spiritual warfare. He wants to defeat you, he wants to appeal to your natural carnal nature, and he wants you to let him influence you to turn away.

. . . because he knoweth he hath but a short time. [Verse 13:] And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

And we know that is going to happen. We don't know the fulfillment of it and we don't speculate on how God will fulfill that prophecy of a place of safety. We are willing to wait patiently for God to reveal all of that.

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Who is it that is in the war? Those who have the testimony—those who were given *the* Truth, those who were called to a knowledge of that priceless Way of Life. Whether you know it or not, brethren, by God having called you and given you that opportunity, you were immediately inducted into the heart of the greatest battle—the greatest war—that has ever occurred on the face of this earth: the war of spirit against flesh, with eternal life as the stake.

Now, turn with me again to Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 10. Ephesians 6 and beginning in verse 10. We read this last time, but we are going to read it many more times:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

As one of our members pointed out, a very appropriate translation from the *Geneva Bible* for this word "wiles" is actually "assaults": "[T]hat ye may be able to stand against the *assaults* of the devil"—that archenemy who has declared war on you and seeks to destroy you.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness [or even more appropriately, "wicked spirits"] in high places.

Yes, the enemy that we fight in Satan, the Devil is not just some lowly, little inept being with very limited, ineffective capability. We are talking about a master deceiver—we are talking about a being of great power and capacity—because God has not removed that from him yet. He is not continuing

to have that power of his own accord, it is only as God allows, according to His perfect will, in order to test us and to try us. And He is allowing that archenemy to attack us—to assault us—because that is the only way that you and I are going to gain and build the character that is necessary to pass the test. God needs to know that we love His way so much that there is nothing that we will allow to deter us from that hope. Because when we overcome that archenemy, and our own natural natures, then God will have absolute confidence in offering us eternal life, knowing, by the character that we have built through the trials of our lives in the flesh, that we will never turn against Him for all eternity, and that we will be faithful and loyal to that God Family. And that is what He seeks: a holy seed in His Family.

And of our archenemy, it says that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities . . ." Principalities. He is an officer in God's government. God left that Devil in the office of king of this earth for the time being. It is a principality. We wrestle "against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against [wicked spirits] in high places." And yes, they are in high places, and they have the command of great resources to do their nefarious work in seeking to destroy you.

1 Peter 5 and verse 8. 1 Peter 5 and verse 8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." We are the potential prey. If we are not keeping our eyes focused upon the goal, and if we do not recognize the enemy—the real enemies—involved, then we are absolutely setting ourselves up to be attacked and destroyed.

Brethren, if we are aware of who the enemy really is, then we are in a perfect position to avoid deception, in the same way that the United States is now engaged in a great act of intelligence-gathering, seeking to identify who their enemy is, and learning about the enemy. Knowledge is the power to be able to defeat them. And so, brethren, we have to know our enemy, as well, if we are to have a hope and a chance of defeating it.

In closing, 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 12. 1 Corinthians 10 and beginning in verse 12: "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." This is an admonition of the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, speaking in reference to ancient Israel and all of the mistakes that they made,

which are there for an example for you and for me to be used in this spiritual warfare. There is a power that comes from learning from history and all that God wrote concerning the poor decisions that the Israelites made.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man [What is it that is common to man? The carnal nature that God created us with]: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

That enemy is not greater than we are, if we are using the implements of warfare that God has given to us. Next time we will begin to see the first of those implements of warfare—the armor of God—that God has provided to give us the power to defeat those archenemies. More, next time.