

THE HEAVENLY WAR

Scripture: Luke 11: 14-23

Saturday, March 31, 2018, 40th Day of Lent

In 1938, Orson Welles terrified millions of Americans with his radio narration of H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. The drama was so realistic that many thought that aliens were actually invading our planet, intent on destroying the human race. It was only fiction; no one should have believed such a far-fetched tale. But they did.

The Bible clearly affirms that we are engaged in combat with an unseen enemy that is intent on destroying the human race: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" ([Eph. 6:12](#)). It is a frightening truth which no one should doubt or ignore. But many do doubt it and live as if it is not true.

The apostle John affirms that "the Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil" ([1 John 3:8](#)). Luke is showing that Jesus' miracles establish His legitimate authority as the Messiah, the Son of God, sent to deliver us from the power of Satan. But Jesus' authority put Him into conflict with the Jewish religious authorities, who did not want to yield to Him. [Luke 11:14-23](#) shows the mounting tension between Jesus and these religious leaders. Rather than approaching Jesus with teachable hearts and open minds, they accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan and they challenged Him by demanding some sign from heaven. As such, they were reissuing the third temptation that Satan had put before Jesus, to use His power for show by casting Himself off the Temple pinnacle. Jesus soundly proved their demands by giving this extensive teaching on spiritual conflict, the heavenly war. We learn that ...since Jesus' miracles authenticate His victory over Satan, we must decisively follow Him.

In other words, this isn't just a subject to banter about in an interesting discussion. Lives and eternal destinies are at stake. People cannot ignore Jesus. They must decide for Him or they are against Him. Neutrality is impossible. We either follow Christ into battle on His side, or we oppose Him and remain on Satan's side. These are the crucial issues behind this section of Luke's Gospel.

Jesus says, "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters" (11:23). In other words, neutrality is not an option. You can't straddle the fence by saying, "I'm not a committed follower of Jesus, but neither am I a follower of Satan!" Nor can you correctly say, "I don't follow Jesus or Satan. I'm my own master." Jesus makes it plain: Either you follow Him or you are against Him and in Satan's camp. Those are the only options.

If we get "help" from any other power than Jesus Christ and His gospel, we have not gotten true and lasting help. You may get a clean and well-ordered house, but you don't have transformation of your soul. You may have a sense of peace and freedom from the troubles that plagued you, but you don't have eternal life. You have a temporarily empty house, whereas the sinner who repents and trusts in Christ has the Holy Spirit as the new permanent occupant (11:13). Even more alarming, you may feel content enough without Christ that you assume that all is well in your soul. Not having a desperate sense of need, you will not flee to the cross to lay hold of the only true Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose shed blood is necessary to deliver you from Satan's power.

So, Luke presses you to answer the question: Is Jesus Christ who He claimed to be or not? Is His authority as the Messiah sent from God established by the miracles He performed? Is Jesus the Son of God in human flesh? You must commit yourself to follow Him whatever the consequences or results. You may suffer trials, persecution, and even death. Jesus is truly Lord, He alone defeated Satan's power, and you must commit yourself to Him and to Him alone. How do you do this?

Thankfully, it isn't that difficult! We have the clear record of the gospel accounts that relate to us what Jesus said and did. There is a spiritual battle raging with two and only two sides. Clearly, Jesus has authority over Satan and his forces. We are on one side or the other. If you are not decisively on Jesus' side, you are against Him. To join His side, you must believe in Him and follow Him in obedient faith.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gospel accounts that tell us what you said and did. Jesus, you have authority over Satan and his forces. Give us the courage to remain true to your calling. Protect us as we strive to do your will. Amen.

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