



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

War of the Worlds

Invisible War: Winning Against Evil | Part 3

Tim Badal | June 28, 2015 | Various Scriptures



We are continuing our series entitled, "Invisible War: Winning Against Evil." We're going to be bouncing all over the Scriptures today, looking at what different writers have to say about this war that we are fighting.

As we've look at this issue of spiritual warfare in our lives, we've seen that:

1. We're in a war
2. We have enemies

We've been looking at all the different enemies that we have as Christians. Last week we looked at public enemy number one: the devil and his demons—how they operate, how they got their start and how this battle will end for them.

Now we turn to a subtler enemy, an enemy that is all around us. We come into contact with this enemy every day. The Bible calls this enemy the world. Before you start to think this war is with our fellow human beings, remember Ephesians 6:12. Paul says that this warfare is not against flesh and blood. This isn't against people. This isn't against the people on the other side of the political spectrum. It isn't against people on another continent. This war is a war against the cosmic powers that are over the present darkness in which we find ourselves. This war is against spiritual forces of evil.

Whatever takes place in the heavenly realms has ramifications for the physical realm. Because of the rebellion in the spiritual realm—until God sees fit to end it—there will be rebellion here on earth. The reason rebellion is such a big part of our lives is that we have an enemy that seeks to destroy the lives of people. This is the enemy of the world. Turn in your Bible to 1 John 2:15–17. Here's what John says to the church of yesterday and today:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

In 1898, H. G. Wells wrote what many literary scholars believe to be the first real science-fiction story. It's one of the first literary pieces where extraterrestrial creatures interact with humanity. In his classic, H. G. Wells tells the story of the *War Of The Worlds*. Martians come down to earth and systematically destroy the world as we know it. He vividly articulates the Martians journey from city to city to exterminate the human race. The book had great success. In 1938, a radio show narrated by Orson Wells caused a panic by portraying H. G. Wells' words in a dramatic reading. People were worked into mass hysteria. They thought, "Could an unknown and unseen enemy destroy us at a moment's notice?" People were gripped by fear that an unseen enemy could do such damage.

While science-fiction stories of Martians and aliens coming to earth are entertaining, I want to remind you today that there is a war of the worlds going on. It's a fierce battle. Sadly, our war of the worlds is not a battle between unnamed and unseen Martians; it's a battle like that of the Civil War. It's a battle fought between parents and children, between neighbors and friends. It's a battle fought in the media. It's a battle fought in our schools and our workplaces. We see this battle in athletics and in the halls of academia. And as we've seen this week, it's being fought in the high courts. There's a clear and present danger, Village Bible Church, that should not lead us to mass hysteria, but to sober-mindedness. There is a war going on. It is a fierce battle. It is a battle that God has called each Christian to be part of so we must be ready to face the enemy, even when he is unseen.

The world is a subtle enemy. Many times, we don't see what the world is doing until we see the damage that has been done. This damage is done by non-believers and believers alike. Our series so far has focused on finding victory in the spiritual battle that we're facing. We've sought to identify each of our enemies. We've asked, "How do those enemies operate? What tools do the enemies use?" Then we asked the question, "What's our response going to be?" This is our outline:

1. Identify the enemy
2. Remind people that we're in a war
3. We need to respond to the power of God's Spirit and His Word in order to find victory

Finding victory in this world means that you must:

1. Define who the enemy is

The Bible has a lot to say about the enemy of the world. This world is a place that we should not love. When we love the world, we become enemies of God. Even being friends with the world means that we are at enmity with the God of the universe so we have to ask: What is this world? Is John telling us that we can't love the physical world that we live in? When we go to the Grand Canyon, should we say, "I can't love you. I can't even look at you. You are unworthy. You're dirty"? Is that what John is telling us? No.

The world is mentioned almost 200 times in the New Testament. The word "world" in the Greek literally means the order of things, or how something is ordered. When the Bible talks about the world, it's not saying that our enemy is the physical world. The physical world that we live in is under a curse, but it still is something immensely beautiful and good. Nowhere in Scripture are we called to hate the physical world. In fact, we are to join the physical earth as it groans for its own redemption. Jesus said that if we will not praise Christ, the rocks will cry out (Luke 19:37–40). We are partners with the physical world as it gives glory to the One and only true God and His Son Jesus Christ.

What is the world? This world is not the earth that we live upon so let's get a definition.

The world is a society or system that man has built in order to make himself happy without God.

Man was created by God for a purpose. The Westminster Confession says that man was created to worship God and enjoy God forever. Because of sin, the world says that the job of humanity is to worship self and enjoy self forever. The world devalues God and elevates man. It tells us to live in direct defiance to God and His Word. God says, "Worship Me. Give Me praise. Give Me adoration and I will take care of all that you need. I will give you all that you require in this life. I will bring you joy and peace and contentment. I want to lavish you with My love." Sadly, just as it was in the garden, people today say "No" to God and "Yes" to self. The Bible shows us how this plays out.

I want you to see a couple things about the system.

This system reaches all corners of the earth

It is easy for us to reel from a Supreme Court decision and say that the world resides here in America. That may be true, but I want to remind you that if your view of worldliness only goes as far as "from sea to shining sea" then you have a myopic view of this world system. This is a battle that was fought in first-century Israel and continues to be fought in 21st century Kane County, Illinois. It's a system that doesn't just prevail here in America, but all over the world as well. When you lament what's happening, remember that your brothers and sisters all over the world are lamenting the world system's prevalent desire to destroy God and His Kingdom. Some of you think that the world's only getting worse. You think about worldliness and say, "It'll never get better." However, as we look at human history we see that God in His sovereignty does a couple different things:

1. During the times of great moral and spiritual decay, God does His greatest work. We don't need to look very far to see this. Under the extreme tension and pressure that Chairman Mao had over the Chinese people, the Chinese church grew more than it ever had in its history. In nations where the Word of God is suppressed, revival is breaking out. Even during the darkest times of American history, great revivals overtook the entire nation and moved the people back to God. The world is busy and active, affecting all aspects of creation and humanity.
2. We also must recognize that amidst these times, God always has the final answer.

This system has a ruler

This world is a kingdom and it has a ruler. It's a system with its own government. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 we are told that this world has a god with a small g. This is the devil himself. Turn to Ephesians 2:1–2. Paul says this about the world: "*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.*" The devil has been given a level of authority for a season. He executes his rule and

authority into the lives of humanity through a world system. He shares with his subjects his focus, his agenda and his goals. He does so in many ways outside of mere human understanding.

The name, *"the prince of the power of the air"* expresses the idea that it's happening in all places. Just as there's air in every cubic inch of the world, so in every cubic inch of this great world the devil is actively at work in the lives of people. Many of you will say, "I just need to get rid of all the worldly elements. I need to just get away from all of that." Well, we have missionaries in New Guinea working with a group of people who had never seen a white person before. Many of the people in the tribe had only been involved with other nearby tribes. They had no connection to the outside world. Our missionary told me in an e-mail that the devil was there amongst that tribe just as he was back in Michigan. The same issues—the same lusts and desires, the same rebellion going on in an unreached people group—are happening with reached people in the same ways. Why? The devil is prowling around like a roaring lion seeking people to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

This system endorses rampant evil

The best description of the world is found in Judges 21:25, *"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."* The world loves living in anarchy. The world loves it when man is supreme and God is suppressed. In Ephesians 2:2, the world longs for people to live in disobedience, where people are not led by God in His Holy Word, but by their passions. They carry out the desires of the flesh. Where you find evil, you will find the world advertising its craft. Because of this, God says in Galatians 1:4, the age we live in is the evil age, devoid of goodness. This doesn't mean that you can't find goodness in the world, but it is a goodness that is marred because of sin.

This system is something we need to be rescued from

This week as you watch the news, read articles and go on different social media platforms, it can be easy to want to separate yourself from this world with an air of disdain and superiority. We see our current political situation as us against them. However, Galatians 1:3–4 tells us that the only reason we are on Jesus' side and not the world's side is because He has single-handedly rescued us from this world. Before you start to think, "Well, I know that sin is sin. I understand that holiness is better than debauchery," remember that you used to walk in the same way.

When we see the sin and debauchery of the world, our hearts should be filled with anguish and pain, remembering that we were once there as well. We were once part of that lifestyle. If it weren't for Jesus, we would still be there today. Because of this world system, and because of Christ and His Kingdom, we've got a war of the worlds. It's a fierce battle.

This system requires that a choice be made

You have to choose a side. You cannot stay on one side and then bounce to the other. You must make a choice. The Bible makes it clear that even friendship with the world is an affront to the will and Word of God (James 4:4). Therefore you must make a decision. Will you live in the realm of God or the realm of the world? That is what the decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ means. By the power of God, your sinful eyes were opened, allowing you to see this world at war. A decision has to be made. Will you follow Christ for advancement of His Kingdom, not only in your life but also in the life of the world as you know it, or will you allow yourself to be ruled by your own desires, your own wants, your own prerogatives and preferences?

Following Jesus Christ is not a "get out of hell free" card. Jesus isn't a means to spend eternity in a place of joy rather than a place of torment. While this is one of the benefits of the gospel message, it isn't the gospel. The gospel message is this: you have been given an opportunity to be part of the Kingdom of light and leave the kingdom of darkness. That means you must bow the knee to Jesus Christ. Because there is a war raging, you've got to make a decision. You must decide whether you're going to choose your own sin or God's righteousness. Are you going to choose to use the resources that God has given you for His glory or your own consumption? Are you going pursue your own satisfaction and entertainment, or are you going to give God the worship that He deserves?

In Joshua 24:15, Joshua had a decision to make. He gave an ultimatum to the Israelites and I put this same decision before you today: *"...choose this day whom you will serve..."* Is it going to be yourself? Is it going to be others? Or is it going to be God? You may ask the question, "How do I know whom I'm serving?" The answer to that question is found in examining your everyday life. How do you spend your time? How do you spend your talents? How do you spend your treasure? Where do you find joy? What do you dream about? If you're honest with yourself, you will get a good idea of whom you are serving.

2. Detect the world's methods

What's the world doing? How does the world hold so much sway over believers and non-believers alike? It's subtle. It's a game of redirection. Turn back to 1 John 2:15: *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* You can't play it both ways. What are the world's methods? In 1 John 2:15–17 we see three things:

1. The desires of the flesh
2. The desires of the eyes
3. The pride of life

How are we being unwittingly redirected? The world seeks to redirect our:

Appetites

This isn't like deciding not to eat meat anymore and becoming vegan. This isn't changing your appetite from GMO foods to eat all organic. That's not what John is talking about when he speaks of our appetites. Here "appetite" refers to the things of the flesh. This kind of appetite usually involves the sexual arena. The question you must ask yourself is: "Am I going to satisfy those desires according to the Creator's good wisdom, or according to my own?" These hungers aren't just sexual; they can be all kinds of desires that human beings have. The question you face is: "Will I trust that the God Who created me knows what those hungers are?" Because He created them and because He knows them, He will fulfill them in His Own perfect time and in His Own perfect way. That's one decision you must make. Will you say, "Yes, I will trust Him. Yes, I will believe that. I have faith in that"? Or will you say, "I can satisfy those desires whenever and however I want. I will decide when those appetites get fed."

Nobody is saying that human beings don't have appetites. Nobody is saying that human beings don't have certain urges and passions and desires. The question is: Who is going to fulfill that appetite? The world says, "If it feels good, do it. If it feels right to your body, then it must be right." It is not that those feelings and those urges aren't real. However, those urges, feelings and desires must be placed under the mantle of God and His Word.

The church has missed this for a long time. I grew up in a generation where sexual appetites were seen as something dirty, as something that should not be talked about, as something that happens but needs to stay behind closed doors. Because of this, the church was ill prepared for the war that the world threw its way. We blew it. In some ways, the world has won some battles. Oswald Chambers wrote that love can wait and worship endlessly, but lust says, "I must have it all and have it now."

Are there appetites that are saying, "I have to have it now"? Teenagers especially struggle with this. As a teenager, I don't know how many times I came into my parents' room and told them, "If I don't have this, I'm going to die." As a kid it was toys. As a teenager it was a car and clothes. As a young adult it was sex. As an older adult it's a house or a vacation or a spouse. "If I don't have this, I will die." That is the lust of the flesh. Are you going to allow the world to dictate how those desires are taken care of, or will you place yourself under the authority of Jesus Christ and His Word?

Aspirations

This is a different kind of lust. It is the lust for things, for possessions. Americans are incredibly materialistic. Christians have fallen prey to this more than we would ever want to admit. We lust for more things, better things, nicer things, newer things and more beautiful things. The world tells us two things over and over again:

1. You may own something, but it's bad and it's lost its luster.
2. We've got the answer to that dilemma.

This pops up in advertisements all the time. They tell you that whatever you do have is terrible and you've got to get a newer replacement. Christians fall for it all the time. We fall for it because we find our contentment in things instead of in God. Does that mean we can't have or purchase new things? No. However, you do need to ask yourself, "Is my life consumed with working for things? Do I get up and get fired up about possessions or do I get up and get fired up about God? Is He number One? Is every financial decision, every purchase that I make funneled through the Word of God?"

This may offend some of you. However, if you're not giving to the work of God and His Kingdom, you have fallen prey to the world and its system. God is not important to you. You may have made that decision out of ignorance or out of incredible insubordination. Whatever your motive is, if you have said, "This money is mine it belongs to me," you're telling God, "You may rule the world, but You do not rule my wallet." You are in the world more than you know. Be careful. The world is eroding your kingdom ability to bring glory to God in all that you do. Change that. Seek to honor God with every dollar you spend, remembering that He is going to evaluate what you have done in this world for Him. I can assure you that when I get to heaven, God isn't going to care how Five B's Catering did in any given fiscal year, or what kind of house I lived in, or what kind of car I drove or where I went on vacation. God's going to ask the question, "What eternal things did you do for this Kingdom?"

Acclaim

The final thing that John speaks about is the pride of life. The world has sought to redirect who is number one in your life. Since the beginning, God has made one thing clear: He's Numero Uno. He must be your chief pursuit and the greatest desire of your life. The

world says, "It's not about God; it's about you." So we go about building our lives with one thing in mind: to show how truly great we are. We will go to great lengths to make this a reality.

If you don't think this is true, look at magazines and television. We idolize people who have made themselves great. We want to be like them. We want to dress like them. We want to talk like them. We want to drive the cars that they drive. The reason advertisers use celebrities to sell their products is that they know that if you have a desire to be like another human being you will go and buy that product. Why? Because we think, "If I drive that car, I will look like Brad Pitt. If I buy those jeans, I'll be like Katy Perry. I'll be like the Kardashians. If I wear that cologne..." When you think like that, you devalue God and His place in your life. You've elevated yourself saying, "I want to be like another human being. I want to be like them."

Is the direction of your life to do all that you can so that one singular thing can be said of you? "That individual lives to bring glory to God" or, "They live to glorify self." If it's more about yourself, you're living in the realm of the world, not the realm of God.

3. Determine how to respond

These two worlds are battling for our allegiance. What are you going to do about it? There are three responses:

Embrace it

Some Christians find themselves like a frog in the kettle that's slowly warming up. Because they're in this warming kettle, they never recognize the temperature is gradually getting warmer and warmer. Before they know it they're dead. And there are Christians who are enjoying the warm water of living for self. They lower their standards little by little each year. Soon, we can't remember what standards we had in the first place. When we don't devote ourselves to God and His working in our lives, we embrace the world's ideas. You can't be neutral in this war. You can't just float along thinking, "I'm a Christian, but I sure do like what I watch on TV. I sure do like what I'm doing with my friends. I sure do like what I look at on the Internet." You think that you can be neutral, but you can't.

James 4:4 says that even friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God. You can't have two masters. You're either going to love the one or hate the other. Some of you are embracing the world and think you're just fine. Jesus says in the Book of Revelation that people who live in that lukewarm kind of attitude are going to be spit out of His mouth. You're neither hot, nor cold (Revelation 3:14–22). I'm no Greek scholar, but I don't think it's a good thing to be vomited out by Jesus. We need to ask ourselves: "When Jesus looks at my life, does it make Him sick? Does His stomach turn when he looks set at my neutral, kind-of-in, kind-of-out lifestyle?"

Escape it

There are some though people on the other side of the spectrum who choose to escape it. Some Christians look at our culture and say that it's too far-gone. Especially after this week, you really want to remove yourself from the world and disengage. You are an escapee if you can't remember the last time you had a meaningful conversation with a neighbor or a co-worker. Does your circle of influence consist only of believers? We've got to make some hard decisions. There's some serious sickness out there.

Think of it this way: Flu season is fast approaching us. There are times when you see another individual and you know that they are either coming from the bathroom having done their thing, or they're about to go there again. When you see a person that sick, what do you do? You stay away. You don't hug and kiss that person when they're green in the face. You recognize the presence of the flu. But that doesn't mean that during flu season you don't engage with anybody. You're careful to wash your hands but then go on with your daily activities. Here's the problem: Some Christians have said, "Because there's flu out there, I have to remove myself and live in a bubble so that I never get the flu." You forget that the flu is inside of you as well. The only thing you're doing by staying in your bubble is contaminating yourself by you own germs (sin). This has huge implications. We live in a world of sickness. That is the risk that you take as you engage with this world. You may get the flu. However, you can protect yourself. Engage as much as possible with the world so that you can be the light of Christ.

Engage it

You are the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13–16). We live in a world of darkness. We live in a world that needs to be purified. The New Testament models a lifestyle that doesn't leave or abandon the culture, or wait for some rapture to take place. No! Brothers and sisters, the Bible says that we should live upright and holy lives until He comes (Titus 1:5–9). As we preach and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, we hasten the day of the Lord's coming. We can't sit back in our Christian La-Z-Boys and wait for the coming of the Lord.

We must engage the world with the mindset that God has not finished His work here on earth. Here's why: If God wanted us to escape from this world, He would have raptured us the second we came to know Jesus. He hasn't done that because He has called us to go into the entire world and make disciples. That's our calling. We've got to engage the world. I know that it's hard. It can be scary. But don't allow your light to be diminished because of darkness.

Here's what we know to be true: The church shines brightest when the world is at its darkest. The best days for Village Bible Church are yet to come. We may go down to one service someday. Maybe there will be fewer of us here. However, in a world of persecution and pain, the Kingdom of God is going to advance so much more than it does in times of comfort and ease. We need to recognize that and be ready for it. So what do we do?

Guiding Principles to Remember

There are four simple truths that I want you to walk away with. Some of them are found in specific Scripture passages. Others are drawn from the totality of what Scripture shows us.

1. **Don't be stupid. This is serious business.** Some of us are so ignorant of this war. We are not doing anything to discern the spirits that are around us. Some of us are watching things and laughing at things and enjoying things that the Bible has clearly told the people of God to stay away from. Some of us are participating in things that God has called us to run away from. We're hugging them. We're embracing them. We're petting them as if they are cute puppy dogs. The devil seeks to destroy. We have become lax in our understanding of what church is and why we exist as a people of God. This may seem legalistic to you, but some years ago, when we tracked attendance we saw that 80% of our congregation was at church on any given week. That meant 20% were out doing other things. That year 75% of our people attended small groups. Today those numbers are down to 50%. Now you say, "Well, sometimes we go on vacation." I get it. I go on vacation. I have another job. I understand that there are things going on. I get it. But the church needs to understand that it is a place where weary soldiers come in from a battle. This is home base where people recoup, heal and are reminded of the mission so that they can go on another week's mission. We're missing it. We walk into this place like it's nothing, like there isn't a battle going on. We have to make sure that all the comforts are there: that the church starts on time, at the right time, so it works into your schedule; so that you have your cup of coffee. Churches are drowning themselves in attempts to attract people. How do you attract real believers? You tell them there's a battle going on and that this is home base. We need one another. We need God's Word in our lives. As we fight this battle, we must recognize who our allies are and who the enemies are. We help one another in that way. Many Christian parents show their children lives that are saturated with the world and not Christ. Do you wonder why your kids are looking at the things they are? If you're not showing your children what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ by making the hard decisions, your children will never learn to do that for themselves. Don't be stupid. There's a war out there.
2. **Don't be schizophrenic. Choose your side carefully.** You've got a choice to make. Are you going to serve God, or are you going to serve yourself and the world? Nobody can make that choice for you. "*Choose this day whom you will serve*" (Joshua 24:15). Not whom your pastor serves, or whom your elders serve, or whom your spouse serves, or whom your parents serve. There's a war going on. Which side are you going to be on? Don't be schizophrenic. You can't go back and forth. You have to choose today whom you're going to serve.
3. **Don't be squeezed. The world wants to mold you.** When I was a young, husky boy I wanted to wear stonewashed jeans like all the skinny guys were wearing. Well, they didn't have stonewashed in the husky section. They had farmer blue. Back in the day, we went to Farm and Fleet to get our jeans. There were no fitting rooms. We had to try on clothes in the middle of the aisle. I wanted a pair of jeans and they weren't my size, but I was bound and determined to squeeze myself into them. My mom used her hand like a shoehorn. She'd pull on them and ask, "How's it feel?" The world wants to advertise the shiny new pair of shoes, the cool new clothes. It knows that you're not going to fit into them. You're on the ground and the world is saying, "Just pull a little harder. Suck it in a little more. Squeeze in." That's what Romans 12:2 says. Do not conform yourself to this world. Don't allow the world to squeeze you in. When you start feeling the world squeezing you in, step out of that the way and say, "This is not for me. I am called to something else." You are called to be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). Don't believe the lie. Believe the truth of Scripture. Allow God to lead and guide you.
4. **Don't be scared. God reigns supreme.** I can't tell you that the battle with this world is going to be easy, that it won't be filled with times of great suffering. I believe now more than ever that your job in life as a Christian just got harder. God is faithful. God is greater than this.

I was struck by the words of a song that I remember singing as a young kid. I believe it was by Bill Gaither, the great songwriter. He wrote this:

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living,
Just because He lives!

It doesn't matter what a bunch of people in black robes say about Christianity. They can't put Jesus back into the tomb, can they? He lives. Because He lives, we serve a God Who reigns supreme over the universe. He's on His throne. He wasn't thrown back by this decision. He wasn't surprised by it. He is on His throne. He's able to address everything that concerns us today.

So, live confidently, not cocky. Live steadfastly, not stubbornly. Know that you're in a battle against this world system, but that this battle has already been won.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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