

Two Kingdoms In Conflict: The Power of the Story

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May the peace of God rest with His people today. I would like to use this opportunity to thank the brothers who sponsored this and the local brothers who made this possible. I've been greatly blessed and rewarded. It's been a great blessing to be here with you.

In my message Thursday evening I used an analogy to help us answer the question: What is Christianity and what is a Christian, what does it mean to be a Christian?

Today I would like to give us the background story that we need to answer two more very important questions: What is salvation, what are we saved from? And, what did Christ's death and resurrection accomplish for us? I'd like to read just a couple of scriptures here at the beginning. Turn with me to Ephesians 6, where it says in verse 12, "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, everything possible, to indeed stand firm." Peter writes, familiar words, you know them very well, "Be sober, be vigilant." Why? "Because our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion is walking about, seeking whom he may devour."

Two kingdoms in conflict. The power of the story. The story I tell you, maybe borrowing from Henry Morris, is the story of the long war against God. God's kingdom being attacked, assaulted, by the kingdom of darkness, Satan's kingdom. That's my message this morning. I'm basically going to review a bit of Bible History and bring us to the climax of the story at Christ's crucifixion and death. Two kingdoms in conflict through long ages. The power of the story. I think if we understand the story that I'm going to tell you, and it grips our hearts, it is a key element that gives us faith and courage in the conflict that we face.

I understand that salvation is not merely a Heavenly bookkeeping transaction. Where does Scripture say that our sin and guilt are transferred to Christ, and His righteousness is transferred to our account? That's what we often hear if we read commentaries or books and so forth. I understand that salvation is much more than a legal transaction, a judicial declaration. Justification is often said to be, "We are declared righteous." Well perhaps that's true, but if God declares us righteous without making us righteous, what is He?

Salvation is fundamentally a rescue operation. We as a race, and we individually, have been captured by Satan. We've been taken captive by him. He's the enemy of God, and we have yielded ourselves, our members as instruments of unrighteousness in his service. We're in his kingdom as citizens of his kingdom, but God and Christ come to rescue us from Satan's tyranny, and bring us out of that kingdom of darkness and transfer, translate us in the King James language, into the kingdom of

His dear Son. He gives us citizenship status in His Kingdom. He makes us His sons and daughters, and He invites us to partake of His riches. We pledge our undivided allegiance to Him and His Kingdom.

Now salvation is also, I understand, a salvage job, but I'm not talking about that aspect this morning. It's God work in our hearts, beginning and going on and on and on, to transform our corrupted hearts into a heart like Jesus, to make us like Christ so that we can be fitting representatives of the Kingdom of God.

The story that I'm telling you is not told sequentially in Scripture. We just get little snapshots of it, and we have to put them together the best we can. And I'm surely you're not dogmatic about all the details that I share here today. As many story writers, sometimes we supply a bit of detail to make the story flow. Give me that license if you will. If I miss it, I welcome your insights and corrections. There are others of you here who I believe understand much of this better than I. I'm certainly not here to cause any conflicts or disputes.

I want us to see the victory of the powerful Christ, and to fall down and worship Him. To enter into that victory as His Kingdom's citizens. I believe there is power in this story. It's the story, as I said, of the long war against God. Jesus' words come to mind where He says, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." We need that, we need that in the world we live in. We face an increasingly hostile world.

Probably many of you are familiar with the Apostle's Creed. It goes something like this: "We believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth, and Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and was buried, who descended into Hades..."

When I first read the Apostle's Creed, I stopped right there, and I said, "What does that mean?" I didn't know from my background anything about that little phrase, "Descended into Hades," and what it meant. Why did the Apostles, more likely the disciples of the Apostles, who penned these words, consider Christ's descent into Hades as a part so significant of the Christian faith that they put it in a Creed 120 words long? There must have been something there that I missed entirely, and perhaps you have. I don't know, I think many of you were taught more about it than I was. I came from the Fundamentalist/Mennonite hybrid, and had a lot of Evangelical Protestant theology thrown at me, and a lot of the verbiage, and their view of salvation, things that we've talked about here today, that I did not understand in my growing up years.

Let me talk about some of these presuppositions I wrote here, "The unseen world," - do you believe this - "is just as real as the world we see?" More real, if that's possible. Do you believe that Satan wages, has waged, and will wage an age long all out war against God? He has, and all of us, men and women, even angels, are part of this warfare. I certainly believe this: "We humans can never know much about the behind-the-scenes battles in the unseen world." We don't know what's going on. I pray today, as we sit here this morning, that God would somehow bring His presence and His holy angels around this place, and drive back the powers of darkness. I don't know what's there. I've come to understand we modern westerners are much less aware of the spiritual world than people in Bible times, and even many people in the world today. We're trained not to think of those things. We don't see them. But I rejoice that God has given us some small glimpses in Scripture of the unseen spirit world and the conflict.

A classic example of course is the example of Job. God gives us a glimpse into what happens in the heavenlies. Right there in Job, He tells a story, and we don't know how often that's gone on through the ages. You remember the story of Daniel, when Daniel was praying and fasting, and he waited for

twenty-one days for an angel to come to bring him a message from God. Why was that angel delayed? There was a prince, a demonic prince, that withstood him, and would not let that angel come to Daniel to deliver the message of God. Have you ever felt like you've been waiting twenty-one days, or twenty-one years? Battles in the unseen world. Of course, in the Gospels, we do see glimpses of that battle in Jesus. God gave us these glimpses to instruct us, and to warn us.

Let's read a few scriptures. Peter, in his great sermon on Pentecost, quoted from the Psalms about Christ, "He will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption." He went on to say his soul was not left in Hades. He rose from the dead. He came back from the mansions of the dead. He burst forth from the tomb. He has made us alive together with Him. "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them." He said to John in Revelation, "I am He who lives, and was dead." Descended into Hades, in fact. "And behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Hades and of death." We can say, "Oh, Death, where is your sting? Oh, Hades, where is your victory?"

Now, when we understand this story, and we look at these scriptures... When I began to understand it, suddenly it dawned on me what Jesus meant when He said to Peter, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." For a long time, I didn't know what that meant. I've heard several explanations given, but I think it is so simple once you understand this story, so simple. The story starts in Heaven. The story of the long war against God.

Ezekiel gives us this scripture, picturing what happened in the heavenlies. It's a bit hard to understand at all, but he says, "You were the anointed cherub on the holy mountain of God. You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect." Talking about an angelic being, "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, 'til iniquity was found in you," rebellion against the law of God.

Isaiah takes up the story, Lucifer said, "I will ascend into Heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will be like the most High." That was his boast. That was his purpose. That's what he said he would do. Did he? Could he? No. "Yet," it says, "You, Lucifer, shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, and will consider you, saying 'Is this the man, the being, who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisoners?'" Notice that prophecy as a part of this story.

The war came to Eden. Adam and Eve, in that beautiful garden, listened to the lie, "You can disobey. You can sin and get by. You can sin and not die." It's the same lie that Satan says over and over. That's the fundamental lie, "You can sin and get by." The serpent came, they listened, they ate, they disobeyed. They who were created in God's image, made to be His sons and daughters, to live in dependence on Him, to enjoy fellowship with Him and the fullness of His blessing, rebelled. They stepped out of the sphere of His blessing, out of the sphere of life.

When you walk away from life, where do you end up? It's like when you walk away from light, where do you end up? You end up in darkness. You walk away from life, you end up in death. Death is a consequence of going away from life, the Author of life. It is a judgment, yes, but it is a consequence, the natural consequence, the only possible consequence, of walking away from God. "So the Lord said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, because you have done this you are cursed. I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.'"

Satan heard those words. I don't know what he understood, and thought, but he knew there was a battle ahead. Genesis 4, "Eve conceived, and bore a son, and named him Cain. 'I've gotten a man from the Lord.'" I don't know, but I think... Here I'm doing some guessing. Permit me, please. I think that Satan immediately said, "Is this the one? The seed of the woman that will destroy me?" And he set about to corrupt Cain, successfully too. Another son was born: Abel. He couldn't corrupt him; he got rid of him. Satan at work, behind the scenes in ways we don't see, trying to accomplish his purpose. That's Satan's business. When Seth was born, Adam said, "Another seed has been given me instead of Abel." I wonder if he was thinking about what God said, "The seed of the woman." I'm not sure what he was thinking.

From there you can just go on through history. We don't know very much about the world before the Great Flood. The Bible only gives us such a short account. The Earth was filled with people, and soon the Earth was filled with violence. Genesis 6 says that the sons of God married the daughters of men, an unholy mixture that produced giants in the earth and incredible violence. I won't comment more about that, but I do just notice what the Lord says. "The Lord saw that the wickedness of men was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thought of his heart was only evil continually."

What I see in that whole story is an enemy of God at work, corrupting mankind with the purpose to destroy God's plan to bring the seed of the woman to crush his head. He was so close to successful that God looked at the world and said, "This thing has gone so wicked, so corrupt, so filled with violence, that I must destroy it." But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. God took that man, and saved him and his family, carried him through the storm... The Great Flood and the Ark, you know the story well... And out the other side, and started over with a fresh, clean earth, with one family that Satan had not been able to corrupt.

What did Satan do? He immediately went to work. Right back to the same scheme, the same plan. You see it climax here, again we don't have many details. You see it climax in the story of the Tower of Babel, that grand rebellion against God in an attempt to unite all of mankind under a human hand directed by Satanic powers, to unite man against God, in great rebellion against God, and destroy God's purpose. Satan was at work. He was behind it. He invented that false religion that disseminated from Babel throughout the whole world. The Babylonians' religious system all started right there. Satan's scheme to corrupt man.

What did God do? God called Abraham. God said, "Abraham, I'm calling you out of your country, away from Babylon, and this corrupt system. Go to a land that I will show you, and through you I will bless all the families, all the nations of the Earth." That's the story of God's work to counter Satan's work. God called a man, and through that man, He promised to bring the seed of the woman that would crush Satan's head.

Just look at the history, and I can't recount much of it today, but just run through it quickly in your mind. You're Bible reading people, you know the history, I trust. All the things that happened down through the long history of the Old Testament. Starting here, I call it Abraham's Folly, the foolish decision he made to expose his wife to danger to save his own skin. Who was behind that? Would you do that to your wife, John? God forbid. Sarah's scheme, when she couldn't have a child, to put Hagar there. Who was behind that, and to bring this conflict?

Just go on down: Esau's hatred of Jacob, his intent to destroy him. Where did his hatred come from? Who's behind that? Jacob's sons' jealousy of their brother, Joseph. Their attempted murder. God intervened. God always intervenes when Satan's active; He stopped them. They threw him in a pit. They sold him down to Egypt. Who was behind all of that? Satan. I want you to see that Satan is there, Lucifer, the enemy of God, engaged in a long war against God.

Go down to Egypt with me. "Another Pharaoh arose that knew not Joseph." He started oppressing the people of Israel, and eventually he resorted to a scheme of genocide. What happens if you kill all the baby boys? What happens? That's the end of that nation. He was there to destroy this seed, this family, because he understood very well that through the family of Abraham, Issac, Jacob, and these twelve patriarchs and their descendants, God was going to do what He promised to do: destroy him, crush his head. He said, "I'm going to do my best to stop it." He worked, he worked, and he worked.

What made Pharaoh, after all those ten plagues, and the mighty destruction... Let's start here. Why did Pharaoh harden his heart? Who was behind that? Who were these gods of Egypt that Jehovah God was battling against and overthrowing in those ten plagues? All of them were surrogate gods. They were idols that were powered by demonic powers under Satan's direction. Then, when the Israelites finally left, and Pharaoh said, "Get out of here. Get going before we're all dead," and a couple days later he said, "We've got to go after and get them." I just can't think what that man was thinking. Was he crazy? After what he had experienced? I'm convinced that Satan was there, and put it in his heart. "Go get those men. Destroy them. Destroy that people. Don't let them go, bring them back into bondage." That's all the picture, I guess, David Bercot, of our salvation, a beautiful picture of our salvation.

Who was behind the Golden Calf rebellion? I just read that story at the end of this past week. Moses on the mountain, that tremendous display of the power of God, that people said, "We will enter into a covenant with God. We'll be his people, obey Him. We'll do all that He says to do," and forty days later, a Golden Calf came out. Who was behind that, corrupting Israel? Attempting to destroy God's plan?

Balak's scheme to call down a curse on Israel. Achan's sin. Go through the Book of Judges, and all the corruption in the Book of Judges when every man did that which is right in his own eyes. Up and down history, I see Satan's footprints everywhere I look. This long war against God. Finally, Israel demanded a king, and we have the story of the tragedy of Saul. Who was behind that? I ask that question again and again. I want us to see behind the scenes. I want us to think, "What's going on in the heavenlies?"

Then God raised up David, a man after His own heart, in His time, His purpose, and said, "Through you, through your family line, I will bring the redeemer into the world to crush Satan's head." What does Satan do? He began to attack David. He seduced him through Bathsheba. He fell into adultery. He committed adultery, he committed murder, and a whole series of sins. Who was behind that? Satan.

Then the zenith of Israelites glory under Solomon, the building of the great temple of God, the worship of God. All of that is so beautiful, so powerful. God was blessing his people. They were, at least in a measure, what He intended them to be: a picture of His kingdom in the world that would draw other people to Him as the holy, righteous God, the God of Heaven and Earth. Then we have the story of Solomon's tragic apostasy. Who was behind that? Who was working? How can it be? Rehoboam's foolish rebellion. You read the story of Israel through the years. The persistent adultery, the clash at Mount Carmel, and the whole thing. I can see Satan at work, over and over.

Now, jump to the New Testament with me. Satan heard Gabriel's announcement. Now, Satan has messengers, he has angels. He's not omnipresent, but he has demons all over. They're listening, they're looking, they're learning. When Gabriel came to Zachariah, when Gabriel came to the Virgin Mary, and said, "This is the time. I'm going to start acting. I'm going to bring that Savior into the world," Satan was there, or his demons were there and reported to him, "There's a development in this war. We've got to pay attention." I don't believe it was a matter of, "Sit up and pay attention." It was a matter of, "Get busy and take action."

When Jesus was born, and the angels announce His birth, what's one of the first things that happened? The wicked king Herod developed that treacherous, murderous, scheme to destroy this child. Why? Well, Satan was there. In this long battle, he knew, and all his cohorts knew, that if they could destroy the Christ child, God's purposes would be thwarted. They tried it every way. Read the Gospel, and just notice how the opposition surfaces, opens up, intensifies.

I can't tell you the whole story, but just notice it. The jealousy, the hatred, the plots, the schemes, and then finally these words, you see them there: "Then Satan entered Judas." When I read that one day, that hit me, as we say, the old cliché, like a ton of bricks. Satan himself entered Judas. He did not trust this scheme to any of his principalities and powers or hosts. He himself actively went right into Judas, and moved this disciple of Jesus to betray his Master. Go on through the story. They came to arrest Jesus, they took Him to His trial, they took Him before Pilate, and the whole story. If you just open your eyes you can see behind the scenes. Satanic powers. Finally, there before Pilate, demonic powers inspiring that multitude, that crowd, to shout, "Crucify Him. Crucify Him!" Pilate said, "I don't find any fault in Him. There's no reason. He could go free. I could release Him!" They said, "Crucify Him!"

I'm trying to get us to see that there was a mastermind. Yes, the Jews plotted. The high priest condemned Jesus to death. Pilate passed the sentence. The Roman soldiers crucified the Savior. But who was responsible for Jesus' death? We often say, "You and I." That's true, we are. He died for us, but behind the scenes, in the spirit world, there was a mastermind at work. Notice this verse: Jesus said, on the eve of His death, "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me." The ruler of this world is coming. He has no hold on Me. At Calvary, Jesus faced the ruler of this world, the god of this age. He faced Satan alone. He could have called ten thousand angels. He called not one. "This is your hour," he told the crowd who came to Gethsemane to capture him. "This is the hour of the power of darkness."

Let me ask this question: was Jesus Christ the victim in the hour of his death, or the victor? Was he the victim, or victor? Amen. He was the victor! Let's read a few verses. From Ecclesiastes we have this scripture: "No one has the power over the spirit to retain the spirit. No one has power of the day of his death." Is that true? Absolutely. We do not control when our spirit is taken from our body. There is a sovereign God who's in control. Look what Jesus said in John 10. "My Father loves Me because I lay down My life that I might take it again," and He said, "No one takes it from Me. I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up."

Jesus knew what was going to happen. He told the thief beside Him, "Assuredly I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise." As His body weakened, the blood flowed from His veins, and He knew that the hour of His spirit being taken from His body was at hand, what did He say? "'Into Your hands I commit My spirit,' and having said this He yielded up His spirit." I think it means simply this: He Himself took control and released His Spirit.

Did Satan have power over Christ? Let's just read a few more verses, and I'll tell a little more about that. "Christ also suffered once for us, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison." Hebrews 12: "Through death He might destroy him who hath the power of death, that is the Devil." Revelation 1: "Do not be afraid. I am the first, and the last. I am He who lives, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of death and Hades."

Now, I'm going to use my imagination a little bit here, but as Jesus was hanging there on the cross, this is the picture that I get. A weakening body, blood flowing from His veins, the scourging on His back that ripped Him raw, and the crown of thorns, all of that. Jesus' body was drawing near to death, but Jesus had the power with one word to heal His own body, to step down from that cross, to destroy His enemies. He could have done all of that. He didn't. He knew what He had to do. He understood the purpose of God. He yielded Himself to it. He gave Himself to the Father's will even though it was a difficult place.

Satan didn't understand that. I don't think Satan understood it. He was there. I believe Satan was right there before Jesus at the cross. Satan, as it were, reached out his hands to grasp the spirit of Jesus when it came out of that body, and to take it down to the regions of the dead, to Hades itself, to carry it away. He believed that if he could do that, that God's purpose would be thwarted, and the victory would be his.

This is the mighty picture. I want you to get this picture. *That did not happen!* When Satan reached up to take the spirit of Jesus, Jesus released His spirit from His body. He reached down, as it were, took Satan, handcuffed him, conquered him, and led him down, down, down, to the gates of Hades. Took the keys out, off the chain from Satan's neck, thrust it in the lock, threw back the bars, opened the door, and marched right into Hades with Satan in tow, and said to all the spirits of the just there, "Here is the enemy who has held you captive these long years. He had the keys of death and Hades, but now I have the keys of death and Hades. I am going to release you from this palace of the dead, and restore you to my kingdom. Just wait. I will go away, and I will come back for you."

He went and preached to the spirits in prison. I don't know what all Jesus said down there to those spirits held captive in prison, but all of the righteous dead that were bound there those long years understood the gospel. He went and preached the gospel to them. It says that, and I don't know what all it means. "He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient." Both the righteous and the unrighteous, apparently.

Now do you understand why Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it"? If Jesus had not taken the keys of Hades and opened the lock, there would be no escape for any of us. The Son of Man did not come to be served, nor to save His own life. He came to serve, and to give His life, a ransom. Why did Jesus die? To teach us how to die that we might live indeed, but to enter into Hades itself.

Why did Satan do it? Why did he orchestrate this whole plan to defeat the living Christ? You know, I can't answer that question. Why did Satan say, "I will ascend, and exalt myself above the throne of God"? He couldn't do it. He thought he could, I guess. He didn't, he couldn't. The Father of Lies believes his own lies. He deceives himself, and has deceived himself through the ages.

What do the Scriptures say? "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, of the hidden wisdom that God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, had they known what was going to happen, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." That's not talking only about Pilate and the Jewish rulers. It's talking about the spiritual rulers. Had they known that this was the very thing that God would use to destroy the power of Satan, and to release the captives held bondage in Hades, they would never have done it. They did not know.

How then shall we live? My dear friends, we can live with a living hope, a calm and steadfast assurance that no matter what the cost to ourselves, we will conquer with Christ, because he has conquered. We have to have that assurance, dear friend. Have you ever wondered when you read from *The Martyrs' Mirror* how those martyrs can face death, and the terrible torture that they faced, so

calmly, so full of grace? It's because they understood this. They understood that Christ conquered death, that death was just a doorway into a temporary region, and that Christ would deliver them from that region. He would usher them back into his eternal kingdom, into the world that He made, a new Heaven and a new Earth, filled with righteousness, and there they would reign with him forever and ever. They understood that. They understood this story.

Through Christ we conquer. I'm going to take you a scripture again, and read it in conclusion. Revelations chapter 12, here's the story in condensed version. "A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars." That woman represents Israel of old.

"Then, being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain, to give birth." That represents the Christ child, the long years of this battle was like a long gestation period when God was laboring to birth his son through the woman, Israel. "Another sign appeared in heaven: behold a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads, ten horns and seven diadems on the heads, and he drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth," just what I described to you, "to devour her child as soon as it was born. She bore a male child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up to God unto His throne." That's the picture of the story. Now, it identifies this person. "This great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

And the last verse in the chapter: "The dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring." That's us. We're in that war. That dragon who was conquered by Christ, and was cast out of heaven, through the victory that he won, is still making war with the offspring of the woman. We are the seed of Abraham by faith, we who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. But Christ conquered, and we can conquer.

Question and Answer Time:

Elias Martin, Goshen, Indiana: I just wanted to thank you, Brother Strubhar for that wonderful message that you brought forward this morning. It was all brought out in a little different way than we're used to. I never had all that put together in one story. Thank you.

Daniel Hershberger, Kinsman, Ohio: Last evening, when they had the group sitting up there, the thought came up about sheep stealing. Immediately I felt something in my heart. I felt a need to enlarge on that, but it was kind of... You had a short cord, and I couldn't prompt myself to move all the way up there. I just went up and shared my thoughts with David and Dean a little bit, and they just advised me to open myself up if there was an opportunity. It fits very well with where we are right now, in this conflict. The point I want to bring out, we all know that the principle of stealing is sin. We know that, so I don't advise anybody to go out, and steal sheep. I also know that in Matthew 24:26, Jesus says, "People will come, and say he's in the desert. Don't go there. They will say he's in the chamber. Don't go there."

If people come and they're trying to draw people to themselves, don't go there. If they're saying Jesus is here in our church, don't go there. I think that's what Jesus is saying. The song that we sang, Rescue the Perishing, very fitting. This is the thought I want to leave. Brother David, Dean, Chester, all the rest, if I meet them, I'm going to shake their hand, and embrace them as a brother. I'm going to

advise them that if they see these perishing, wandering aimlessly, without food, even if they come from the path from where I'm the overseer, I will ask them to move in and to point them to the true shepherd, but don't try to draw them to yourself. You're not stealing when you do that.

Now, I want to leave another thought. Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword in the sheath, because he who takes the sword is going to die by the sword." I'm just going to leave you with this thought. If you're going to build your church stealing sheep from other congregations that may have serious issues, don't be surprised if you don't have God's blessings, and those sheep end up going out the back door, and you end up with nothing left. If anybody has any questions, maybe I didn't even make my point. Thanks for your time.

Nathan Overholt: Thank you. We're truly in a conflict. Thank you.

Floyd Yoder, Gold Creek, Montana: I really appreciated your message, Brother Ernest. In assuming from the chronology of your message, is it your understanding that Satan was cast out of heaven, and also made this statement that we find in Isaiah 14 ... Did that happen between the time that God created the Earth, and the time that Eve was deceived in the garden? Is that your understanding?

Ernest Strubhar: What the Scriptures don't reveal to us clearly, we can sometimes make a humble guess, but we do better not to speculate much. I don't know. I suppose that's true. It seems to me that after Christ carried Satan down into Hades, and displayed him in his victory march through the corridors of Hades, that Satan went up to Christ in a last assault against the heavens. You read that in Revelation 12. Michael and his angels made war, and threw Satan out of heaven. I think there was another victory, perhaps, over Satan. A final assault against the throne of God while Christ was down in Hades, and a great warfare that threw him out. Satan's here on the Earth ever since, making war against the saints of God, the seed of the woman, and the rest of her offspring. That's my humble understanding. Is it exactly right? I don't know. God knows all of those things. We only have to do a little guessing. Most of all, just serve the King, the risen, conquering King, and trust Him through thick and thin.