

The Cosmic Battle



and the **American Christian**

But you are a chosen race,
a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
a people for God's own possession,
that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him
who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light

Ken Stoltzfus (Sr.)

The Cosmic Battle



and the **American Christian**

But you are a chosen race,
a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
a people for God's own possession,
that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him
who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light

Ken Stoltzfus (Sr.)

The Cosmic Battle and the American Christian

© 2010, Ken Stoltzfus, P.O. Box 228, Kidron, OH 44636 USA

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, electronic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author.

The above statement notwithstanding, you hereby have my permission to download this document; print it off; and/or otherwise share it with others in its unaltered form; as long as its use is for strictly personal, non-commercial, non-profit purposes.

I will appreciate your sharing *The Cosmic Battle* and other resources at www.john2031.com with others.

For what its worth, life would be easier for me if these kinds of thoughts didn't come. The fact is that they do come, and usually in my quiet times with God when I'm just trying to hear him and mind my own business – and I feel constrained to write them out.

I invite your input, be it affirmation and encouragement, challenge or correction, or further insight. And please tell me if you find awkward or unclear expressions or other flaws! I can fix them.

My hope is that this material will challenge individuals, and will be used as a basis for discussion among serious Christians – or those who think they might want to be.

Ken Stoltzfus

P.O. Box 228, Kidron, OH 44636 ken@flyinghigher.net

Unless otherwise noted, scripture is taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved. The “NIV” and “New International Version” trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society. Use of either trademark requires the permission of International Bible Society.

Table of Contents

Introduction	v
Facilitating Discussion	7
Part I The Battle of the Ages	1
1 The Cosmic Battle	3
2 A Cosmic Worldview	4
3 God and the Nations	5
Part II The American-Christian Dilemma	7
4 Change	8
5 God and Country	9
6 What It Means	11
7 Looking Ahead	12
Part III Opportunity Is - -	13
8 I Saw - -	14
9 The Challenge	15
10 Guilty as Charged?	16
11 If My People - -	17
Part IV New Foundations	19
12 A New Definition of Life	20
13 A New Object of Worship - The Call	21
14 The Object of Worship	22
Part V The Foundation of A New Human Nature	24
15 A New Nature	25
16 Transformed Into the Image of Christ	26
17 Filled With the Spirit	28
18 A New Identity	30
19 A New View of Blessing	31

Part VI The New Look	33
20 The Mark of Authenticity	34
21 The “Stuff”	35
22 The Church	37
23 Unity	39
24 Bible Reading and Prayer	40
25 A New View of Suffering	41
Part VII The Dividing Line	43
26 The Name	44
27 The Options	46
28 Betrayal	48
29 Trustworthy?	49
Conclusion	51
The Last Words	53

Introduction

First of all, please understand that my use of I Peter 2:9 (NAS) on the cover refers to the “Christian” part of “American Christian.”

Secondly, nobody agrees with anybody about everything and you won’t agree with everything I say here. However, I challenge you to embrace a Biblical worldview that lifts us above the secondary issues which now separate God-fearing and born again Christians. Please read “The Cosmic Battle” from that standpoint. Does it fit within the context of the fundamentals of faith that Christians have always believed, even if it doesn’t totally harmonize with your personal theological bundle?

This is not a message to America. It is a word to those who call themselves “Christian,” and who live in America. These are serious words for serious times; written to a church that is in deep trouble; in a world that is in utter turmoil. Maybe it’s time for Christians to sit up and take notice.

Nothing that I say is meant to suggest that we turn from appropriate patriotism and love for our country, and gratitude toward God for the blessing of being American. We need to pray for our leaders as never before, and the most patriotic thing American-Christians could do is to begin to love God with all of our heart, soul and mind.

Christians and others alike have a gnawing sense that troubles are just around the corner. Economic woes; major world religions in a faceoff; fear of untreatable disease; natural storms of apparently increasing intensity; fear of global warming; the threat of rogue nations with nuclear capabilities; growing pessimism about peace in the Middle East and more, are panicking our world.

I am not prophesying the rise of the antichrist; a soon-coming “mark of the beast;” or the destruction of America. Any of that could happen soon or not for many years – I really don’t know. I’m more a pastor-teacher than a prophet. What I *am* saying is that we are not doing a very good job of representing the heart of God to our nation or our world, and we’re facing a good opportunity to get serious about that!

This document is intended to provoke your own sober thinking and inquiry into what God is doing as you watch events unfold in the years ahead. He wants to speak to your heart and draw you closer to Himself as the sky darkens, so that you will stand firm yourself and be able to encourage others.

It will soon become clear that I doubt if American-Christians are prepared for changes that challenge our commitment to God and loyalty to each other. However, because God is God, I’m also an optimist and believe that He will enable all who are serious about the need for an invigorated Christian life.

This is not a message of doom and gloom. It speaks of light in the darkness; of hope in the midst of despair – for all whose deepest roots and most important sense of identity and purpose come from their relationship with God – the Creator Whom we know through Jesus Christ our Savior.

I trust that this material stirs within you the Proverbs 1:7 kind of fear which opens your heart to the realities of where the church is at, and then draws you toward God for instruction and correction. Please rethink your relationship with Him, if it causes you to retreat in fear.

As you read the descriptions of what a revived church will look like, please consider pursuing such a walk with God right now. We will experience many new and wonderful beginnings as we seek Him more deeply. It will be rewarding beyond description as we let go of the present, earthbound American-Christian model. We will enter into riches that will amaze us. We will find ourselves wondering how we got there, and God will tell us that this is simply what it means to live with our eyes upon Him – like Jesus did. It's almost that uncomplicated.

One of the delights of the Christian life is the experience of gaining insight. (Read Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9-14.) A challenge though, is that sometimes "new wine" will need new wineskins. Many Christians will find it difficult to move beyond their comfort zones enough to enter into a deeper walk with God, and to more actively participate in what He is doing in the world today.

Here's a bottom-line thought that I hope prevails in your mind as you read, and I'll be repeating it. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain by viewing current and upcoming events as a wake-up call that moves us toward being the people of God in the way He always wanted us to be. It wouldn't call for anything new! If American-Christians were to take this to heart it would lead to repentance and new life in the church. This new life could extend the time of God's grace upon America; or empower us to stand firm through difficulties that will come as His grace is lifted because of our sin; or some combination of the two. Regardless, we win.

My mind and pen will never be able to craft a statement or express a series of thoughts that is complete in every way. I see in part and I speak in part, and both are only a tiny piece of the whole.

I welcome your response, be it affirmation, encouragement, challenge, correction, further insight or anything else that you believe God puts in your heart. May God bless you richly in your ongoing pursuit of what it means to be a son or daughter of the King!

Yours, and His,



Ken Stoltzfus (Sr.)

Facilitating Discussion

Christians generally don't talk much about their faith in personal terms. We try to act "spiritual" and sometimes we discuss theological issues in a certain way, but rarely do we get personal and vulnerable about how the Gospel is being worked out in everyday life. I propose that even most small groups or cell groups function at a superficial level.

That needs to change if we're going to stand in the days ahead. We must embrace Colossians 3:16-17: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.* Consider Ephesians 5:18-21, too.

And Hebrews 3:13-14 applies to us as well: *But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.*

Every social group needs leadership, but I propose that in the institutional church we have become far too dependent upon organizational structure and positional leaders. It's time for the people of God to step up to the plate. We must believe and apply I Peter 2:5: *you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* We must become participants in the Kingdom of God, not just observers.

I believe that this material can serve you well toward that end. Here are several questions that will provoke discussion as a group works through it:

- What is the key point that is being presented in this chapter/page/paragraph?
- Is it consistent with scripture?
- How does it correlate with our thinking up until now?
- Do we really believe that God works in these ways today?
- Do I feel despair or excitement as I read this, and why would I experience one emotion versus the other?
- What new insight have I gained from this discussion?
- What insight would you like to add to this discussion?
- In what way do you disagree with the author?
- How will I apply this to my life?
- How different would life be if we applied this principle?

Part I

The Battle of the Ages

From the time that Satan rebelled against God in heaven, followed by sin entering the human experience, there has been an ongoing contest between him and God for the heart of man. We know that as “good” and “evil,” and every culture has its way of identifying both. This contest will continue until Satan is finally bound and cast into the eternal Lake of Fire as described in [Revelation 20:10](#).

I groan inside as I struggle to express the meaning of that truth. To view the human experience through this lens, brings life and our attempts to be Christian into focus in a new way. It is like looking through binoculars and adjusting the eyepieces to focus them. The view goes from blurred to clear in an instant. And something that was far off is now near.

The reason we aren't more like Jesus is that the compulsion that drives us is so different from His. His purpose was simply to do the will of God; and every action, response and choice was dictated by that premise. As He said in John 6:38: *For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.* And in John 5:30 He explains why He could always get it right: *By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.*

However, because of the sin nature that we inherit, the premise that we move from as we attempt to find our significance and wholeness in life (which we'll talk about soon), is very different. Because of Adam and Eve's sin, we are condemned to live under Satan's rule until we choose to switch sides and receive new life through Jesus. We then begin a life-long process of learning *His* way.

Many of us wear glasses or contacts, without which we don't see things as they are. That wonderfully illustrates the spiritual side of life. Because of our sin nature we are born with faulty vision. We *don't* see things as they are because “things as they are” is based on God's truth and our view is shaped by Satan's lies.

That's why so many of the sayings of Jesus and the life He calls us to, are so hard to understand and experience. The Sermon on the Mount; the life principles of love, serving, forgiving, and suffering; His sayings about money and possessions and so much more that marked Him as “radical,” are simply what it means to live for God in a

world that is ruled by Satan. All of that is “normal,” not radical, according to how God designed things on the earth to work. It only seems radical, and even impractical, because we have come to accept the broken world we were born into as normal, and it isn’t. It’s the distorted view of life that we inherited because of our sinful nature.

When we are born again we have opportunity to see things as they are. The problem though, is that we still have a choice about which lens we look through. That’s what Jesus is speaking of in Matthew 6:22-23: *The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!* Phew!

The reason we get so many spiritual headaches is that, although God has given us the possibility of new vision, we still insist on looking through the old lens to determine what is good for us and what is not. In John 7:16b-17 Jesus said that our willingness or unwillingness to do His will is what makes His teaching either clear or blurry: *My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 17 If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.* Straight talk!

The whole “Christian” thing then, is about Jesus coming to earth; dying on the cross to bear the penalty for our sins; and His being raised from the dead on the third day by the power of God so that Satan’s power of spiritual death over us could be broken. All who would subsequently learn of that Good News, and who chose to accept God’s rescue plan, would be “saved.” They are “born again.” Their spirit is made alive and they are now able to live in relationship with God as He intends.

The assumption then is that one’s outward life, which had previously shown that they were under Satan’s control, would now show that they are serving God. What happened on the inside would be confirmed by what others see on the outside.

That choice totally impacts our years on earth and determines our eternal destiny. Learning to apply it in everyday life, and especially in a Christian culture that has not done well at defining what it means, is what this document is about.

It would be worth choosing God even if it were only for this life, because His way is so much better than Satan’s; but when one considers that a million billion years is only the first day of “eternity” it *really* seems like the right thing to do!

1) The Cosmic Battle

God is good. He created a wonderful and perfect world and placed man in it. There was no sickness or anything else that could deprive man of total health, peace and joy – all of which were His full intention for mankind.

Man was created in the image of God and was given a spirit and the capacity of moral choice. In order for there to be moral choice, there needed to be good and evil. Satan is that evil. Everything in the world that is less than perfect is the result of Satan's influence, and man choosing Satan's way versus God's.

Man was created with a God-shaped hole. An emptiness of sorts. We must find our significance, purpose, and sense of wellbeing in someone or something greater than and outside of ourselves. We must give allegiance to a god – either God or Satan. There is no neutral ground. ([Romans 6:16](#)) Our wholeness cannot come from within us; from another person; or from anything created.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve's fellowship with God gave them the wholeness they lacked in themselves. As we know though, man's choice to sin broke his relationship with God and consequently he was compelled to seek wholeness as best he could, without Him.

Sin, is simply man's misguided and futile attempt to find wholeness. To fill the God-shaped hole in his soul. The "life" that he was created to enjoy, and which only God can truly give – but which now eludes him because of his separation from God.

That hole creates a vacuum, desperately sucking in everything that proposes to fill it. Both God and Satan make promises as they vie for our affection, and the choice is up to us. Each speaks from His/his nature but one speaks truth (because He *is* Truth), and the other speaks lies (because he is a liar and the father of lies). Each offers his own brand of "life" but one is genuine and the other is counterfeit. The contest is obvious as Christians declare themselves to be disciples of Jesus but struggle to be like Him. We can find it so difficult to practice the life that He offers and so easy to experience that which Satan offers under *his* rule.

This battle for the human heart might be called "The Cosmic Battle," because it originates in the cosmos. There is a spiritual world which is outside of the earth as we know it. It is the unseen realm that Paul identifies in Ephesians 6:12: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* (Also [Romans 8:38](#), [II Corinthians 10:3, 4](#), and [Ephesians 1:21](#))

The spirit world may be unseen in one way, but it is obvious in another. Consider the conflict of powers that you see at work in individuals; in every social group; and among nations. Isn't it clear that something deep and sinister is at work?

2) A Cosmic Worldview

A worldview comes from one's collection of beliefs about life and the universe, and shapes how we see and interpret the world. It determines where we attempt to find our human wholeness and affects how we respond to people and situations – including national and world events.

Christians who have a Cosmic Worldview will experience life altogether differently than those who don't. We will have a realistic view of how events on the earth relate to the battle in the heavens, and will connect with the power and purposes of our sovereign God – thus finding our wellbeing in Him regardless of circumstances. *That*, is good stuff!

No disciple of Jesus could deny the existence of Satan. Even without the extensive Biblical material on him including the testimony of Jesus, there is enough evil in our world to convince any logical thinker that there is an enemy of good, among us. Without that, there would be no reason to be a disciple of Jesus!

Gratefully, we Christians know that in the end, God wins. Jesus has the last word. As Paul writes in Philippians 2:9-11: *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Meanwhile the battle rages, and with increasing intensity as we advance toward final events in the Cosmic Battle. It has everything to do with everything. Aren't even issues like environment and animal rights taking on a spiritual flavor, often being expressed with religious fervor? Might this be happening because of man's desperate attempt to find significance and purpose outside of a relationship with Creator God?

This religious spin moves persons to circumvent the normal processes of disagreement and dialogue in the context of mutual respect, and opens us to extreme and irrational reactions which are not to be ignored.

A wonderful benefit of embracing a Cosmic Worldview is that it gives us a new lens to look through. A new perch from which to observe. Similar to a pilot climbing through rough weather, getting on top and looking down upon it, Christians whose lives are connected to God's agenda will observe and experience the events of the day altogether differently than their earth-bound brothers and sisters.

Isaiah 26:3, 4 describes such a person: *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. 4 Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.* We can have that peace regardless of what direction our nation is taking or who is in office.

3) God and the Nations

We think of nations as being sovereign entities whose existence and wellbeing are shaped by the will of man. That is true, but it's not the whole story because nations and their leaders can become pawns in the contest between God and Satan.

Consider Acts 17:26, 27: *From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.* It's clear, isn't it, that God is involved in the events of nations for the purpose of making Himself known?

Didn't God have His agenda, and Satan, his, in the events surrounding the birth of Jesus? Was Roman rule over the Jews at that time just a coincidence of history, or was it part of the setting that God formulated for Jesus' birth? Was Herod's determination to have Jesus killed as an infant, his idea alone, or was he provoked by Satan as part of *his* game plan?

Why did Hitler so hate the Jews and determine to exterminate them? Was that just his idea or was it part of a larger picture? Was he goaded by Satan to do such an awful thing as another expression of *his* battle with God? Was the timing happenstance or deliberate? Consider the reestablishment of Israel as a nation soon thereafter.

Is there any significance to the open hostility that is now being expressed by Iran and other Muslim/Arab leaders toward Israel? Is it part of Satan's agenda against the Jews? Are such events part of something bigger than national or political interests – or even oil? Will God have the last word and use for good what Satan meant for evil?

Even when God allows a nation to experience the consequences of its sins, it isn't only to punish them. It is also to make Himself known and to draw them back to Himself. In [Ezekiel 14:1-4](#) He speaks warning to those who have rejected Him and in v5 He says: *I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people of Israel, who have all deserted me for their idols.* Then there's vv 10a and 11: *They will bear their guilt - - 11 Then the people of Israel will no longer stray from me, nor will they defile themselves anymore with all their sins. They will be my people, and I will be their God, declares the Sovereign LORD.*

God will always be about His business through nations, both good and evil. Think about how often He used them to bless or chastise Israel in Old Testament days. Embracing this perspective gives one a Cosmic Worldview – and a rock to stand on!

There will only ever be one Jewish nation, and **I am not saying that America** was a modern-day Israel, but I *will* propose that God did a deliberate and special thing in our country. I believe that He led in the founding of America, and then blessed us

with freedom and opportunity so that He could make Himself known to the ends of the earth through these resources. He does that sort of thing.

Except for the Jews, no peoples in history have been blessed in the measure that United States of America has been. I believe that we have prospered not only because of our moral and Biblical foundations and the benefits of democracy, but because we were a specific component in God's plan to take the Good News to the ends of the earth as part of the Cosmic Battle. It is true, that until recently most of the missionary and world evangelism effort has been carried out by American Christians.

However, change has come to our great land and we must prepare for what lies ahead. We need a Cosmic Worldview if we expect to stand. We must connect with God and His eternal purposes as the battle in the heavenlies intensifies. Satan wants us to find our significance and wholeness in the passing things of the world, and to thus be discouraged. As the days grow darker he will use fear of various kinds to attempt to manipulate us toward actions that would deny God and set us up to betray one another. Time will tell, if the thoughts that came to me on Oct. 10, 2008, "[A Day of Repentance, Reconciliation and Restoration](#)" are from the heart of God.

I like how [Ezekiel 36:22-23](#) and similar texts represent the way *in* which, and the purposes *for* which, God works among the nations. None of us knows what lies ahead for America and the rest of the world. But let's have new "eyes to see and ears to hear." Let's embrace a Cosmic Worldview and start thinking more about Kingdom agenda, asking Him to reveal to us how and why He is moving among the nations. He is, and we get to be a part of that if we choose to!

Could we plead with Him to speak deeply to us, that we would be faithful to Him and become partners with him – to whatever end He has for us personally and as a nation? While we would hope that it will result in deliverance for America, we would not mandate that to God or make it a precondition to our focus upon Him. This, is about something higher. *Much* higher!