

TC Ministries

Equipping the Church for the Work of Ministry

SPIRITUAL CONFLICT

How Did It All Begin?

What Christians Believe Series

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What is
Spiritual Conflict?



What was
Lucifer's downfall?



What do we
Rebel against?



What does the Bible
mean by the term
"Weapons of our
Warfare"?



If you want to know more
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SPIRITUAL CONFLICT

Life is full of conflict and warfare. Whether we watch the news portray nation fighting nation; countries tearing themselves apart, or whether we look at the religious, racial and cultural tensions which abound in many places today, even in the West, or whether we simply look at the soaring divorce rate and the endless stream of homeless and abused people dominating our televisions and online media, it would be hard to deny this world is under a bombardment of constant conflict.

So how did it all begin? - Why is it here? - When will it all end?

The world does not have an answer to these questions. Indeed it cannot, because its perspective is natural, and the world deals with what it can see and touch and feel (*seeing is believing*). That is the way it has always been, and always will be. The world has no insight into the spiritual realm where the real battles are fought.

By largely rejecting the idea of a God who created the heavens and the earth, and who maintains firm and just control over every aspect of life as we know it - past, present and future - the eyes of the world are blind to truth and spiritual reality. Not so the Bible.

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:3-5)

There is a spiritual reality beyond the visible reality of the world we see around us. It is in this eternal, invisible and powerful realm that the real spiritual war is being waged.

TWO KINGDOMS

There are two sides to this spiritual conflict, and two kingdoms seeking to establish themselves in the lives and the hearts of men and women everywhere. It is in understanding the nature and character of these kingdoms that we begin to understand the true extent of the conflict and warfare raging in the world around us and in the heavenlies.

War In the Heavenlies

Sometime before the creation of the world there was a war in heaven. In a brief booklet such as this we cannot go into every detail that the Bible covers, but we will cover some of the highlights. It is an exciting and revealing subject because it makes sense of all the conflict and war we see raging around us as this world spins towards its ultimate conclusion.

Genesis tells us that God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1). When the earth was formed, Man was created in God's image (Gen 1:26). At some stage along the way God also created several orders of angelic beings, some of whom we read about in the Bible, such as Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer.

The angel Lucifer, whose name means “Light Bearer” was a powerful and very influential cherub, in charge of as much as one third of the angelic host.

“You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you ... You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you” (Ezek 28:13-15)

Lucifer's Downfall

Lucifer became proud of His beauty, gifts and talents, and considered himself to be equal with God. This was a fatal error on his part. In exchanging truth for a lie he lost sight of who the Creator and who the created were, something we should all bear in mind on occasions.

Lucifer's rebellion probably occurred over a very long period of time, although it could also have occurred quite quickly. We have no way of knowing. I'm sure God would have tried to do whatever was possible to avoid the conflict that arose, and to bring Lucifer to his senses. During this period of time it appears Lucifer sowed his poisonous seeds of rebellion in others who served under him because eventually he had an army of angels willing to take on the other two thirds of heaven in a war which would make our best special effects movies pale into insignificance by comparison.

Lucifer was determined to set himself above the throne of God, and for reasons which we may never fully understand, he actually thought he could accomplish it.

“By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendour ... Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you” (Ezek 28:16-18)

Jesus made an interesting comment, when the seventy disciples had returned from ministering deliverance to people in the surrounding districts, revealing His true eternal nature in the process.

“And the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven’”
(Luke 10:17-20)

In the book of Revelation we get another insight into this war that happened in heaven before time, as we know it, began. In this passage Lucifer is referred to as ‘the dragon’.

“And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Rev 12:7-9)

Now we see the emergence of a new name for Lucifer. No longer is he referred to by his glorious angelic name of Lucifer, the 'Light-Bearer'. Now he is referred to as the 'devil' and 'Satan'. His name has been changed from 'Light-Bearer' to 'Accuser'.

“And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God, day and night” (Rev 12:10)

In the book of Isaiah we get a picture of how far Satan has actually fallen, and his present condition according to prophecy. We see his pride and arrogance as he makes five statements about his intentions beginning with ***“I will ...”***! We then see the results of that futile exercise, and gain an insight into his real condition when Isaiah said, ***“Is this the man who made the earth to tremble ...”***

“How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth. You, who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you. They will ponder over you, saying, ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities, who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’” (Isaiah 14:12-17)

THE RANSOM IS PAID

As Christians, we are born-again into a pre-existing war, which we didn't start, which we are not responsible for, and for which the conclusion has already been decided. Like many wars we see today, even after the victory, the defeated party can remain insolent and rebellious, and much “mopping up” needs to be done before the “all clear” can be genuinely and truly sounded.

When Jesus came to earth His life became a ransom, very much like the ransom which is paid to kidnapers to gain the release of their hostages. In this case we were the hostages, Satan the kidnapper and Christ was the ransom.

Satan is still very much alive and active in this world, largely because much of the world rejects the ransom and chooses to remain in symbiotic bondage to their spiritual host and kidnapper. But the Bible clearly states that his “works”, meaning his power and authority over those who believe and accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, have been destroyed forever.

“The one who practises sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8)

When we are ***“In Christ”*** the Devil no longer has power over us. The only power he can wield is through deception and intimidation. He is the father of lies and his purpose is to steal, kill and destroy.

“The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10)

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and replace them with the abundant blessings and provision God has reserved for His children. We are now joint heirs with Christ according to his unchangeable promises (Gal 3:29; Eph 3:6; Tit 3:7; Heb 6:17).

God has promised we shall be victorious, and we have available to us everything we need pertaining to life and godliness.

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (2 Pet 1:3-4)

OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD

As we have already seen, conflict and warfare are very much a part of life, both past and present, and this is likely to continue. Conflict and warfare to one degree or another is also a part of our own experience and, as Christians, a very important part of our lives and calling.

We are soldiers, called into warfare. Spiritual conflict, war and the life of a soldier are all a part of the normal life of a believer in Christ. It is a fact of life that all Christians will experience spiritual conflict of one form or another.

“The root cause of all this conflict and warfare is rebellion against the righteous, legitimate and sovereign government of Almighty God”

The New Testament does not place the Christian on the defensive, but on the offensive! We should not be waiting to see what the enemy will do to us, but we should be keeping the enemy in an attitude of suspense, wondering, ***“What will these Christians be doing to me next!”*** The initiative always lies with the believer!

The Life of a Soldier

The life of a soldier is entirely different from the life of a civilian. A soldier needs training, discipline, armour, weapons, a functioning and effective authority structure, a clearly defined strategy and comradeship.

“This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith” (1 Tim 1:18-19)

“Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Tim 2:3-4)

In fact, the Bible repeatedly speaks of God in a military sense, and acknowledges Him as the military commander of the angelic hosts.

“The Lord is a warrior; The Lord is His name” (Exod 15:3)

Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, he raised his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” He said, “No; rather I have come now as captain of the army of the Lord” (Josh 5:13-14a)

***“Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord mighty in battle” (Ps 24:8)***

God is often described as ***“The Lord of Hosts”***. The old Elizabethan English word for an army is ***“Host”***. God is ***“The Lord of Armies”***. The Hebrew Word ***“tsaba”*** is the modern word for the Hebrew Army.

In Scripture it means: ***“A mass of persons especially organised for war (an army); by implication, a campaign”***.

God is a God of love, and mercy, and faithfulness, and justice, but never forget that He is also a God of War! He will not forever delay that great day at the end of time when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall rise, and Jesus will come for His bride (1 Thes 4:16-18).

REBELLION IS THE ROOT

The root cause of all unrest, conflict and war can be summed up in one single word: **REBELLION!** Rebellion against the righteous, moral, legitimate and sovereign government of God. The world today is full of rebels, and a rebel can never know peace.

Before adultery or murder were ever committed or considered, rebellion and disobedience, brought about through pride and deception, were in evidence.

In the case of the Adamic race, which is the term we use for Mankind as distinct from the many other forms of creation, both angelic and natural, our rebellion began in the garden of Eden. The story is familiar to most people, and can be found in the first few chapters of the book of Genesis.

Satan had already fallen and made his home on earth, but he had no authority to harm mankind, or to take charge of the earth, because this responsibility had already been given to Adam.

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’... And God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Gen 1:26-28)

Unfortunately for mankind, Adam did not highly value his place in the order of creation and, like Satan, desired to be like God. He paid the price for his sin and his foolish pride, and we have lived with the consequences of this decision ever since.

What followed Adam’s spectacular fall from grace has got to be the saddest and most sobering story in the whole Bible. People argue over whether it is fact or allegory; whether Adam and Eve really existed or whether this is just a story to illustrate a greater truth. It doesn’t really matter because the Word of God was written to express and illustrate truth, and it is God’s express intention, through Scripture, that we come to an understanding of the origins, and the fall, of Man in order to understand the need for redemption. We also need to fully appreciate the temptation which brought about the fall of Adam and the consequences which necessitated the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any animal of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, “You certainly will not die! For God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate” (Gen 3:1-6)

So many problems are better understood when we accept the fact of sin in our lives and the consequences which this brings (Rom 5:12; 6:23; 3:23).

We cannot save ourselves. Nor can we enter into the presence of God with sin in our lives. This is why we must be born again by the Spirit of God (John 3:3).

JESUS IS THE ANSWER!

To understand spiritual conflict, and the victory we have in Christ, we must first understand that Satan is both a fallen and defeated being. He still has his pride, and rebellion is part of his nature, but he is defeated!

We must then understand that there is no competition in the heavenlies between the unlimited power and authority of God and the very limited power and authority of Satan. They are simply not in the same league. God is the creator - all-powerful, all-knowing and ever-present. Satan is a created being - powerful, in his natural state, even now, but nevertheless not God and not in control of his ultimate destiny.

We are created in the image of God and as such hold a special place in God's heart. We know this because Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, left heaven not counting equality with God a thing to be grasped, and came to earth as a man.

“Though He was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-8)

Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6) and He came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). We cannot save ourselves, but need to be saved just the same. If we don't want to end up in the same eternal fire that has been reserved for the devil and his angels, we only have one option, and that is Jesus (Heb 9:27)!

The problem is that choosing salvation sets us up for conflict with Satan!

Two Opposing Kingdoms

There are now two opposing kingdoms, and they are not America and whoever opposes her. It is not the West verses the Third World. It is not even Christianity and Islam. It doesn't matter who seems to have the greatest earthly clout at the present time. The two kingdoms are the **kingdom of God** and the **kingdom of Satan**.

Satan may be defeated, but he is not yet fully disarmed. He is able to deceive the world, and even the church at times, into believing a lie and striving for equality with God by choosing our will over His.

Remember the Lord's prayer, which Jesus instructed His followers to pray? It's found in Matthew's gospel (6:9-13) and the second line goes like this:

“Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10)

This means it is God's intention to have His will done, and His wishes obeyed, and it is Satan who is determined to frustrate this process. He cannot ultimately stop the divine clock that is ticking away, and he knows his future is eternal damnation (Matt 8:12; 13:42; 13:50). But by delaying and frustrating the purposes of God he can buy some time just the same as we might try and “buy some time” when our tooth aches and we know we have to go to the dentist, but put it off until the last possible moment, trying various methods to avoid the inevitable confrontation.

Caught in the middle of this conflict, and having far more influence over its day-by-day activities than any of us fully realise, is Man. The heavenlies is the battleground and we are the prize. Satan's only power over us is what we allow him to have, and Jesus now holds even the keys of death and hell on his belt (Rev 1:18). You see, the gates of Hell will never prevail against the Church Jesus is building (Matt 16:18)!

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

At the heart of all conflict and rebellion is a battle for the truth. Spiritual warfare is essentially a battle for the heart and mind of Man, and it is a reality for all believers (2 Cor 10:3-5; Eph 6:10-12).

The overall teaching is quite clear. We are to take the initiative in engaging the enemy in the area God has called us to minister, and we are to press in until we obtain the prize, overcome the obstacle, and claim victory in Jesus name!

We are to be assertive, even aggressive (Matt 11:12), and we are not to fear (Matt 10:28; 1 Pet 3:14).

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The Blood, the Word and our Testimony

In the book of Revelation we see a heavenly vision of how the accuser is vanquished, with the saints overcoming and gaining their victory:

“And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God, day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death” (Rev 12:10-11)

The Blood of the Lamb . . .

We receive the cleansing blood of the lamb by acknowledging the birth, life, death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by faith, choose to accept his shed blood as the only way to enter into eternal life and relationship as sons and daughters of our Father God (Rev 7:14; John 1:12).

The Word of God . . .

No book in history has affected the lives of men and women so deeply as the Bible. No other book contains such divine wisdom and relevance as the living and abiding Word of God (2 Tim 3:16). Two things need to be understood about the Bible.

a) It is the Inspired Word of God:

This means that the whole Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and is God's written Word to man, giving him instruction and counsel in every conceivable area of life.

b) It is the Infallible Word of God:

This means it lacks error, a book of absolute truth, the only such book available to man on the earth today.

Our Testimony . . .

Nothing is more powerful in influencing the thoughts and actions of ungodly men and women towards the things of God as a personal testimony. If God has done something in your life, you are obliged to share it, and as you do the Holy Spirit will take your words and bring life to them.

The Holy Spirit will convict of sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8), but we must share our experiences of God as faithful witnesses (Matt 28:18-20).

The Holy Spirit gives us the power (Acts 1:8), all we need is the will to obey!

“In all these things we are more than conquerors...” (Rom 8:37)