

1101 Creative Living: Spiritual Warfare

1. Introduction

the Bible always assumes the reality of a spiritual world inhabited by beings that are not material

this is universally true for all cultures that have not been influenced by western science and materialism

western believers are often subconsciously more influenced by the assumptions of their own culture than they realise

the rise of the “New Age Movement” and the spread of non – Christian religions into traditionally “Christian” countries is a challenge to the spiritual status quo of many churches

C.S. Lewis, 2 equal and opposite errors – ignore the demonic or be excessively interested

2. Evil Spiritual Realities

“Satan” = adversary e.g. 1 Chron 21:1; Zech 3:1; Matt 4:10; Luke 10:18; Rev 12:9 (Hebrew)

“devil” = accuser e.g. Matt 4:1 -11; Hebrews 2:14; James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8; Rev 20:2 (Greek)

Satan rules over an evil spiritual world (Rev 9:11) that seems to be a hierarchy :

“principalities, powers, thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities”- Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:15 in the “heavenly places”

“demons” – Ex 22:20; Deut 32:17; Ps 106:36 -37; Matt 9:33 -34; Luke 8:2; 1 Cor 10:20 -21; James 2:19 etc.

“spirits” – Matt 8:16; Mark 8:17; Luke 7:21; Acts 16:16; 1 Tim 4:1 etc.

3. The Scope of Satan’s Influence

“prince of this world” – John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11;

“god of this world” – 2 Cor 4:4 cf. Col 1:13

“the whole world lies under the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19) cf. Luke 4:6; Rev 20:7 - 8

n.b “world” = anti – God system of humanity

demons/spirits are able to afflict with various sicknesses, stimulate strife and disorder etc. (see references above)

4. The Plan of Evil

this is summarised in the handout which parallels the kingdom of God and the dominion of darkness

Satan has an anti- kingdom over which he rules in a manner that is oppositional to that of God

5. The Power of Evil

Satan has two principle weapons, deception and accusation

as the “father of lies” (John 8:44), all that the devil does is deceptive (Matt 24:11; 2 Thess 2:9 -10; Rev 12:9; 13:3- 4, 14; 19:20; 20:3,7 -8, 10)

all sin is deception (Rom 7:11; Heb 3:13; 1 John 1:8 cf. Eph 4:22) and this is the power of the entire Babylonian world system (Rev 18:23)

accusation is based on guilt, shame and the punishment for sin, which is death (Job 1:6- 12; 2:1 -6; Zech 3:1- 3; Rom 8:33; Heb 2:14- 15; Rev 12:9 -11)

this is intimately connected to the rule of law in a fallen world that reminds people that as sinners they deserve to die (Rom 3:20; 1 Cor 15:56; Col 2:20 – 23; 1 Tim 4:1- 3)

6. The Battle for the Mind

this begins in Genesis 3 where the serpent enters into a conversation with Eve

the New Testament identifies the serpent with the devil (Rom 16:20; Revelation 12:9)

Paul can refer to this as an action of guile or cunning (Rom 16:19; 2 Cor 11:3; cf. 2 Cor 2:11)

it is the mind that is led astray (2 Cor 4:4; 11:3 cf. Rom 1:21; Eph 17 -18; 1 Tim 4:2)

Paul seems to teach that the Satanic “strongholds” in the mind consist of proud or self - exalting (2 Cor 11:4 - 5)

in Genesis 3, the cunning of the devil (verse 1) is to suggest that by disobedience Adam and Eve could experience both more sensual satisfaction (“the tree was good for food...a delight to the eyes”) and a greater wisdom (“the tree was desired to make one wise”)

such wisdom was in fact “devilish” because it was boastful, full of “envy and selfish ambition” (James 3:13 - 16).

to *submit* to the lie that they could become “like God” (3:5) apart from God was to deny their existence in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26) and that they that no inner and indispensable created connection with God as their Father

this is essentially an act where they sought to “father” themselves in the way of wisdom

since self –generated wisdom is impossible for children (Prov 1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 10:1; 13:1 etc.), the first couple came under bondage to a “father” other than God, the devil, (John 8:44)

to follow his desires was to destroy the image of God in humanity (John 8:37, 38, 41, 59)

in losing “the glory of God” (Rom 3:23) they lost the ability to know God from within as Father (Luke 3:37; Eph 2:3)

the radical loss of the image of God in humanity introduces a state which is the opposite of sonship i.e. fatherlessness (Jer 2:27)

once the decision was made and “the knowledge of good and evil” entered into the experience of humanity all people were convinced that they knew what was best for them

nothing in the story of Eden suggests that Adam and Eve came to a realisation that they had sinned against the character of God; only that the consequences of their actions were painful

because pride stood in the way they took no responsibility for their actions, so that pride became the source of the Satanic power over humanity

7. Jesus and the Defeat of Evil Powers

Jesus resisted the temptations of the devil in the wilderness to prove that he was a great person, i.e. “the Son of God”, by some act of power (Luke 4:1- 13)

these temptations occur immediately after Jesus’ baptism where he is affirmed by the Father in the Spirit that he is God’s beloved Son (Luke 3:22)

this is a witness that must have penetrated to the depths of Jesus' heart and spirit because it was an action of the Word and Spirit from the heart of the Father (Deut 30:14; Ps 119:11; Rom 10:8 - 9; Heb 4:12 -13)

dependence upon the inner witness of the Spirit enabled Jesus to speak the Word to the devil and refuse his advances

this occurred despite the presence of any sensory (hunger), human (authority) or angelic witness (protection) to his identity

the temptations of the devil form a parallel with "did God say" in Genesis 3; Jesus is being induced to act "like God" apart from God on the basis of a prior revelation from God

this he refuses to do no matter what the cost to his own life

Jesus lived completely under the authority of his Father and did not exert his own strength (Matt 12:28)

he repeatedly drove out demons by word of command (Matt 8:16, 28 -34; 9:32 -33 etc.)

Jesus is aware of the designs of the devil to destroy him but could confidently say, "he has nothing *in me*" (John 14:30); for Jesus knew that he was free of shame, guilt, judgement and enmity

this is the absolute opposite of the situation with the betrayer Judas, who, as person principally responsible for the murder of Jesus has Satan "enter *into*" him (John 13:27)

the climax of the struggle between Jesus and Satan comes at the cross; it is the witness of New Testament that this is where the devil's power is destroyed (John 12:31; Col 2:14 -15; Heb 2:14 -15; 1 John 3:8)

this occurs by Jesus takes into himself, that is into his innermost being, the powers that destroy the image and glory of God (2 Cor 5:21)

in going into the place of our judgement under the wrath of God (Rom 3:25; 1 John 2:2), Jesus exposes himself to the human condition of guilt and shame which is sonlessness and fatherlessness (Mark 15:34)

at the same time his love for humanity and God is not diminished but perfected

he refuses to judge his murderers for what they are doing (Luke 23:34), so showing that he is not the son of a murderer (John 8:44)

he refuses to accept that his condition of experiencing God – isolation and alienation is the truth about God's innermost being (Mark 15:34), renouncing all the lies of the devil that the Father is one who punishes without compassion (John 8:44)

in doing this for us, he restores the truth of the image of who God is (Col 1:15) both in and for humanity and undoes the basis for all demonic deception and accusation

he will not come down from the cross, refusing to exalt his self- image under the accusations of the crowd (Matt 27:38- 44; Luke 23:35)

the resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Jesus at the right hand of God by the Father means that God has taken the initiative to maximise God - likeness in and for humanity (Acts 2:33- 34; Phil 2:9 -11)

Jesus now enjoys a state beyond the conditions of guilt, shame and death (Rom 6:9; Heb 12:2)

his status is that of a fully justified human being; this is the final judgement of the Father upon (the new) humanity (Rom 4:25; 1 Tim 3:16; 2 Cor 5:16 - 17)

he has been received back into heaven (Luke 24:51; John 6:62; Acts 1:9, 11) to be made “Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36; cf. Rev 17:14; 19:16)

this is a position of universal authority (Matt 28:18) above all evil spiritual rule (Eph 1:19 - 21)

from his throne all his enemies are being subdued (Acts 2:33 – 35; 1 Cor 15:24 - 28; Heb 1:3 -13; 12:10 etc.)

8. Overcoming the Devil

for those who accept the truth of Jesus, there is no longer any basis for fearing punishment (1 John 4:17 – 18); in principle, the struggle is over about the divine identity and what it means to be “like God”

as those who by grace have been justified they have passed beyond the judgement of the second death (John 5:24, 28 - 29; 6:40, 44, 54; 11:25)

to “be strong in the Lord and the strength of his power” (Eph 6:10) in the battle against evil forces is to realise the church shares in that power of God through which Jesus was exalted over all opposing rule and authority (Eph 1:19 - 22)

in practice, Christians will overcome the devil in exactly the same manner that Jesus did, “for the one who is *in* you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4)

since our hearts are cleansed by the blood of Christ (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 10:19 -23) Satan cannot invade our spirit – life; the battle is still in the mind

Satan’s strategy will be to attempt to accuse us of sin so that we feel guilt and alienation from God and separate ourselves from him

with this he will interpret the suffering induced by circumstances as validating his own judgements on the untrustworthiness of the character of God, trying to draw us into anger, bitterness and resentment

to deal with this requires a basic attitude of humility, which is to share the mind of Jesus (Phil 2:5)

humility reverses the human (and Satanic) thrust for self- exaltation, and depends solely upon God the Father to bring honour and praise and glory (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6)

this is the principle means for defeating the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:7- 9)

when this basic attitude is adopted and God is trusted through doubt – inducing circumstances that appear to deny him, the truth of the plan of God is revealed to those with the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:6- 8, 16)

such an attitude is sustained by continuing setting our minds on the things of Christ and his Spirit (Rom 6:1- 5,11; 8:5- 8; 12:2; 2 Cor 10:5; Eph 4:23; Col 3:1- 3 etc.)

with these mind- sets the church becomes increasingly aware of its position and authority in the heavenly places over the forces of evil (Eph 1:20- 21; 2:1- 7; 3:10; Col 3:1- 3)

practically speaking, the devil has no access to our lives if we refuse to give him ground/make room through judging others (or God); hence believers are exhorted not to entertain anger (Eph 4:26 -27) and to live free of dissensions (Rom 16:17- 20)

to walk in the way of forgiveness is to live in the sovereign victory of God (2 Cor 2:5 - 11)
only those who love are not murderers and so have “eternal life abiding in them” (1 John
3:15; cf. Matt 5:21- 22)

this total attitude embraces the gospel armour (Rom 13:12; 2 Cor 6:7; Eph 6:11- 18)

in such a context, God will answer prayer for discernment (Phil 1:9) concerning the truth of
spirits: human, demonic or divine (1 Cor 12:10)

if every action of judgement on a person reveals our own anticipation of judgement, every act of humble forgiveness sets us free from the authority of the Accuser (Matt 7:1 - 5)

(i) Kingdom of God	Satan has a kingdom Lk 11:18
(ii) God is king Ps 24	Satan is this world's prince Jn 12:31 Eph 2:1-2 etc
(iii) God is God	Satan is this world's 'god' 2 Cor 4:4
(iv) God is to be worshipped by his people Jn 4:24	Satan seeks to be worshipped a) by Messiah Lk 4:7 b) in the Temple of God 2 Thess 2:4
(v) God sends his prophets Hebrews 1:1 Christ is the true prophet (Acts 3:23f)	Satan sends false prophets 1 Jn 4:1; Rev 16:13 Satan has a parallel prophet Rev 16:13; 19:20
(vi) God is true and tells the truth Jn 17:3	Satan is a liar and presents lies as the truth Jn 8:44-45
(vii) God initiates and uses prophecy Amos 3:7	Satan uses false prophecy Deut 18:9-22
(viii) God is Father, has a Son and sons (family) Romans 8:15-17	Satan is a father Jn 8:44, has a son (of perdition 2 Thess 2:3) children I Jn 3: 10ff, family I Jn 3:1-10
(ix) God is holy I Peter 1:15	Satan gives himself out to be perfect of 2 Cor 11:14
(x) God is triune 2 Cor 13:14	Satan has a counter trinity: himself, the wounded beast Rev 13 (cf 5:1ff slain lamb) prophet Rev 16:13
(xi) God has his city Heb 12:22	Satan has his - Babylon Rev 16:19, 17:1-18:24
(xii) God has his army Joshua 5:13-15	Satan has his, fights for the opposite of good, righteousness and holiness. Rev 19:14-19

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Possession?

Part 1. The Existence and Nature of Demons

1. The reality of 'evil spirits' is presupposed in the canonical literature.

2. A question of interpretation.

De-myth - N.T. categories alien to scientific culture. Mythical form must be separated from the question of content. Modern

'world—view' excludes the notion of possession. But all 'world—views' require substantiation.

Modern science (psychiatry) — no significant difference in natural history of 'possessed' and organically/personality disordered. Scientific progress requires elimination of supernatural causation.

Reply: inexplicable residue, demonic dimension can't be ruled out.

Ockham's Razor: 'Entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity'. What data would compel us to believe in the existence of evil spirits, i.e. another category of entities? We have no direct access (cf. in the case of mind) to a non—material realm. The usual symptoms of 'possession' are mundane. Parapsychological? Ockham's Razor — prefer humans with E.S.P. to demons with E.S.P.

A 'cosmological problem'. A logical leap from material effects to spiritual powers.

Empirical events imply material causes. Skepticism is in a strong position with respect to the existence of 'evil spirits'.

A moral argument - the demonic makes 'the problem of evil' more difficult. Reply: the existence of evil spirits is on a logical par with that of evil human persons. Explanation of the latter in terms of the misuse of finite free will.

b An argument for the existence of spiritual beings: the 'great chain of being'. A graduation of existents, spirits as 'finite immaterials'. This argument has aesthetic appeal.

An argument from authority: the Bible treats demons as real. No available evidence conflicts with the existence of demons.

3. Nature of evil spirits. Fallen finite immaterials. A pre-mundane Fall?

Isa 14:12—14; Ezek 28:1—19; Rev 12:7—9; do not teach this.

Gen 6:4; Jude 6 - can't refer to evil spirits active in the world.

Matt 25:41; Revelation 12:7 - demons as angels.

Almost nothing can be said about the origin and nature of evil spirits.

Part 2: Demons and Pastoral Care

1. In the N.T. 'pastoral' refers to Christian ministry to the congregation.
2. No N.T. example of demons being cast out of believers.
3. 'Discernment of spirits' (1 Cor 12:10) — recognition of possession? Cor with 1 Jn 4:1—6, evaluating prophetic utterances. 1 Cor 14:29 such a function. c.f. 'spirit' in 1 Cor 14:14,32.
4. The evidence of experience in pastoral contexts.
5. Scripture, tradition, reason, experience as orders of decreasing authority
6. Objections to Christian possession.
Positive status of Christian life (Col 1:13; 2 Cor 1:21-22; Eph 1:13, Romans 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 1 Jn 4:4).
Christ's complete victory on the cross (Col 2:15; Eph 4:8; Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8).
Luke 11:21-26 - the exorcisms of Jesus are unlike those of others because of the power of the Kingdom of God.
Historical data : Justin Martyr (c.150), Irenaeus (c.180), Tertullian (c.200), Origen, Cypric
Unanimous testimony of Early Fathers - exorcism is an evangelistic activity. cf. Mark 16:17 — casting out demons commends the gospel.
Experience in deliverance ministry is non—uniform e.g. personal knowledge of possession.
'Naming' of demons is non—biblical, c.f. ancient magical practices. Jesus exorcised by immediate word of command, and passed on his authority (Matt 28:19; 16:19). Christ's authority over the spirits is absolute, therefore extended 'deliverance sessions' are contradictory. Conclusion : contemporary deliverance ministry in the church is not valid. (Though may be cathartic)
7. Prevalence of exorcism today relates to a 'disease model' of pastoral care, avoidance of personal responsibility, Satanic deception.
8. 'Power encounter' is a valid expectation in the context of gospel proclamation.
9. Christians should never be treated as possessed. Guilt/deception to be handled on the basis of the death of Christ.
10. Ambiguous cases, doubt excludes deliverance ministry.
11. Recognition of genuine possession. Kurt Koch
 - (1) Phenomenon of resistance.
 - (2) Trance states.
 - (3) Clairvoyance.
 - (4) Xenoglossa.If (1) to (4), a valid exorcism in context of evangelism.

General Conclusion

Contemporary exorcisms reflect semi-dualistic position that de-emphasises the work of the cross. Need a richer grasp of God's greatness. Exorcisms should occur in the context of mission. If not we must suspect unfaithfulness and unbelief.

