

INTRODUCTION



There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight.¹

—C. S. LEWIS

Lewis was right. Unfortunately, strands of both errors exist in today's church. On the one hand, some Christians are materialists who fail to understand that the Christian life is a fierce spiritual battle.

One reason for a materialistic attitude is indifference. When your world is an easy place to live in, it's easy to forget that a spiritual war is going on. It's easy to forget that millions of souls in the world are in the grasp of Satan. And it's easy to forget that Satan always takes advantage of Christians who are lethargic, indolent, or spiritually

stagnant. He loves it when Christians try to hole up in a sanctified environment instead of fighting the battle. Yet that is precisely the agenda of many churches today. People are trying desperately to enjoy fellowship while remaining indifferent to the battle.

Another reason for being materialistic is worldliness. Too many Christians crave earthly, temporal pleasures instead of the rigors of warfare. They seek a life of ease—a life of entertainment and activities, never realizing their role in the battle of the ages. A believer who invests his or her time and resources in mundane things won't understand spiritual warfare.

A Christian who had a deficient view of God's grace said to me, "The wonderful thing about the Christian life is that basically you can do whatever you want." Believers are not handed a free pass to do what they want. They are called to obey Christ, the Commander in Chief. In Matthew 16:24–25, Jesus raised this call: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

We can't let spiritual warfare rage around us without joining the fight. It's vital that we take spiritual inventory by asking, *Am I making a difference in the fight?* Too many will settle for indifference and worldliness. Satan has a heyday with such Christians. My prayer is that *your* devotion and commitment level will deepen when you understand how to meet the Enemy.

On the other hand, there are also many in today's church who have an excessive and unhealthy fascination with demons. The following article, which appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, illustrates this obsession:

Under the militant banner of "spiritual warfare," growing numbers of evangelical and charismatic Christian leaders are preparing broad assaults on what they call the cosmic powers of darkness.

Fascinated with the notion that Satan commands a hierarchy of territorial demons, some mission agencies and big-church pastors are devising strategies for

“breaking the strongholds” of those evil spirits alleged to be controlling cities and countries.

Some proponents in the fledgling movement already maintain that focused prayer meetings have ended the curse of the Bermuda triangle, led to the 1987 downfall in Oregon of free-love guru Baghwan Shree Rajneesh, and for the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, produced a two-week drop in the crime rate, a friendly atmosphere and unclogged freeways.

This is not the cinematic story line for a religious sequel to “Ghostbusters II,” yet the developing scenario does have a fictional influence: interest in spiritual warfare has been heightened by two best-selling novels in Christian bookstores. “This Present Darkness,” by Frank Peretti, describes the religious fight against “territorial spirits mobilized to dominate a small town.” A second Peretti novel has a similar premise.

Fuller Seminary Prof. C. Peter Wagner, who has written extensively on the subject, led a “summit” meeting on cosmic-level spiritual-warfare Monday in Pasadena with two dozen men and women, including a Texas couple heading a group called the “Generals of Intercession” and an Oregon man who conducts “spiritual-warfare boot camps.”²

More and more Christian leaders seem to be championing such efforts. I know of a large conservative mission organization that is requiring all its missionaries to attend special training seminars to learn how to confront and assault the powers of darkness. Their strategy includes speaking to demons and learning techniques for exorcising them. It is becoming very popular to deliver incantations against Satan and supposedly rebuke or bind him.

What about this fascination? Do believers need to attend spiritual-warfare boot camps? Are we to break the stronghold of demons so we can regain cities and countries? Should believers speak to demons and cast them out? Can we actually bind and rebuke Satan?

Certainly Christians are engaged in a struggle against the powers of darkness, for in Ephesians 6:12, Paul said, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Many of the practices of today’s spiritual-warfare movement, however, are in stark contrast to the clear teaching of God’s Word. Dr. Archibald Alexander, the first professor of Princeton Seminary and a brilliant theologian, wrote:

There is nothing more necessary than to distinguish carefully between true and false experiences in religion; to “try the spirits whether they are of God.” And in making this discrimination, there is no other test but the infallible Word of God; let every thought, motive, impulse, and emotion be brought to this touchstone. “To the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them.”³

God’s Word must be our only guide for all we believe and practice. Let’s examine what Scripture says about spiritual warfare in contrast to the beliefs, practices, and experiences of those in today’s spiritual-warfare movement.

DRAWING THE BATTLE LINES



A senator concluded his resignation letter with this honest admission:

Over a period of years, as I drank the heady wine of power and influence, my priorities in office became distorted. Success and recognition were foremost; honesty and adherence to the law were not at the center of my focus. Like some others before me, I placed undue emphasis on raising funds, on achieving political status and on impressing my friends. Strict compliance with the law would have allowed me to perform my public service without becoming the center of one controversy after another over the years.

I wish my colleagues well and it would please me if someone benefits from what I have said and rededicates himself or herself to staying clear of the line.

When you are willing to walk close to the line, whether for political success, personal gain or to help your friends, you risk waking up one day to find out that you have long since crossed a boundary that you vowed you would never cross. That is where I find myself today. Goodbye. Good luck. Thank you. I apologize. Please include me in your prayers.¹

The former senator was not the first to drink the heady wine of power and influence and cross the boundary between right and wrong. Nor will he be the last. Today many people sacrifice honesty on the altar of prestige, power, and influence. It might seem hard to believe, but the first crossing of that boundary took place in heaven.

In the beginning no war or rebellion existed. No one opposed God's sovereign rule or voiced animosity against His holy purpose and will. But then a disastrous event occurred, marking the beginning of spiritual warfare.

Thus says the Lord GOD, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 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. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. 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. 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, O 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 splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries. 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. 28:12–18)

That passage speaks of a being so complete that he possessed the seal of perfection. It cannot be referring to a mere human being. Furthermore, in verse 13, the writer said this sublime creature was “in Eden, the garden of God.” Clearly, this prophecy is an indirect reference to Satan, the Serpent—the adversary who was in the garden of Eden.

In verse 14, the writer identified him as “the anointed cherub who covers.” God designed the ark of the covenant with two angels—one on each side, spreading their wings over the mercy seat. These angels were called covering cherubs. They represented the angels associated with God’s holiness, covering the place where atonement was made between God and man by the sprinkling of blood. The covering cherubs were subservient to this magnificent angel, “the anointed cherub”—the highest angelic creature in the presence of God’s full glory and holiness.

Scripture mentions angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, rulers, principalities, and powers. Those terms indicate that God designed an angelic network to carry out His bidding. Here, then, was an angel of supreme rank, created by God to be the anointed cherub.

THE FALL OF SATAN

This highest angel was blameless from the day of his creation. The day came, however, when unrighteousness was found in him (v. 15). What unrighteousness was specifically found in him? His spirit

of rebellion against God. “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty” (v. 17) reveals that this archangel allowed his perfection to be the cause of his corruption. That sin was not an inherent part of the being God created, but later issued from within him because of his pride.

Verse 18 was God’s response to his sin: “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.” God cast this angel out of heaven to be eventually destroyed.

Isaiah recorded the event.

How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning [“Lucifer,” KJV], 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. (Isa. 14:12–15)

The name *Lucifer* means “star of the morning” and “son of the dawn.” *Satan* means “accuser.” Lucifer became Satan when God cast him out of heaven. “You have been cut down to the earth” (v. 12) speaks of his fall. Jesus said, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning” (Luke 10:18). The preincarnate Christ was a witness to Satan’s fall. Note Lucifer’s repeated use of “I will” in Isaiah 14. It reveals his pride, and that pride produced discontent. He wasn’t satisfied with being top angel anymore; he wanted to be like God Himself.

In Isaiah 14:15, God responded to Satan’s sin: “You will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.” Satan’s rebellion will ultimately end in his own destruction. Revelation 20:10 prophesies Satan’s final end: “The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false

prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

THE ARMY OF SATAN

When Satan fell, he did not fall alone. In Revelation 12:4, John said he “swept away a third of the stars of heaven.” In verse 9, John identified the stars as fallen angels or demons allied with Satan. Although Satan is a tremendously powerful creature and influences many governments and nations, he is not omnipresent like God. His work is augmented by one-third of the angelic host.

How many is one-third? We don’t know. We do know that angels neither procreate nor die (Matt. 22:30). There are as many angels today as in the day of their creation. There’s no diminishing or adding to their ranks. Scripture describes the number of holy angels as being “myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands” (Rev. 5:11). The Greek word for “myriad” means “ten thousand” and was the largest number the language could express. Perhaps there are too many angels to count.

Some of the fallen angels are bound in everlasting chains (Jude v. 6). I believe they were the angels who sinned at the time of the flood as described in Genesis 6:1–7. Because these “sons of God” cohabited with humanity, producing a mixed race, God drowned their offspring in the flood and bound the angels with chains. Perhaps God has put more and more demons into that pit throughout redemptive history. In Luke 8:31, the demons at Gadara “were imploring [Christ] not to command them to go away into the abyss.” Other demons are bound temporarily. According to Revelation 9:2, some demons will be released during the tribulation.

Satan’s army of demons is highly organized, for believers struggle “against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). The Greek construction, using the word translated “against” repeatedly, separates each category of demonic beings—rulers, powers, forces of darkness, and spiritual forces of wickedness. “Rulers” and “powers” obviously refer to demons who

have high ranks in the satanic hierarchy. Perhaps “world forces” refers to demons who have infiltrated the political structure of the world and are influencing decisions from behind the scenes. “Darkness” speaks of hell. In Matthew 8:12, Christ called it “outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

People often ask me if I believe there is a global conspiracy of evil organizations trying to gain control of the world. I don’t believe there is such a conspiracy on the human level. But I know from Scripture that there is an unseen spiritual global conspiracy involving demons in high places, and many humans and earthly organizations are unwitting participants in it. The Old Testament says that the gods of the nations are demons (cf. Ps. 96:5; 1 Cor. 10:19–20). In 1 John 5:19, John said, “The whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” Satan is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), and so he controls much of what occurs in the events of this world.

SATAN’S TARGETS

CHRIST

Christ is Satan’s primary target. Why? Because the divine plan was “that through death [Christ] might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives” (Heb. 2:14–15). Satan unsuccessfully endeavored to destroy the messianic line so Christ couldn’t even be born. At the Savior’s birth, King Herod issued a decree to find the Child and slay Him (Matt. 2:16–18). That was a satanic plot. When it didn’t work, the Devil tried to conquer Christ in the wilderness (4:1–11). At the cross, perhaps the Devil thought he finally had defeated Christ, but Christ proclaimed His victory over the hellish forces (1 Peter 3:18–20), gloriously rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven.

Satan opposes everything Christ does. Christ revealed the truth (John 1:17), but Satan conceals the truth. In 8:44, Jesus said Satan “does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Christ gives life, but Satan takes life. The one who trusts in Christ as Savior and Lord “has passed out of death into life” (5:24). However, Satan “was a murderer from the beginning” (8:44) and has “the power of death” (Heb. 2:14).

Christ produces spiritual fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). But Satan loves the fleshly fruit of “immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these” (vv. 19–21).

Christ permits tests or trials in our lives to help us grow spiritually (James 1:3), but Satan lures us with temptation to destroy us (1 Peter 5:8). Christ sets believers free (John 8:31–32), but Satan enslaves the lost (2 Tim. 2:26). Christ defends believers (1 John 2:1), but Satan accuses them (Rev. 12:10).

Today Satan continues to oppose the work of Christ. He will fight against Christ when He returns and will finally be dealt with when he is cast eternally into the lake of fire.

HOLY ANGELS

Holy angels are another target of Satan and his demons. A holy angel appeared to Daniel and said:

Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this [information regarding Israel’s future] and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future. (Dan. 10:12–14)

Daniel had set his heart on understanding why his people had not returned to Israel, so he fasted and prayed for a lengthy period of time (vv. 2–3). A holy angel appeared to assure him that God was not indifferent to his prayers. God had heard them on the first day, but delivery of His answer was delayed for twenty-one days.

The angel explained that the “prince of the kingdom of Persia” had detained him (v. 13). The context reveals the prince spoken of here was not a man. No mere man could withstand an angelic being. Perhaps this was a demon indwelling the king of Persia. His position was to influence the events in Persia and hinder God’s plans for Israel’s future. His relationship with Persia was ongoing; he would fight the angel again later on (v. 20).

God sent the archangel Michael to release the unnamed angel from conflict (v. 13). Michael is mentioned two other times in the Old Testament (10:21; 12:1) and twice in the New Testament (Jude v. 9; Rev. 12:7). It seems God has given him the special responsibility of guarding Israel. Apparently God has assigned certain holy angels to specific nations to carry out His purposes. Possibly Michael is the highest of the angels. He and the holy angel fought against the demon prince of Persia. Together they were victorious.

Once the Persian conflict ended, the holy messenger would begin fighting the prince of Greece—the next great world power (Dan. 10:20). Satan works at the highest levels, trying to thwart God’s divine program. When Persia was in power, apparently Satan assigned a demon to that empire to influence its affairs against God. About two centuries later, when Greece came to power, he would assign another demon to that nation. This holy messenger would be there to fight against them, and Michael would be available to give help at any time (v. 21).

The book of Jude provides another glimpse of cosmic conflict. In verse 9, Jude says, “Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’” Why did the Devil want the body of Moses? We really don’t know. Perhaps he wanted to display the body, so people would

worship it as an idol. Throughout history people have worshipped artifacts. Whatever the reason, Michael appealed to the Lord Himself. Unlike so many “experts” in spiritual warfare today, Michael did not rail at the Devil or rebuke him. He invoked the Lord’s name. Evidently he prevailed in the conflict. In Deuteronomy 34:6, the writer said that the Lord buried Moses “in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day.”

ISRAEL

Throughout history the powers of darkness have furiously tried to wipe out the nation of Israel, knowing it is crucial to God’s eternal plan because of the covenant He made with Abraham. Israel’s history is a chronicle of persecution and holocaust. The mass murder of Jews under Hitler’s regime was only the latest in many centuries of demonically motivated persecution. During the great tribulation, a holocaust of even greater proportion will exist on earth as Satan attacks Israel, but God will supernaturally protect her (Rev. 12:4–6).

BELIEVERS

Believers are yet another target of Satan. In Revelation 12:10 a loud voice in heaven proclaimed, “The accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.” Satan brings vicious accusations—and so much more than that—against all who believe in Christ. We’ll take a closer look at that conflict in the remaining chapters of this book.

What is spiritual warfare? A war of universal proportions pitting God and His truth against Satan and his lies. It’s a battle of wills between God and Satan. It’s a cosmic conflict that involves God and the highest creature He ever made, and it filters down to every human being. Satan and his army of demons are fighting Christ, His holy angels, the nation of Israel, and believers. The battle lines are clearly drawn.