



SPIRITUAL WARFARE (cont.)

The Old Testament and Spiritual Warfare

Individual Texts

We've got a little ground to cover. I had wanted us to really be able to read through all these texts, but I don't think we're going to have time to do that. So, I want to encourage you to go back and look at these texts; they will challenge you in a variety of different ways. I'm going to try and summarize these different Old Testament texts as we finish out these glimpses of spiritual warfare in the Old Testament, and then we're going to dive into how the picture transitions with Christ, and then into the church in the next section we have together.

So, 1 Kings 22:6-28. I believe is where we left off, and basically, this is a story about how God sends lying spirits into the mouths of prophets to lead King Ahab to his destruction. So, that's the summary; God sending lying spirits into the mouths of prophets who will then lead King Ahab to his destruction. So, what's that all about? Here, yet again, I want you to see, that in the Old Testament, we see a picture of God, of a holy God, who uses an evil spirit as an agent of His judgment. This is key.

The spirit is an agent of the judgment of God, and ultimately, a holy God using an evil spirit to accomplish His purposes, to bring about what He had said. Now, this is going back to Ahab's sin. You go back to 1 Kings 16:33, and you find out that Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all of the kings of Israel before him. He was rampant in sin. Just like we saw in the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18, God is using false prophets here to bring about judgment on a pagan king. So, that's the picture: a holy God actually using an evil spirit as an agent of His judgment to accomplish His purposes.

Now, Job 1:6-2:10. This is the story, if you are familiar with Job, of God's conversation with Satan in heaven preceding what happens to Job. Kind of round one, and then round two. What happens to Job when catastrophic things begin to happen? The Chaldeans begin to attack. What happens is Job's crops, his land, his property, and his children are completely destroyed. Then, in Job 2, after Satan comes back and talks with God, Job is afflicted with boils, and that's where Job 2 ends. What do we learn about spiritual warfare in this conversation between God and Satan?

The primary truth, yet again, is God's sovereignty. Don't miss it. In Job 1 and 2, Satan speaks when spoken to, and Satan acts within God's permission. Satan is not doing anything that God has not allowed him to do, and God has not already allowed him to do. He is acting within God's permission and acting to fulfill God's purpose. God's purpose is, in the end, to bring Job to the point where he would say, "My ears had heard, but now my eyes have seen you." Job came to a deeper knowledge of the greatness of God. Don't miss this. Job came to a deeper knowledge of the greatness of God because of the work of Satan in his life. Job came to a deeper knowledge of the greatness of God because of the work of Satan in his life. Satan acting within divine permission and, ultimately, fulfilling divine purpose. So, the picture is God's sovereignty.

The primary victory is Job's morality. The question that the book of Job gives us is, "Is Job going to curse God?" Obviously, he was tempted, and Satan said he would. Instead, what he does is Job glorifies God. That's interesting. You'll notice in Job 1 and 2, Job doesn't mention Satan. He doesn't mention the raiders and thieves who plundered his property and killed his family. He doesn't even talk about and focus on the painful sores all over his body or the rejection he was receiving from his wife. Instead, the whole drama in the book of Job is Job wrestling with God, because he knows God is the ultimate cause here. Shall we accept good from God, comfort from God, and not trouble from God? This is a very God-centered perspective of spiritual warfare and suffering. Job glorifies God, and Job humiliates Satan.

This is just a side note, but I am sure that there are a variety of different circumstances represented here where you might find yourself in a confusing time, in a time where you were walking through a valley of some sort. Especially if you find yourself, now, in that place or in preparation for a time when you might find yourself in that place, I want to remind you that suffering can only rightly be understood from the sovereign perspective of heaven. This is just a side note here, but it's a part of Job glorifying God and humiliating Satan. Job had no idea that there was a conversation that had gone on in heaven between God and Satan. We know that, reading this book. Job did not know that as he walked through this in his life. As a result, he had a very limited perspective on his suffering.

The suffering makes sense to us because we know that this is a test and Job is passing the test, but don't miss the sovereign perspective. Just imagine this picture, this perspective; Satan approaches God, God is surrounded by 100,000 angels, and Satan says to God, "He doesn't really trust you, love you, worship you. It's just because you give him all the stuff." Then, God says, "Take the stuff. He will still praise me. Take his health, he will still praise me." Job does not know that's going on, and so Job loses all of his property; it's plundered. His children, his family are destroyed. He has boils all over his body, and you can picture the hosts of heaven, angels and demons, peering over, waiting for what was going to happen. Was Job going to curse God? Then, Job rises from the middle of his suffering, and he says, "God gives and God takes away. May the name of the Lord be praised," and unbeknownst to Job, at that instant, 200,000 arms from angels go rising into the air and cry out, "Worthy is the God of Job." 100,000 voices sing His praises as Satan runs in humiliation. This is a very different perspective on suffering from heaven than we sometimes have on earth. Job glorifies God, and he humiliates Satan.

Two more texts, one here, and then I'm going to add one more. Zechariah 3, the next-to-the-last book in the Old Testament. What happens there is Joshua, the high priest, is envisioned as standing before God as a representative of the people of Judah, and Satan is the accuser, standing there accusing Joshua, the high priest of sin. What happens is that this is a picture of God cleansing His people, removing their guilt, giving them His righteousness. At the end of this passage, you look at the end of Zechariah 3, and you see one of the most beautiful promises of Christ, the Messiah who is going to come, the servant of God, the branch of David, the stone, the promised Messiah, and Satan is limited. Satan is limited. If you look at Zechariah 3, Satan is not even allowed to talk. He's there to accuse, but he doesn't get the chance. Again, he speaks when spoken to. He's limited. Sin is the problem. The people of Judah had sinned, and they needed to be cleansed. They were responsible for their sin. They needed God to remove their guilt, and by His grace He did, and He promised that a Savior is coming. It's an incredible text. Incredible text.

Now, I do want you to turn to this last one. Write out something to the side, Daniel 10. I've mentioned it on a couple of different occasions, but you've got to see this, at least a little glimpse of this. So, turn with me to Daniel 10, and I want us to read Daniel 10:12-14. The

whole book of Daniel really gives a lot of insight into angels and demons; we see this picture throughout the book. What happened was Daniel had set his heart on understanding why the people of God had not returned to Israel, and he was fasting and praying for an extended length of time for God to restore His people. After he had been fasting and praying for a long time, an angel appeared to him. It's one of the descriptions we saw earlier of an angel, but I want you to hear what the angel said to him, so we'll just skip to that.

Daniel 10:12, *"He continued,"* this is the angel speaking to Daniel: *"Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard."* The first day you started praying and fasting your words were heard, *"and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes,"* Archangel Michael, *"came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."*

He goes on to talk about more of what's happening. What the picture is here is the angel saying, "Your prayers were heard on day one, and for 21 days," this is the picture. The picture is not just wrestling with a king, the prince of Persia; the implication here in this passage is that this is an evil angel, and the picture is that Daniel began praying on day one, his prayers were heard on day one, and for 21 days there was a war raging in the heavenlies between this angel and the evil spirit of Persia. Michael is brought in, some heavy artillery brought in, and a victory, a breakthrough happens. Then, the angel goes on to talk about how this is going to affect Greece in the days to come. It's really an astounding passage of war.

Just think of this; as we're praying and fasting and seeking God and calling out, the picture in Daniel 10 is that there is war, literally, raging in the heavenlies. Now, Daniel did not know this. Daniel is not saying, "Angel, do this. Angel, do that." He's praying to God, and unbeknownst to him, there is a war raging in the heavenlies in response to his prayers, and he perseveres in praying. He doesn't stop; he perseveres and victory breaks through. That's the picture in Daniel 10. You study that text, and it will drive you to your knees and help you to get a glimpse into what is happening when we get serious about going to God in prayer.

So, these are seven Old Testament passages. I want us to step back, and I want to give you two observations, three conclusions, and then one question. Okay? Two observations, three conclusions, one question.

Interesting observations...

First, two very interesting observations that I want to point out to you that are really pretty surprising, especially when you think about the fact that the culture surrounding Israel in the Old Testament had demonic explanations for everything. It was normal to talk about demons/evil spirits, but when you get to the Old Testament, what you find is that the Old Testament minimizes Satan and demons. You don't see the Old Testament talking everywhere about Satan and demons and evil spirits. As God inspired His Word among His people, that was not prevalent. The reality is the Old Testament does not endorse the occultic worldview of the surrounding nations; it does not accommodate all their demonic explanations. In other words, the Old Testament is giving a totally different view of the devil, evil spirits and God. The focus is not where it is in the pagan cultures around.

Now, it is not that demons, evil spirits were not at work, but the focus in the Old Testament is on minimizing Satan and demons, and instead on maximizing human responsibility. This is key. You do not see a focus in the Old Testament on a problem in inhabiting demons. You don't see the Old Testament say Noah struggled with a demon of drunkenness, and David struggled with a demon of adultery, or Moses struggled with a demon of unbelief, or Israel struggled with a demon of idolatry. You don't see the work of Satan and demons talked about like that. Instead, the focus, the problem, is in the human heart. Not in inhabiting demons, but in the human heart. This is a maximizing of human responsibility. The focus of evil in the Old Testament and sin is not in demonic explanations, but in the human heart. You see this in Genesis 6, wickedness of the earth, how great man's wickedness had become, the inclination of the thoughts of his heart. Ecclesiastes 9, picture of evil in our hearts. Jeremiah 17, *"The heart is deceitful above all things beyond cure. Who can understand it?"* This is key. Hold onto this, because we're going to come back to this. This is key. Minimizing Satan and demons in the Old Testament, maximizing human responsibility for sin. The problem is not with inhabiting demons; the problem is with the human heart.

Old Testament conclusions...

Three Old Testament conclusions. Number one, this should come as no surprise, God is sovereign over Satan. We've seen this over and over and over again. Here's the deal: Satan possesses unlimited malice. He is a liar, he is a destroyer, he is an accuser and a murderer. That's the bad news. The good news is Satan possesses limited power. I love what one writer said. He said, "The one who utterly enslaves the nations in the darkness of evil and death is a predictable supporting actor in the larger story of God's holy love and holy wrath." That's it. He's a predictable supporting actor in a larger story. Satan possesses unlimited malice, limited power. God is sovereign, not Satan. God is sovereign over nature, nations, life, death, disease; He's sovereign over all. Satan is not sovereign over nations. Satan is not sovereign over disease. Satan is not sovereign over cancer. Satan is not sovereign over whether or not we live or die. James says, *"If the Lord wills we will live, if not we will die."* God is sovereign over all these things, not Satan.

Second conclusion, sin is the primary human problem. We are responsible for our sin. The Old Testament does not put blame or responsibility for evil on Satan. People are responsible for their evil. Who is responsible for sin in Genesis 3? Adam and Eve. Who is responsible for sin in the story of Saul? Saul is responsible for it. Ahab is responsible for his sin. Men, women are responsible for their sin.

The Old Testament teaches that we, as a result, must respond to God in light of our sin. If we're responsible, then we are responsible for responding to Him. The picture we see over and over throughout the Old Testament is either we repent of our sin, or we die in our sin, and that is God's message to His people over and over and over again. How do you deal with idolatry? How do you deal with sexual perversion? How do you deal with lying and cheating and stealing? The answer the Old Testament gives every time is repent. Repent. Turn from your sin and turn to God. Trust in God. Follow God. Obey God.

Notice the conspicuous absence here in the Old Testament. We're not seeing demons cast out of people in the Old Testament. We're seeing people struggling with sin being told to repent and trust in God. That is where spiritual warfare is happening in the Old Testament. Hold onto that. Repent or die. Spiritual warfare, in this way, is God-centered, not demon-centered. God is on center stage. Demons are players in the story; they're the background. The devil is on a leash in the Old Testament.

Now, this whole thing does bring a question: "If God is sovereign over evil, and He is even using evil spirits as agents of His judgment to accomplish His purpose, then how can a holy

God relate to evil? That's a very important question. That's the question I want to put before us then: how does God relate to sin? How does God relate to evil? I want to give you an overview that – all right, the challenge for the next five minutes to stay with me through this picture, because it's about to get really Old Testament, thick Old Testament, doctrine, theology, and I'm convinced our heads are going to be spinning in just about five minutes. So, just try to stick with me, okay?

God relates to sin variably, in different ways. That's what I mean by variably—different ways, different times. Sometimes in the Old Testament, God prevents sin. We're not going to look at all these examples, but that's what Genesis 20:6 shows us there. Sometimes God prevents sin. At other times, God permits sin. He allows sin. He gives us over to our sin, the Old Testament teaches. Other times, we see God directs sin. He takes sin, and He directs it for good. This is the story of Joseph's brothers. We'll come back to that story in just a minute. Sometimes God directs sin for good. Sometimes God limits sin. Maybe He doesn't prevent evil completely in a situation, but He does restrain the extent or the effect of sin.

So, God relates to sin in all these ways, but don't miss this: God never directly causes sin. This is key. God never directly causes sin. God never sins in Scripture, and God is never blamed for sin in Scripture. Scripture nowhere shows God as directly doing anything evil. Don't miss this. God is never a personal agent tempting us to evil. Even in His sovereignty over evil, He is still able to maintain His perfect holiness. His holiness and His goodness are never at one moment impugned or questioned as He relates to sin.

This is so key because, if we're not careful here, we'll fall off into a couple of different errors. If we say that God Himself does evil, then we deny that He is the good and righteous God who is worthy of all our worship, so we don't want to go there. Scripture does not take us there. At the same time, if we say that God is not sovereign over everything, that there are parts of evil out here that He is not sovereign over, then that means there are some things that are out of His control, which also does not square with Scripture. We want to make sure we don't jump off this horse on either side. We've got to stay here on this picture. God never directly causes sin. So how do we process that? God and evil.

This is how God relates to sin. Now, think about evil. God relates to good and evil asymmetrically, meaning in different ways. He relates to good in a way that is different than the way He relates to evil. Okay? Head slowly starting to spin, here we go. God and good, all that is good is under His sovereignty. Everything that is good is under His sovereignty. God is completely and totally good, and He's in control of everything that is good. I would take it a step further and say all that is good is morally chargeable to Him, to God. All that is good flows from whom? From God. We don't see anywhere where good is morally chargeable ultimately to a creature; it's always to the Creator. This is the whole point.

You get to the New Testament, Romans 3:9-20,

"What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? No, we've already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. There is no one who does righteous. No one is righteous, not even one. No one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away. They have together become worthless. There is no one who does good. Not even one."

So, we don't bring about good; God is the one who is credited with bringing about good. Everything that is good comes from God. He is primary; we're secondary in anything good. Does that make sense?

All that is good is morally chargeable to Him. Keep that in mind, because when it comes to God and evil, all that is evil is under His sovereignty, just like all that is good. Just what we've seen, all that is evil is under His sovereignty. Lamentations 3, the end of that passage, *"Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?"* You look at these passages, and what you'll see, like in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, what you'll see is a picture of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart. You will see this picture all throughout, and the fact that everything is evil is under His sovereignty in all of these texts.

However, here is the deal that is different. Whereas all that is good is morally chargeable to God in Scripture, all that is evil is not morally chargeable to Him. Plainly put, the Old Testament and Scripture all together never charges God with evil. It always attributes evil to other agents, other causes. Scripture, rightfully and continually, blames moral creatures for the evil they do, and we see this in Isaiah 66. The end of that passage is a prime example, but the blame for evil, the responsibility for evil is always on the creature, whether man or demon who does it, not the Creator.

This is where we come face-to-face with one of the core truths in the gospel. God is totally and wholly and completely good, and we have sinned and turned from Him and rebelled against Him. There is nothing good in us, Paul says. Therefore, we need the goodness of God to even begin to turn towards Him. All that is good, morally chargeable to Him. All that is evil, morally chargeable to us, creatures, man, evil spirits, demons.

Now, how does all this work together? I just want to remind you, and this is what we talked about in the *Who is God? Secret Church*. Remember the compatible plan of God. The compatible plan of God. How does this work together? It's these two truths, and how they come together is a mystery, but these two truths. Number one, God is in control. God is totally in control. Number two, we make choices. God is in control, and we make choices, and both of those statements are true. Let me give you two examples. Genesis 50, Joseph's brothers. Let me ask you a question. Were Joseph's brothers guilty of sin when they sold their brother into slavery and lied to cover it up? Were they guilty of sin? Were they responsible for that sin? Absolutely. Was God in control of it? Every single detail, and He was using it to bring about the redemption and salvation of His people in a famine that was coming. God in control, us making choices.

This picture is even more beautifully described in Acts 2,

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth is a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross."

Were Jesus' accusers, tormentors, and killers responsible for murdering Him on a cross? Absolutely. They were responsible for the sin of murder here. Did they choose to murder Him? Absolutely. *"You put him to death."* Was God sovereign over this picture? Every detail. God was not sitting back, just hoping something like this would happen to bring about the salvation of His people; God, this was His set purpose and foreknowledge, to use the most gruesome picture of evil in all of history to provide salvation for all of us.

So, these come together. God is in control, and we are making choices. As a result, it helps us to think through God is sovereign over everything, good and evil both, but He never sins. He is never blamed for sin. This is the picture of spiritual warfare in the Old Testament.

God, totally sovereign. Man, completely responsible. The focus is not on Satan, demons, casting this out or that out; the focus is repent, turn to God, and you're responsible for doing that, and everything that's happening is under the sovereignty of God, and He is ultimately using even evil to bring about good. Okay, let's stop for a second. There's the Old Testament and spiritual warfare. Meditate on that for weeks.

Christ and Spiritual Warfare

A thorough battle...

Okay, now Christ. We turn the pages of Scripture into the New Testament, and we see a pretty different scene. Jesus is casting out demons and evil spirits, it seems like, left and right, particularly compared to the Old Testament. We're wondering, "Were they just clueless in the Old Testament?" Why do we see such a different picture?

I want you to think about the portrait of Christ in the Gospels. Spiritual warfare is a thorough battle. At the beginning of His life, there is an attempt to kill Christ from the start, when King Herod issues this decree to find children and slay them. The beginning of His life, then at the beginning of His ministry. Jesus' ministry in Matthew 4 and Luke 4 is inaugurated by His temptation in the wilderness with the devil.

The beginning of His life, the beginning of His ministry, and as we move on, we see spiritual warfare in the middle of His life and ministry. He's casting out demons, Luke 9 is one picture, *"Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams."* Later, the passage said, *"Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God."*

He's casting out demons, and He is asserting His dominion. He is asserting His dominion over demonic forces in a clear and pretty controversial way. You go down to the end of this passage in Matthew 12, and they are accusing Him of driving out demons by the prince of demons. Jesus is responding to them, and He says, *"If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God then the kingdom of God has come upon you."* That's the point here. He's showing the kingdom of God is here. *"Or again,"* Jesus says, *"How can anyone enter a strongman's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strongman? Then he can rob his house."* Now, the end of this passage is so important, because in this imagery here, the strongman is Satan. His possessions, plunder, are not his personal property or effects; they are people. People whom he has blinded to the truth, the plan of salvation, and what Christ is doing as He carries out His ministry is He is showing that He has power to bind up the strongman, tie him up. That's the ultimate picture in the cross. What Christ is doing is He is binding the strongman, binding the one who held them captive. Jesus' ministry on earth is showing us that Satan has been bound. Satan has been bound by Christ, and Jesus' promise for eternity is that Satan will be destroyed. There is an eternal fire prepared for devil and his angels.

So, Satan has been bound, and Satan will be destroyed. All of that leads to the end of his life, where the cross is the ultimate exorcism. The prince of this world will now be driven out. The cross is the ultimate exorcism, and the resurrection is the ultimate victory. Jesus, the beginning of His life and ministry, middle of His life and ministry, comes to the cross, His resurrection, and then at the end of His ministry, before ascending into heaven, He says boldly, *"All authority in heaven and on earth is mine,"* (Matthew 28:18). I put Daniel 7 there because that's the fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel 7. Then, *"he would have everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."*

A two-sided battlefield...

So, the picture is, talk about a fly-through with Christ and demons. The picture is He is asserting His dominion all throughout, from the beginning of His life and ministry to the end of His life and ministry. What I want you to see, though, is that Jesus' involvement in spiritual warfare focused on two primary fronts, two different fronts, a two-sided battlefield. Follow with me here. Jesus wars against both moral evil and natural evil. Spiritual warfare in Christ: He is warring against moral evil and natural evil.

I want to show you the difference between the two. Moral evil primarily includes sin. Moral evil is wickedness, inequity, transgression, sin. It's the evil that we believe, the evil that we do. Satan draws us into, tempts us to sin. Moral evil includes sin, but that's not the only picture of evil that we see. We also see in all the Scripture and in the Gospels natural evil, which primarily includes suffering. This is not necessarily stuff that we do, but stuff that may happen to us, maybe natural disasters, sickness that is brought on. It's different. It's evil, but it's not moral evil in the same way sin is. It's different. Natural evil includes suffering.

Now, obviously they are connected; moral evil is ultimately the cause of natural evil. It goes all the way back to the beginning. We have catastrophic things that happen, natural disasters, tornadoes, hurricanes, as a result of sin's entrance into the world in Genesis 3. We have sickness. Now, just because we get sick doesn't mean we had a sin that directly caused that, right? However, ultimately moral evil is the cause of natural evil, but there are two different pictures of evil here. Now, the question is, "How does Satan relate to both of these?"

Satan is a liar who provokes moral evil. He provokes us to sin, but he is also, second, a murderer who applies natural evil; he applies suffering. I want you to think with me for a minute about how Jesus confronts both of these, both moral and natural evil, and I want you to think about how He confronts them in slightly, but important, different ways. Jesus wars against moral evil and natural evil differently, differently. How did He fight moral evil? Through one primary means. Follow with me. Jesus used declaration of truth to fight moral evil. We see this from the very beginning. As He is tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He quotes Scripture; He confronts temptation to sin with truth. Then, when we see the very beginning of His ministry, right after that, the very first message that's coming from His mouth is what? End of Matthew 4:12-17, verse 17 there, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.*"

In conversations with people, what Jesus is doing all throughout the Gospels is a summary, but He is exposing sin. Obviously, this was very prevalent among religious leaders, hypocrites, Pharisees. He's exposing their sin, and He's calling for repentance. Jesus exposed sin, and He called for repentance. Think about it. When Jesus was addressing the sins of the religious heretics, Pharisees, did He ever cast demons out of them? No. He didn't say, "You have a demon of pride. Be gone. Demon of hypocrisy, be gone. Demon of idolatry, be gone. Demon of self-sufficiency or your demon of money, be gone." No. Whenever He was addressing moral evil, He simply exposed their sin with truth and called for them to repent. That's how He fought moral evil, through declaration of truth, exposing sin, calling for repentance.

However, on the other hand, Jesus always used declaration of truth, but add here and demonstration of power to fight natural evil. Natural evil, like sickness and suffering, how would He address that? Certainly He'd still declare the truth of God, but he also demonstrated the power of God by showing His power over sickness, suffering, and I want

you to notice with me that in the passages where we see Jesus driving out demons, it is in context where Jesus is confronting natural evil, not moral evil.

Look at Mark 3, *"He had healed many, so that those with the diseases were pushing forward to touch him. When the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, 'You are the Son of God.' But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was."* Then, you get to Matthew 4. He's healing every disease and sickness among the people. *"News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed."* Do you see where the demon-possessed are mentioned? In context with those who have diseases, with pain, with seizures, who are paralyzed. That's where the demon-possessed are mentioned. This is the picture we see, sicknesses and evil spirits in Luke 7.

So, here's the deal, come down to the bottom, below Luke 13 there. Here's the picture we have of spiritual warfare in Christ. Jesus does not cast out demons in cases of moral evil, dealing primarily with sin. Instead, Jesus is casting out demons in cases of natural evil, dealing primarily with suffering. Does that make sense? You following here? This is key. Jesus approaches those who were demon-possessed primarily as sufferers who were needing relief, not sinners needing repentance.

Now, obviously there were some times when He would address both, when you have maybe the lame men in Mark 2 or John 5, and He healed them, but then also proclaimed His authority to forgive their sins, but it's separate here. The picture we see, Mark 5 is really the quintessential example of Jesus approaching a demon-possessed man, and Mark 5 does not tell us this man had demons of sin that were controlling him. Now, obviously he was acting in crazy ways, and certainly he was a sinner, but the emphasis is on his suffering as a result of this demon possession, and Jesus is delivering him from that possession.

So, the picture is Jesus dealing with moral evil and natural evil in very different ways. Moral evil He is saying, "Here's the truth of God. Repent." That's spiritual warfare against moral evil in the ministry of Christ. When it comes to evil spirits being cast out, this is spiritual warfare dealing with natural evil in Christ, and this is when He's casting out, when it comes to natural evil. We do not see Him casting out demons of sin; we see Him casting out demons of suffering.

The Church and Spiritual Warfare

Do we fight spiritual warfare exactly as Christ fought spiritual warfare?

Now hold onto that. It's huge. Now, we're coming to the church and spiritual warfare. Again, Old Testament, to Christ to the New Testament church, what's different and what's similar. This is where we need to ask the fundamental question, "Do we fight spiritual warfare exactly as Christ fought spiritual warfare?" That's an important question. What I am convinced that the New Testament teaches on this and a variety of other issues is that we address issues that are similar to what Jesus was addressing; they are similar issues. However, we address those issues in different ways. Oftentimes in very distinctly different ways.

I want to broaden your thinking for just a second. You're going to wonder, "Where in the world this is going, and what does this have to do with spiritual warfare?" I just want you to think about for a minute about how Jesus addresses similar issues, and then we're supposed to address the same issues but in totally different ways, because there are distinct differences between us and Christ. Think about paying taxes. They're asking, *"Does your teacher pay the temple tax?"* They have this conversation, Jesus says to Peter, *"Go to the lake, and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth, and you will find*

a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours." So, for Jesus, how did He pay taxes? Jesus caught a fish and paid the tax. Now, that works well. Like I wish this was possible so that all it took to please the IRS was a great Saturday at the lake, but that is not what we see. Are we supposed to do the same thing, catch a fish and pay a tax? No, the Scripture teaches us to work a job and pay the tax. Matthew 22:16-22, among other texts, teaches us, commands us to pay our taxes using methods we use to get that money. Scripture, obviously, never commands us to order fish to give us our tax money. Instead, Scripture clearly teaches that we're responsible for acquiring that money ourselves.

Now, think about catching fish. They're having a hard time catching fish, so Jesus just says, "Why don't you go out to this area, throw your net over the side, and you'll catch scores of them?" So, they do. Jesus worked this way. Jesus commanded the fish to be at the side of the boat, then eat. If only it were that easy. Just get on the boat, and when you decide you want them there, tell them to be there and bring them in. Not the same for us. Wait forever for the fish to come anywhere near the boat, then eat. We're supposed to find food still, but the means by which we do it is different.

Walking on water, Matthew 14, Jesus expressed faith by walking on top of the water. Are we ever commanded to do that as an expression of our faith, go out to the lake and try it? No. For us, we express faith by walking through deep waters, difficult times, trusting in God and keeping our focus on Christ. There's a shift in mode here.

Think about feeding the hungry. What did Jesus do in John 6, feeding the 5,000? He reveals himself as God by miraculously providing food for the needy. He prays and the food is there. Obviously, not the same for us. Now, it's not that we're not supposed to feed the needy. Are we supposed to feed the needy? Yes, but for us, we pray to God as we work to provide food for the needy. Why don't we just use supernatural means to feed the needy today? Why don't we go into impoverished villages and just pray and expect the food to come? Because God has said, Ephesians 4, 2 Corinthians 8-9, "Sacrifice your resources to help those who are in need." "Sacrifice your resources to help those who are in need," that's what He's commanding us to do. Pray to God as we work to provide food for the needy.

Think about speaking; the way they reacted when Jesus spoke. We've got to realize, Jesus had an inherent authority; He could say, "I say to you" this, and whatever He said was the Word of God. Not the same with you and me. Us, not an inherent authority, but a derived authority. I have authority to speak the Word of God only in so much as I am saying what this book says. I don't say, "I say to you, tonight" and this is authoritative. Absolutely not. This is authoritative, and my authority to speak the Word of God is only, it's totally tied to this Word and its authority. It's derived from God in His Word.

Think about forgiveness of sins. With Jesus, He had authority to provide for the forgiveness of sins. You and I do not have that authority. Instead, we are ambassadors who proclaim the forgiveness of sins. We proclaim His forgiveness. We're still confronting the need for peoples' forgiveness, but there's a totally different mode shift here.

When it comes to raising the dead, John 11, "*Lazarus, come out.*" Jesus never preached a funeral; every time He started one in the New Testament it's over. Not the same with us. It's Jesus, and what you've got is raising the dead is both an authoritative command and a gospel invitation. There are times when He says to a dead man, "Be raised and live," and they do. There are other times where He invites people to repent, to trust in His Father, and you will live forever in the resurrection and the life. Now for us, we don't do the former; we just do the latter, gospel invitation. We call people to eternal life. We are addressing this

issue, resurrection from the dead, but we're commanding people to receive the gospel, not telling them to rise up and walk.

Think about controlling the weather. Mark 4, Jesus speaks and the weather obeys. Us, we pray and God responds. We don't say, "Clouds, go over here. Wind, wave, stop." We don't speak like that. We're not told to; we're not commanded to. We pray and God responds.

Think about healing the sick. Think about healing the sick. Jesus had authority to command someone to be healed, and immediately, they would be healed. Then, we come to the New Testament, and it's not the case. If so, somebody come up to me and command this cough to come out of me. No, we do intercession for healing. We gather around, James 5, and pray for one another in the church and as elders in the church.

So, these are different instances. Now, think about spiritual warfare. This is the story I put in here of Mark 5, Jesus casting demons out of individuals. This is something Jesus does here and in other places, but here's what I want you to notice. We are never commanded to cast demons out of individuals. Never commanded. The only example where this might be the case, some would point to Luke 10, and there are huge implications of that text for understanding our mission today. However, at the same time there are distinctives in that mission that are different from us today. They were going to a specific place, a specific time, a specific territory, at a specific time where the kingdom of God had come, and it was there in the presence of Christ. We don't see in the New Testament, in the Gospels, we do not see a command to cast demons out of individuals. In fact, once you get past Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts, you don't see it again at all in the New Testament, people casting demons out. This is a picture that we see in Christ, and we see in some of His apostles in the book of Acts, but when you turn the page from Acts to Romans you hear nothing about casting demons out of people the rest of the time. The silence in the New Testament thunders here. There's nothing.

So how do we fight spiritual warfare?

I emphasize that because I want us to at least realize, at this point, that in New Testament, spiritual warfare in the church it is not primarily about casting demons out of people. I'll take it a step further in a minute, but what we see in the New Testament, in the church when it comes to spiritual warfare, is not an emphasis on exorcism and incantations and binding and loosing and casting out this or that. Instead, we see a clear, consistent, bold emphasis on fighting the good fight of faith and repenting ourselves and calling others to repentance. That is spiritual warfare. It is the same picture we have seen in the Old Testament, and it's the picture we have seen in Christ fighting moral evil in the Gospels, and it is the picture we see of the church and spiritual warfare. Never commanded to cast demons out of individuals.

This is where the battle of spiritual warfare is waged. Just think about this, Revelation 2 and 3 gives a picture of seven different New Testament churches in the middle of battle. It's interesting; again, I wish we had time to go through it, but these are churches; don't miss this. Church in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Laodicea, that were birthed in the middle of pagan occultic idolatry, all kinds of demonism that was rampant. Interestingly, when Christ speaks to them, we do not see at any point in Revelation 2 or 3, as well as the rest of the Epistles in the New Testament, the letters to the churches, things that we see today in conversations about spiritual warfare among Christians.

Let me give you some examples. These are not just "out there" kind of things, some of these very reputable, supposedly reputable pictures. One article from the *Los Angeles Times* in our day,

"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. Fuller Seminary professor, Peter Wagoner, 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."

Many of these writings begin to talk about walking around a community rebuking Satan in Jesus' name at every turn. Specific places, calling demons out of. There are a variety of methods for casting out demons. One, the *Deliverance Handbook* says,

"In deliverance, we were released from the spirits and desires that twist our heart and deceive our mind. What is a spirit? Anger is a spirit. Irritation and self-pity are spirits. Hatred, jealousy, illness, worry, deception, arrogance, fear, rebellion, resentment, phobia, shyness, conceit, confusion, sadness, accusation, addiction, pride, legalism, homosexuality, complaining, lying; they're all names of spirits. If at any time in your life you have ever expressed any such spirit or desire then you still have it hidden inside, unless you have been delivered of it."

So, they claim that you need to experience deliverance by binding or casting out that spirit. To do that, they say, simply say this prayer, "I bind and rebuke you spirit of (fill in the blank) in the name and blood of Jesus, and I command you to leave me now, totally and wholly. Thank you, Jesus." Some go deeper, "Speak directly to the spirit and cough and blow it out." What is that about? "Coughing is often necessary to release the spirit. Cough as necessary until it is out. If the spirit manifests disruptively or violently, it may be commanded. Do not allow the demon to speak and alter the words of this prayer. If it's altered the demon doesn't have to obey it, and the demon knows this." This is the kind of stuff that is out there. It's very prevalent, and there are variations on this, some of them more excessive than others.

I want you to think about when Christ had an opportunity to speak into seven churches that were in the middle of this kind of pagan occultism, where all kinds of spirits were rampant, what did he say? To the church in Ephesus, a church surrounded by idolatry and immorality. Ephesus had the Temple of Diana, Artemus, scores of eunuchs, thousands of prostitute priestesses who came together in just a total sea of music, orgies, drunkenness. Many followed in the lines of Nicolaitans and sexual immorality, and Jesus does not say to them "Cast out the demons of sexual immorality and idolatry. Organize prayer walks around the Temple of Diana and bind those spirits." No. He says to them, "Repent of your sin." Revelations 2:5, "Repent of your sin and reclaim your first love. Love me." This is where spiritual warfare is fought, in the heart, in the affections of your being.

Then, in Smyrna, a church that was facing persecution. They were facing direct satanic opposition, being persecuted. What does Jesus say? "Bind Satan and all of his forces?" No. Instead, we see here what we see in other places in Scripture. God was sovereign over this persecution, and He was using it to bring about His purposes. So, Jesus says to them,

"Trust God in faith and persevere in patience. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life." That's spiritual warfare.

Pergamum, to a church dwelling amidst Satan's throne. It literally says that, "You dwell in the middle of Satan's throne." This was a tough city, huge altar to Zeus. There's one god of healing in Pergamum associated with snakes, and the way you would be healed of your diseases is you would go, and you would lay on the floor and let the snakes crawl over you. Like, I'm staying sick if I'm in Pergamum. This place was messed up. Satan's throne, yet in the midst of it, God does not tell them to go around binding and rebuking Satan. Instead He says, "Be pure in thought and be pure in deed, that's how you fight the enemy."

In Thyatira, a church engulfed in false teaching. False teacher, symbolically called Jezebel there, who was leading all kinds of people with her teaching into idolatry and immorality. Jesus didn't tell them to cast demons out of Jezebel or bind Jezebel, but instead Jesus said, "Listen to holy truth and commit to holy living." This is spiritual warfare.

Revelation 3, Sardis, to a church that was basically dead; it was dying spiritually, and the letter to them simply says, "Turn from sin and turn to Christ. This is how to come from darkness to light."

Philadelphia, a church opposed – it literally says "opposed by a synagogue of Satan." They were unbelieving Jews who were opposed to the gospel in Philadelphia. They were persecuting believers, and the believers were facing temptation to shrink back. Jesus said, "Hold fast to my word and proclaim my name." Hold fast to His Word and proclaim His name. This is where the battle of spiritual warfare is fought, in the proclamation of the gospel. Don't miss it; they were not supposed to go around Philadelphia praying down all the spirits in Philadelphia. Instead, they were to go around Philadelphia preaching the gospel, and that was spiritual warfare.

Laodicea, to a church that was lukewarm, had all the money and all the trappings, and Christ said, "You're poor and naked. You think you're rich, but you're empty." He says to them, "Seek treasure in Christ. Clothe your lives in Christ." It's great imagery there. "Also, fix your eyes on Christ."

The picture in all seven of these churches, all seven are in the midst of intense spiritual battle in the first century, and Jesus never once tells them to engage in spiritual warfare by casting out, binding, rebuking, or calling down demons or engaging in high-level spiritual warfare. Instead, over and over and over again, He says, "Repent. Turn to Christ. Be pure. Be holy. Repent. Proclaim your first love. Then, proclaim your first love all over the city that surrounds you." That's New Testament spiritual warfare.

Now, some might say at this point – we're getting a little bit, obviously, into where we're going to be going at the end, but some might say, "You don't understand. There's a lot going on in different parts of the world today and you just – there are different things in the world today that warrant different types of spiritual warfare." That's just the point I want to make; if there was any place that necessitated the kind of spiritual warfare stuff that we hear so prevalent in contemporary Christian discussions of spiritual warfare, this was the place, but even in the middle of this place, Jesus is simply saying, "Trust in God. Repent of sin and proclaim the gospel."

So, when we think about New Testament spiritual warfare, I want us in our minds, and I hope this isn't too disappointing, but I want us in our minds to come back and realize that what we are seeing all over the New Testament is spiritual warfare in action, but it's not this

glamorous, fanciful this and that, casting and calling out and binding. No, it's a constant pursuit of Jesus Christ, turning from sin over and over and over again, and a proclamation of the gospel to the ends of the earth, and spiritual warfare is happening in the middle of it.

When you look in the New Testament, what you will see in terms of spiritual warfare are two primary actions. How does the New Testament say we should fight spiritual warfare? Number one, stand firm. A defensive posture. Look at Ephesians 6. It's one of the main texts we're going to look at the rest of the night. Remember, this is right in the middle of Ephesus, Temple of Diana, all these gods and goddesses being worshipped, immorality and idolatry, and Paul says, "Stand." This is what you do. "This is so anticlimactic, Paul. Like give us something a little more exciting." Four times he says, "Stand." Underline it. "*Put on the full armor of God so you can take your stand.*" Underline it there. "*Therefore put on the full armor of God,*" a couple of verses down, "*So when the day evil comes you may be able to stand your ground,*" second time, "*After you've done everything to stand,*" third time, "*stand firm then.*"

Spiritual warfare is standing and resisting the devil. It's standing against temptation and the attacks of the enemy. Listen to 1 Peter 5, "*Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*" So, what do you do? Resist him, standing firm in the faith. Resist the devil. When the Bible, New Testament is talking about spiritual warfare, this is the picture: stand, resist, be firm, steadfast, and James says, "Submit yourselves, resist him, and he will flee from you." I promise a victory does not get any stronger than that. Stand, brothers and sisters, and the devil will flee. It's a promise. You want to fight spiritual warfare? Stand firm.

That's the defensive posture in spiritual warfare. Then second, press forward. An offensive posture. Attack enemy territory. This is the picture in the Great Commission, and this is where the whole passage in Ephesians 6 leads. Don't miss it. "*Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it fearlessly, as I should.*" Paul's ministry was about aggressive proclamation of the gospel. So, there are two primary actions in spiritual warfare in the New Testament church. One, stand firm, resisting the devil's schemes. Number two, we press forward, attacking enemy territory, and there are three primary fronts where this battle is raging. The Bible teaches three ways or avenues through which evil is attacking us. Three avenues, fronts. Number one, the world. Number two, the flesh, and number three, the devil. World, flesh, devil.

What I've done is I've listed – you'll see all three of these in Ephesians 2. You'll see all three of these in James 3, and then when you look at these two passages in 1 John, you'll see evil described as the world, the flesh, and the devil. Think about it. When it comes to the world, the world is around us. The world in Scripture is referred to as the environment in which we live; all the ungodly aspects of culture, and our values and traditions and customs and philosophies that surround us in this world. All the worldview assumptions that we so readily accept, we need to see how the world has a profound influence on the way we think. Don't we realize this?

We can go to a gathering of the church Sunday in and Sunday out, and we can go through the motions and never once think that maybe Christ wants to redirect the way we raise our kids than our non-Christian neighbor next to us. Maybe Christ wants to redirect the way we spend our money than our non-Christian neighbor next to us. Instead, the world and the church look just like one another. We don't think about the fact that the world is attacking

us so sinfully around us, and we are buying in to where our lives are very, in many ways, indistinguishable from the world. The world is around us.

Second, the flesh is within us. We have in us, still, a sinful nature, an inner propensity to do evil. It's part of us that was tainted by the Fall, and it's still in us. Galatians 5 talks about that. So, you've got the world around us, the flesh within us, and then Satan is against us. The evil spiritual being and his demons intent on perpetrating evil in our lives.

Now, I want you to think about these three together: world, flesh, and devil. The Bible differentiates these three strands of evil without dividing them, without dividing them. The Bible does not say, "We've got three problems: a world set of problems, flesh set of problems, and Satan/devil set of problems." Instead, kind of like three cords of a rope, they are together. They're different, but they are overlapping together. Over and over and over again, they are coming together.

In addition, the Bible addresses people, not demons. Just like we saw in the Old Testament, this is what we're going to see in the New Testament. When the Bible talks about spiritual warfare, we are on center stage and demons are backstage. This is one of the dangers—just by the way—of Frank Peretti and the like. I know it's just fiction, but we start taking fiction, and we bring it into truth in our minds. The danger is with novels like that, they put demons on center stage, and that is not how Scripture pictures spiritual warfare. Scripture is putting an emphasis over and over again on people, and people's responsibility. People's response to the world, flesh, and the devil, not demons.

All three of these working together against man. Thomas Brooks, he wrote one of the books that I had recommended. Thomas Brooks wrote, and he talked about how the flesh is the hook; it's just a picture, just an image. The flesh is the hook, the world is the bait, and Satan is constantly baiting the hook in our lives. Constantly baiting the hook in our lives. What this means is spiritual warfare, then, is a lifelong struggle, not a one-time fix. Spiritual warfare is not about a trip to someone who can cast demons out. Spiritual warfare is about a holistic battle that involves our entire lives and our struggle with sin, contending our faith, advancing the gospel. This is where I want us to see that spiritual warfare and discipleship go hand-in-hand, and our sanctification is on the front lines of spiritual warfare. If we give ourselves to making disciples, we will be on the front lines of spiritual warfare.

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