

Introduction to Spiritual Warfare

For the skeptic and materialist¹ in this world, the whole idea of Spiritual Warfare might cause a good laugh. NBC's comedy program, Saturday Night Live had a character known as the "Church Lady" who attributed everything to "Saaatan!". People in the audience and all over America roared in laughter at the characterization of a Christian who attributed events to a being known as "Satan". The audience response is completely understandable; Satan is a biblical revelation, so why would we expect the world to take such a thing seriously.

This comedic sketch is just an example of how pervasive the Spiritual War is around us. What! How is a simple comedy skit on a Saturday night, part of a Spiritual War you might ask? Satan according to the Bible is a very real being, who is opposed to God's work in every way. According to Jesus, he (Satan) is the father of lies (John 8:44), there is no truth in him. Therefore, with millions of people watching, Saturday Night Live plays its role in causing many to doubt Satan exists, bringing doubt to the words of Jesus in the Bible. This is just one of many examples of the Spiritual War taking place all around us.

So, what is the goal of this Spiritual War? Where is it all going?

First, we have to understand the only reason we know there is a Spiritual war taking place is because God chose to reveal it to us through the prophets in the Bible. Without the revelation of scripture, we would be blind to this battle. Therefore, to understand this war, we need to see what scripture says, and not rely on our feelings and emotions. Again, understanding the Spiritual War requires revelation from God, so it's understandable the world would be skeptical of such a conflict.

Secondly, the Bible tells us, there is an invisible realm, which is distinct from our physical realm. Our physical world is in many ways under the power this spiritual world. Much of the evil in the world is direct result of this unseen war. The number personalities involved in this conflict, are huge, they involve both the forces of Satan composed of fallen angels and of God, along with His angels.

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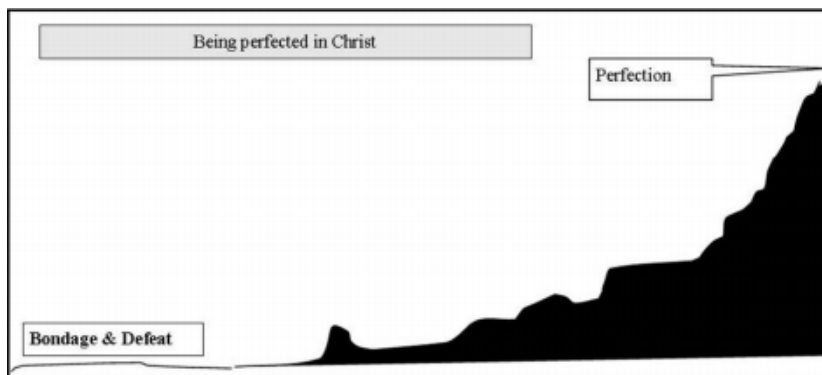
¹ 1 The philosophy which teaches all that exists is the material, as opposed the existence of a spiritual realm.

This battle is played out in the realm of humanity, the physical world. According to scripture, the target of this battle is the souls of humanity, (1 Peter 5:8-9), and the battlefield is in the mind of humanity, blinding them from the truth, that they perish without salvation.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 *“3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”*

This is the conflict raging all around us, as the kingdom of Satan wages war on the kingdom of God, for the souls of humanity. When we come to Christ, we are saved, but God’s program does just not end at our salvation. We now become part of the kingdom of God, opposed to the kingdom of Satan, bringing salvation to the lost. We become an adversary to the god of this age, who has blinded the lost. Understanding, the dynamics of this spiritual world is key to having victory not only in our life, but also in advancing the kingdom of God, in territory claimed by the enemy.

Why do we need to understand Spiritual Warfare?



Have you ever played a game, not knowing or understand the rules? Imagine you are invited to play in a football game, without understanding the rules. You might find yourself asking these questions. What do you do with the ball? Why are these players hitting me? You might

find yourself quitting or lying on the ground in agony, not understanding why the other team hit you. This happens in the spiritual realms, when someone comes to Christ, and is born again. Many times, the new Christian finds himself/herself in the middle of a war, not understanding the conflict.

The purpose of understanding Spiritual Warfare is so that we can understand the dynamics of the conflict, and move forward in victory, rather than lie in defeat. Our goal is to advance the Kingdom of God, take territory from the enemy and bring souls into the kingdom. If we understand how our enemy works, his traps and strategies are less likely to take us by surprise.

Satan understands the redeemed (saved) are his mortal enemy. His goal is to remove the advantage of victory they have in Christ, by causing the saved to wallow in bondage and defeat. A defeated Christian is one less enemy Satan has to worry about; one more warrior of the Kingdom of God taken out of commission. Knowing this is Satan's goal, allows the believer to pursue victory rather than wallow in defeat.

We need to understand just how Satan wages war in our lives, and in the lives of those around us. If we know his methods, we will then be equipped to disarm, and tear down the strongholds, which cause our constant defeat. Knowing the method of spiritual warfare, allows us to go on the offense, rather than responding from a position of defense and weakness.

When did Spiritual Warfare begin?

To understand the origin of this Spiritual conflict, our knowledge of this war comes through scripture alone. God has revealed through the prophets, in both Old and New Testaments, the origin of this war. The being known as Satan has many names in scripture; one among them is Lucifer, who was the angel who covered the throne of God.

His beauty and pride made him rebel against God's authority, causing him to lead a rebellion of 1/3 of the angels against God. These angels along with Lucifer became "fallen" angels. The nature of Satan's fall is covered in **Ezekiel 28:1-18**, and Isaiah **14:1-19**, where Satan is referred to as the King of Tyre (Ezekiel) and the King of Babylon (Isaiah).

Isaiah 14:12-13 14 *"12How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! 13 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north;*

Ezekiel 28:14-15 *"14You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. 15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you."*

We will cover the details of his fall in a later study, but for now we need to understand that Satan fell from a point of perfection, through the agency of free-will. He chose to reject God's authority, along with 1/3 of the angels (**Revelation 12:4**). With the fall of these spiritual beings, the war began. As a place for punishment, God created the everlasting fires of Hell for the Devil and his angels.

Matthew 25:41 *"41 Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:'"* Before Satan was dispatched there, God made humanity and allowed Satan to question His authority.

The fall of Man

Along with the creation of angels, God also created the physical world, and humanity, which was made in the very image of God. Like the angels, humankind had the ability to choose to reject or obey God's commands. God created man and then woman, Adam and Eve, and placed them in the Garden of Eden. Humanity, like the angels, could choose to obey or reject the command in the Garden. Adam and Eve, made in the image of God, were given dominion over the earth; they were to subdue the earth and have dominion over it, being made in the image of God.

Genesis 1:28 *"28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

God also permitted Satan, the fallen angel to tempt Adam and Eve. By questioning God's nature and commands in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, like 1/3 of the angels paid attention to Satan, and rejected God's command. They rebelled against God and fell. They turned over their rights of dominion to Satan, who was then given authority over humanity. In rejecting God's command Adam forfeited his assignment. For this reason, Satan could tempt Jesus on the mountain, and offer him the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would fall down and worship him.

Luke 4:5-8 *"5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 "Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." 8 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"*

Though Adam and Eve delivered the nations. The nations (the descendent of humanity) to Satan, God established a plan of redemption through the seed of Eve, the woman. A descendent (a seed) of the woman would crush the head of the Serpent (Satan). The war, which began in the Spiritual realm, now entered the physical world, as God promised that the judgment on Satan, would come through the offspring of the woman. The Messiah, a descendent of Eve, would one day crush Satan.

Genesis 3:14-15 *"14 So the Lord God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*

After man's fall, followed by God's declaration, humanity became the battleground between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. The Spiritual War now entered the physical world. From the time of Cain and Abel, we see two groups of descendants emerge from Adam and Eve, one who seeks God and one who rejects God, like our spiritual counterparts the angels.

For this reason, God called out a people from the earth, who would serve him. These people are the redeemed of the earth. They are the Lord's army representing God in the Spiritual War, opposing the work of Satan. Meanwhile, Satan and his fallen angels work to corrupt and subvert God's people, trying to prevent his final end.

The redemption of humanity and Satan's fall

Prior to the birth of Jesus, and even after His birth, Satan's goal was to prevent the redemption of man. From the point when Cain killed Abel, the "Seed" of the Serpent has pursued the "Seed" of the Woman. In the days of Noah, God separated His people, the family of Noah, from fallen humanity. After Noah's Ark landed, and his descendants began to multiply, we see Satan continue the battle, which began in the garden. Again, God calls out a people, Abraham and his descendants who are chosen, to be God's people, opposing to the work of Satan.

Remember, Satan's goal is to prevent the fulfillment of God's Word, which declared his being crushed by the "Seed" of the woman. God chose Israel, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as His people. In the book of Exodus God refers to the children of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as "My people" nineteen times. He makes a distinction between His people and the people of Egypt.

Exodus 6:7 *"7 I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."*

Through the descendants of Israel, God would complete his plan of redemption in the world. Satan again tries to prevent this. In Exodus chapter 1, Satan through Pharaoh, tries to integrate Israel into Egypt by killing all the male children, which would have forced Israel to become Egyptian. Out of this struggle, Moses emerges to lead the people of Israel back to the land of Canaan, the land of promise. On the way to the land, God again declares the distinction between His people and the rest of the nations.

Exodus 19:5-6 *"5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."*

Israel was created to be distinct on the Earth, a unique people, a holy people. The Hebrew word for holy is *Xwdq Qadowsh*, meaning sacred, set apart or saint, while the New Testament equivalent is *hagios*, which translates as saint. Israel was to be a nation of saints, among fallen humanity. Through the nation, God would bring forth the Messiah, who would crush Satan. As we read the stories of war and battles in the pages of the Old Testament and the nation's struggles with sin, what underlies everything is the Spiritual War through which Satan tries to prevent the Messiah's birth.

The prophets such as Isaiah declared the Messiah (Christ), would be a descendent of King David, who would be born in Bethlehem (**Micah 5:1-2**). He would rule on David's throne over the nations and His kingdom would be eternal (**Isaiah 9:6-7**). However, the Messiah would suffer and pay for the sins of man, before he came in glory and power to judge the nations (**Isaiah 53**). Jesus at the cross, defeated Satan who earlier tempted Jesus to worship him, promising Jesus the nations in exchange (**Luke 4:5-8**).

When Jesus died on the cross, He redeemed what Adam and Eve lost and paid for the sins of humanity. He suffered, the Serpent bruised (crushed) His heel (**Genesis 3:15**), but in the process the Messiah became the payment of sins for all humanity. Again, God was redeeming His people from those on the earth. The Church is the body of Christ on the earth representing God's presence in the world. In the same way Israel represented God during the Old Testament period, we represent God today. We have been grafted into the covenant blessings of Israel (**Romans 11:17**).

Jesus declared his victory over Satan, giving authority to His people, the saints, over the fallen angels. Therefore, redeemed by the blood of Christ, we carry the battle forward, having authority over the enemy. We have authority over the demonic realm in the name and power of Christ. This is what Satan tried to prevent, from the fall of man until the time of Jesus Christ.

Luke 10:17-20 *"17 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' 18 And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.'"*

Satan, however, is still at work trying to prevent the advance of the Kingdom of God in the world, despite his defeat at the cross. He understands his time is short and that one day the saints, the redeemed of the earth, will inherit all things. We see this declaration in the book of Daniel, over 500-years before the birth of Jesus.

Daniel 7:27 *“27 Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.”*

We, those in Christ, march forward in victory over the power of Satan. Satan’s goal for the Christian, is to take away the victory we have in Jesus Christ, causing us to live a life of defeat. By doing this, he removes one more threat against his work. God however has put limits on just how far Satan can go, whether he likes it or not. We see this in the book of Job as Satan rejects Job’s righteousness, because he (Satan) does not have the permission to touch him, because the Lord has put “a hedge around him.

Job 1:8-10 *“8 Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" 9 So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 "Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.”*

The Invisible world of the Spiritual realms

Satan’s work against the Kingdom of God, takes place in the invisible realms. We cannot see the spiritual world with our physical eyes, but its effects are just as real. Scripture clearly declares the existence of the unseen invisible world (**Romans 1:20, Hebrews 11:27, Colossians 1:16**). This world cannot be comprehended with our physical senses. The idea of a spiritual world stands in contrast to the philosophy of materialism, which teaches all that exists is the physical made of matter.

Paul, in Ephesians chapter 6, tells us not only is this spiritual realm invisible but it is organized with a structure of rule. The battle we face in the world is not one in the physical world but one in the spiritual.

Ephesians 6:12 *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

The word for wrestle *pavlh Pale*, is found only here in the New Testament. The wrestling contest referred to here, means a contest between two in which each one endeavors to throw down the other, and which is decided when the victor is able to hold his opponent down with his hand upon his neck. Paul uses this example to illustrate the contest we face against the invisible spiritual realms. Our battle is very real, its actually against an organized system of power and influence in the heavenly realms.

Paul wants us to understand that the root behind the conflict is not the physical, but the spiritual. The angelic world and the demonic (fallen angels) conflicts are being played out in the physical realms, which involves us.

The extent and nature of this invisible world is probably more than we can imagine. However, the Bible gives us glimpses of how the invisible world interacts with the physical. In II Kings 6, the King of Syria is at war with Israel, Elisha the prophet kept telling the king of Israel what the Syrian king planned to do. Finally, the Syrian king sent an army to get Elisha. The morning they arrived, Elisha's servant was shocked and frightened, and he cried out to Elisha.

II Kings 6:15-18 *"15 And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" 16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 18 So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, and said, "Strike this people, I pray, with blindness." And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. "*

Now Elisha, understood the situation from a spiritual rather than physical viewpoint. The servant was there for our benefit, God allowed us to see the situation as the servant saw it, so that we could understand the world we live in. Here two men stood, Elisha and his servant, who represented the Lord, versus a much larger physical army of chariots and horses from Syria. In the world of flesh, Elisha would have no chance of escape. The physical world however is subject to the spiritual realms. The spiritual realms are just as real as the physical only they are not seen with our physical eyes. This is the point Elisha wanted his servant to understand and God wanted us to know. The armies of the Lord are present in the world, and servants of the Lord have authority over the fallen realms through the power of Christ.

Another example of this invisible world is the New Testament **Mark 5:1-13**, when a man who was possessed with demons confronts Jesus. Through this event, Jesus allows us to see the operation of the demonic realms of this invisible world.

Mark 5:1-13 *"1 Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. 2 And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, 4 because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. 7 And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me." 8 For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!" 9 Then He asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many." 10 Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. 11 Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. 12 So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that we may enter them." 13 And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea."*

Mark 5:1-13 From this event, we can glean a great deal of insight into the spiritual realms. However, let us just look at some of the major points for now:

- The man had a supernatural strength, but his power was subject to God.
- The man in whom the demons dwelt was in torment.
- He recognized who Jesus was, and appealed to Him.
- The spirit dwelt in the man, allowing him to interact in the physical world.
- The demon was frightened of Jesus.
- He had an identity, he was named "Legion".
- He was more than one demon.
- They could only do what was permissible, such as entering the pigs.

The detail presented here is no accident, Jesus wants us to understand the detail of the Spiritual War, so we can comprehend the conflict we are in. In our day, it's not uncommon for many to dismiss the whole idea of demons and possession as a relic of from the past.

Satan's goal is not to be seen, but to deceive. In a secular, skeptical world it's to Satan's advantage for people to think he does not exist.

When Bible teachers and church leaders reject Satan's existence, they not only reject him, but they reject Jesus words, which is Satan's object, because Jesus proclaims Satan does exist. He is very real, and he has a goal, which is to blind those who are perishing, Satan is called the god of this age, who prevents the lost from seeing the truth.

In fact, according to some polls the majority of people in America reject the teaching, of Satan as a personal being, including the churches.

The chart below illustrates how far we have come from truth about the spirit realm (Satan particularly) and what many believe about it:

Group	Satan is only a symbol of evil	Satan is a living being
Average of American Adults	60%	35%
65 years and older	49%	38%
Born again	43%	52%
Not born again	68%	25%
Evangelical Christians	47%	49%
Roman Catholics	69%	26%
Mainline Protestants	65%	27%