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## Lesson #5

### Territorial Spirits and The Debate over Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare

Introduction:

*Has Satan assigned specific demons special responsibility, authority and power over specific geographical and political areas? Could the entrenched resistance to the gospel in some nations and cultures be due to the ruling presence of a demonic spirit (or spirits) placed there by Satan? If so, what is the responsibility of the Christian? Is there a unique form of spiritual warfare calling for special tactics when it comes to dealing with so-called "territorial spirits"?*

#### A. *Biblical Evidence for Territorial Spirits*

Several lines of evidence lead me to conclude that there are indeed territorial spirits.

- Satan has organized his demonic forces into a hierarchy. There is some form of rank, as indicated by the six-fold description in Paul's letters: *principalities, authorities, powers, dominions, thrones, world-rulers*.
- Demons differ both in their degree or depth of wickedness (Mt. 12:45) and their strength or power (Mark 9:29). Could this possibly be what determines their organizational position?
- Satan does not operate haphazardly. He has a plan, schemes, tactics, a cosmic agenda (Eph. 6:11; 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 John 5:18-19).
- The scenario described in Daniel 10 is the most explicit support for the idea of territorial or "nationalistic" spirits.

*Preparation for the Vision – 10:1-4*

#### 1. the chronological setting – 10:1

Cyrus's "third year" would have been 535 b.c., two years subsequent to the appearance of Gabriel in chapter 9. Daniel would now be @ 85 years old. He mentions his Babylonian name ("Belteshazzar") "apparently to emphasize that he was indeed the same individual spoken of earlier in the book. After all, it had been over seventy years since he had been taken into captivity" (Miller, 276).

#### 2. Daniel's personal preparation – 10:2-4

Daniel's period of "mourning" was perhaps provoked by his concern over news of what was happening in Palestine (cf. Ezra 4:5,24) among those who had returned to begin work on the city and temple (cf. Neh. 1:4). He evidently began his partial fast (v. 3) on the third day of Nisan (March-April, the first month) and experienced his angelic visitation on the twenty-fourth day.

There is no explanation given why Daniel himself had not returned to Palestine with the first wave of former captives. Perhaps his age was a hindrance. Perhaps he was too important in government affairs to be spared. He may even have voluntarily chosen to remain behind, thinking that he could do more for the Jewish effort from his power base in Babylon. In any case, he take three week off from his duties and seeks the Lord in prayer and fasting, somewhere in the vicinity of the Tigris

River (which originated several hundred miles north of Babylon and flowed to the Persian Gulf; it passed within twenty miles of the capital city).

*The Angelic(?) visitation – 10:5-9*

1. his characteristics – 10:5-6

Several things should be noted about this “angel”:

- In 12:6 an angel is portrayed as being in the air above the Tigris; perhaps the same is true here (notice that Daniel “lifted” his eyes and looked).
- This “angel” took on the form and appearance of a man (v. 5) –
- He was dressed in “linen” (v. 5) – both priests (Ex. 28:42; Lev. 6:10) and angels (Ezek. 9:2-3,11; 10:2,6-7; Luke 24:4) wore white linen, a symbol of purity (cf. Isa. 1:18; Dan. 11:35; 12:10).
- His waist was girded with a belt of the “gold of Uphaz (v. 5) – this may have been a linen belt embroidered with gold, or perhaps even gold chain-links; perhaps royalty or the power to judge is in view.
- His body was like “beryl” (v. 6) – also identified as “chrysolite,” some form of gold-colored precious stone.
- His face looked like “lightning” (v. 6) – how does a face look like “lightning”? Is he referring to lightning “bolts” or simply alluding to the “brilliance” of his face?
- His eyes were like “flaming torches” (v. 6; cf. Rev. 1:14) – try to envision a face of “lighting” surrounding eyes that look like torches on fire!
- His arms and feet like “polished bronze” (v. 6) –
- His voice sounded like a tumult (v. 6; cf. Rev. 10:3) –

Who was this being? (1) Some say it was once again the pre-incarnate Son of God, the same who appeared in the furnace (chp. 3) and the lion’s den (chp. 6). If so, we must differentiate between this being and the “angel” who appears in vv. 10ff. See the similar descriptions in Ezek. 1:26-28 and Rev. 1:12-16. Problem: if this is God the Son, what is the purpose of his appearance? Why appear only then to be replaced on the scene by an angel? It makes better sense if the being who terrifies Daniel in vv. 5-9 is the same one who touches and teaches him in vv. 10ff. (2) Therefore, others insist that this was Gabriel who had earlier appeared to Daniel in chp. 9. One argument used against this view is that in 9 Daniel was not afraid of Gabriel but here in 10 he is terrified. But that may well be due to the form of his appearance (perhaps the description in vv 5-6 is designed precisely to explain why Daniel reacted differently). (3) Or this may be yet another angel, similar to Gabriel and Michael in power and majesty. See esp. Rev. 10:1.

2. Daniel’s reaction – 10:7-9

*The Angelic explanation (1) – 10:10-17*

1. his mission – 10:10-14
2. Daniel’s reaction – 10:15-17

*The Angelic explanation (2) – 10:18-11:1*

In response to his humility and prayer (v. 12), God sent an angel to Daniel. His arrival was delayed 21 days because he had been hindered by "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" (v. 13). Who or what is this "prince"? He isn't a human prince:

- because he is able to resist this exalted angelic being, something no human could reasonably be said to do;
- because he is able to resist with such force that Michael had to be summoned for help (v. 13b);
- the word "prince" is applied equally to Michael.

He must be demonic in nature:

- he engages in direct conflict with an angelic being;
- he sustains an on-going relationship to the nation of Persia (v. 20). Thus, "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" is a demonic being assigned by Satan to this nation as his special area of activity; he was to provide hindrance to God's will and kingdom there, especially among God's people under Persian rule.

We read in v. 13 that Gabriel "had been left there with *the kings of Persia*." Wood argues that the "kings" of Persia refers to the future rulers of that nation and that Gabriel successfully gained a position of influence over them in the place of the "prince (demon) of Persia" mentioned in v. 13a. Others contend that the "kings of Persia" were additional demonic spirits assigned by Satan to influence this nation that currently ruled the world. We read in v. 20 that, after his encounter with Daniel, Gabriel was to return to resume his battle with the prince of Persia. This indicates that whatever the nature of the "fight" in v. 13, Gabriel was not able to forever destroy or banish that "prince." In v. 20 we also read of the "prince of Greece". Does this indicate that there is *at least* one high ranking demon assigned to each country or nation, perhaps with lesser demons assigned to assist? Note well that, according to Dan. 10:13,21; 12:1, Michael is portrayed as the special guardian or protector over Israel.

There are several conclusions to be drawn from this:

First, it is important to note that Daniel is nowhere portrayed as praying to or commanding angels. His prayer is directed to God alone who in turn, it would appear, commissions His angelic hosts to engage in the conflict.

Second, we clearly see that the demonic hosts are engaged in warfare with the angelic hosts of heaven, the prize being the opportunity to manipulate earthly kings, nations, and peoples. Page explains:

"These rebellious angels oppose the forces that support Israel, and the conflict between these two groups affects relationships between the nations with which they are allied. That is, the situation on earth reflects the situation in heaven. Presumably, the antagonism of the prince of Persia in the extraterrestrial realm manifested itself in the human opposition Israel encountered as she sought to rebuild the walls and temple of Jerusalem (Ezra 4). Later, Israel would find herself under the control of another foreign power, Greece, and the mention of the prince of Greece alludes to this" (64).

Third, Daniel's prayer did, in fact, provoke a heavenly conflict. The fact that Daniel's three-week fast coincides with the three-week struggle between the "prince of Persia" and the unnamed angel "demonstrates a relationship between human intercession and what happens on a higher plane. Daniel's prayers appear to influence angels who play a significant role in shaping the destinies of nations" (Page, 64). Does this suggest that the outcome of the heavenly conflict is *dependent* on the frequency or fervency of one's prayers on earth? Whatever answer one gives to that question, it is important to remember, as Clinton Arnold points out, that

"Daniel had no idea of what was happening in the spiritual realm as he prayed. *There is no indication that Daniel was attempting to discern territorial spirits, pray against them, or cast them*

*down*. In fact, Daniel only learned about what had happened in the angelic realm *after* the warring in heaven" (162).

Fourth, the outcome of battles and struggles on earth reflects the involvement of heaven. "The purposes of kings and nations," observes John Goldingay, "are more than merely the decisions of particular human beings. Something in the realm of the spirit lies behind them" (312). In other words, the unfolding events in human history are not determined solely by the will of man. Page explains:

"In particular, there are malevolent forces in the universe that exercise a baneful influence in the sociopolitical realm, especially where the people of God are concerned. Nevertheless, the power of these evil agencies is limited, for transcendent powers of goodness oppose them, and the faithful prayers of believers are also effective against them. However antagonistic the forces of evil may be towards the will of god, they cannot prevent it from being accomplished" (64).

In a word, there is more to historical conflict than meets the eye! See 2 Kings 6:15-17.

Fifth, Arnold makes this important observation:

"The events of Daniel 10 took place in 535 b.c. On the human plane, the Greek Empire did not surface to prominence until the rise of Alexander the Great, almost exactly two hundred years later. For the next two centuries, the Persian Empire remained the dominant power in the Ancient Near East. It is important, then, to observe that the text does not teach that Daniel, by his prayer, was able to bind, cast down, or evict the Persian prince – he remains powerfully influential for two hundred years. Of course, casting down a territorial ruler was not the objective of Daniel's prayer anyway" (155).

Sixth, whereas in Daniel 10:13,21 we see that Michael had to come to assist Gabriel, two years earlier (@538 b.c.) Gabriel had to assist Michael! Why? Perhaps this is related to the return of the Jewish exiles to Palestine following the decree of Cyrus. As Archer notes, "knowing that such a development could lead to the ultimate appearance of the Son of God as the Messiah for God's redeemed, Satan and all his hosts were determined to thwart the renewal of Israel and the deliverance of its people from destruction. The supreme effort to exterminate them altogether was to take place some fifty-five years later, in the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), when Haman secured his consent to obliterate the entire Jewish race" (127). Although we read nothing in the book of Esther of a cosmic battle between angels and demonic forces, it seems likely that her success was the result of angelic support and strength.

#### B. *Additional Biblical Support for Territorial Spirits*

Several other texts implicitly hint at the idea of territoriality among the demonic hosts.

1. Deuteronomy 32:7-8 - Here we are told that the Lord apportioned humanity into groupings ("set the boundaries of the peoples") according to the number of "*the sons of Israel*". However, in the Septuagint (LXX) and in a scroll of Deuteronomy from Qumran we read "according to the number of *the sons of God*," an obvious reference to the angelic hosts. If the latter is correct, as many OT scholars believe, the implication would be that "the number of the nations of the earth is directly proportional to the number of angels. Certain groupings of angels are associated with particular countries and peoples" (Arnold, 151). Thus, as F. F. Bruce put it, "the administration of the various nations has been parcelled out among a corresponding number of angelic powers." We have already encountered this idea of nations having "patron angels" in Psalm 82. ***If God originally made this assignment among the holy angels, it would not be out of keeping with Satan's character to copy and combat it.***

2. Mark 5:10 - Here we have the strange request by "Legion" that Jesus not "send them out of the country." Why did they fear (resist) being driven from that specific geographical locale? Could it be that they had been assigned to that region by Satan and feared his reprisal for failing to "keep their post" so to speak?

3. 2 Corinthians 4:4 - Why would not the blinding of individuals by Satan extend to nations, states, cities, etc.?

4. Revelation 2:13 - Pergamum is described as "where Satan's throne is" and "where Satan dwells". This city was infamous for its paganism, and several things may account for this description: (1) Pergamum was the center for the imperial cult where a temple had been erected in honor of "the divine Augustus and the goddess Roma." (2) There was also a temple in Pergamum for Zeus, king of the Greek gods. (3) The citizens of Pergamum worshipped Asclepius, the god of healing (portrayed or symbolized by the serpent = Satan).

Perhaps Pergamum was the focal point of Satan's activity at this time, the home-base, as it were, from which he directed his demonic hosts. The point is that some places, and hence people, are more intensely under the control or rule of demonic power than others because of an unusual concentration or presence of demonic activity.

Conclusion: I see nothing in the Bible that precludes the possibility of "territorial spirits" and I see numerous texts that certainly imply their reality. The question remains, "What should be our response to them?"

### Excursus on Spiritual Mapping

*Spiritual mapping* is an attempt to look beyond and behind the natural, material and physical features of a city to the spiritual forces that give it shape and influence its character. It involves "superimposing our understanding of forces and events in the spiritual domain onto places and circumstances in the material world" (George Otis). It is an attempt to discover the doors through which Satan and his demonic hosts gained access into and influence over a geographical locale, a city, or a nation. This will reveal the moral/legal grounds on which the stronghold is built as well as the demonic spirits who energize it. In other words,

"spiritual mapping gives us an image or spiritual photograph of the situation in the heavenly places above us. What an X-ray is to a physician, spiritual mapping is to intercessors. It is a supernatural vision that shows us the enemy's lines, location, number, weapons, and above all, how the enemy can be defeated" (Harold Caballeros).

With this knowledge, intercessors are better equipped to pray for the dismantling of the stronghold and to pursue other courses of action that will break the demonic influence and thereby open up opportunities for evangelization of the lost. Spiritual mapping is most often, but not always, based on an active and aggressive approach to spiritual warfare known as *strategic level warfare*. According to this view, ***the church is called to do more than simply stand firm, resist, and defend. The church is called to actively seek out, uncover, and confront the demonic powers that influence our corporate existence.*** Thus a fundamental assumption underlying spiritual mapping is the concept of territorial spirits.

Two questions:

(1) Is "spiritual mapping" biblical? Even if it is not explicitly mentioned in the Scriptures, is it permissible; and if so, is it helpful?

(2) If one should acknowledge the validity and helpfulness of spiritual mapping, is one *necessarily* committed to "actively seek out, uncover, and confront the demonic powers that influence our corporate existence"?