

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn about the practical life of the Christian community. Two teachers will teach from the Bible about Church building ministries. Today's teaching is: **EVIL SPIRITS AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE**. We will learn what the Bible teaches about evil spirits and their fall, their aims to destroy, and their disarmament by Christ. Finally we will learn what Christians must do in the spiritual warfare against the evil spirits.

(S) **POINT 1. EVIL SPIRITS AND THEIR FALL.**

When God created the universe, he also created different kinds of angels, called *powers and authorities*. Colossians 1:16 says that these powers and authorities were created *by* Christ and *for* Christ as their Goal. However, together with the fall of the archangel Satan, many other angels fell (Cf. Rev 12:4,9). These fallen angels are called *evil spirits* or *demons*. False teachers of many religions are constantly referring to these angelic beings or evil spirits and worship them as *gods*.

Paul does not deny the existence of good angels and their ability to exert influence for good (1 Tim 5:21), neither does he deny the existence of evil angels and their ability to exert influence for evil (Eph 1:21-22; 6:12). However, Paul does emphasise that they have no power apart from Jesus Christ. The good angels cannot add anything to what Christians already have in Christ (Col 2:9-10) and according to Romans 8:35-39, the evil angels cannot separate Christians from the love of God. The evil spirits are approaching the day when even their ability to do harm in God's universe and in the hearts and lives of people will be ended once and for all (1 Cor 15:24-25)!

(T) **POINT 2. THE DIFFERENT PURPOSES OF EVIL SPIRITS.**

First. Satan tries to claim the world.

In Luke 4:5-6, Satan *claims* that "all the kingdoms of the world and all their authority and splendour" has been given to him and that he could give it to anyone he wanted. In Ephesians 2:2, Paul says that Satan is the ruler of "the kingdom of the air". And in 1 John 5:19, John warns that "the whole world" is under the control of the evil one. These three Bible passages do not teach that Satan possesses and controls all the countries in the world! When John speaks of *the world*, then he means *only the whole society of evil people*, who are alienated from God or oppose God in the world.

When Paul speaks of "Satan's kingdom of the air", then he means that Satan is able to carry on his destructive work through his evil angels only in the whole society of evil people on earth and its surrounding atmosphere. He can only do this within the limits of God's sovereign power and permission. Therefore, when Satan claims that he owns and rules the nations and that he has the right and might to dispose of them and of their wealth as he pleases, then he is *a liar* (John 8:44)!

Ephesians 1:21-22 teaches that during this present age and in the age to come, Jesus Christ "is above every rule and authority, power and dominion. God has placed all things under his feet and appointed him head over everything". It is not Jesus Christ who takes a back-seat in this present world, but Satan and his evil spirits. The only thing the above mentioned Bible verses say is that *Satan exercises a powerful influence for evil in the lives of all those wicked people and evil spirits who acknowledge him as their master*.

(S) **Second. Satan's evil spirits try to control certain territories.**

The Bible relates how non-Christians sometimes believe in *territorial spirits*. These non-Christians believe that the whole world is divided into many territories and that each territory is controlled by certain evil spirits and their demon prince. In order to appease these evil spirits and their demon princes, non-Christians believe that they have to worship each spirit in its own territory.

The Bible in Daniel 10:11-14,20-21, further relates that before the first coming of Jesus Christ, the earthly kingdoms or empires of Persia and Greece had their spiritual representatives among the demon princes. From these passages it seems that evil spirits and their demon princes had a great interest in the different territories or countries of the world. However, these passages clearly teach the following truths:

One. God sovereignly controls every territory on earth. Although it seems that evil spirits and their demon princes try to control certain countries, the Bible clearly teaches that they *do not control the whole* empire of Persia and Greece and everything that happened in it! Although many non-Christians believe that their territory is controlled by evil spirits and their demon-princes, the Bible clearly teaches that God is sovereignly in control of every territory on earth and in the universe!

Two. God sovereignly conquers evil spirits. Although it seems that non-Christians believe that countries like the empires of Persia and Greece have demon princes who are stronger than the spiritual powers of weaker countries, the Bible clearly teaches that *the hierarchy of demons* in the air is not a replica of *the hierarchy of kings* on earth. Although Israel was an insignificant nation and Persia and Greece were great world empires, Michael, the angel prince of Israel, was much stronger than the demon princes of Persia and Greece! These demon princes of Persia and Greece were not bound and conquered by people on earth, but by God! The Bible consistently teaches that God sovereignly binds and destroys evil spirits and their demon princes. For example, in 2 Chronicles 32:13-21 we read that the Assyrian king boasted that the gods of other nations could not deliver their nations from his mighty army. However, God sent just one angel, who completely annihilated his mighty army!

Three. God sovereignly reveals the future historical events on earth. God is not only in complete control of the historical events on earth, he is also able to disclose them before they happen. God revealed to Daniel that the spiritual warfare in the air was going to be directed against Persia first and then against Greece, because each of these countries would have power over God's people in exile for a limited time. Although God's people seemed defenceless, they had God's angels on their side! Although the conflict on earth would be such as to cause doubt as to whether God's people could survive, God's vision to Daniel was intended to give Daniel unshakeable assurance that however desperate the situation on earth might be, *God is always in control and the outcome is already determined!*

(T) Third. Evil spirits try to destroy the bodies, minds and spirits of people.

In Luke 11:14 and 13:11,16, we read how evil spirits or demons cause certain physical disabilities. For example, they have the power to make some people blind, deaf and mute, cripple, mad, or drive them to commit suicide.

However, we must make it very clear that not all sicknesses, pains, physical disabilities and mental diseases are caused by evil spirits, because the Bible clearly distinguishes between sickness and demon-possession in Matthew 4:23-24. Evil spirits sometimes attach themselves to the bodies of certain people. In Matthew 12:43-45 and Luke 8:2,30, we read that evil spirits sometimes go into the bodies of non-Christians, that is, people, who do not have the Holy Spirit living in them. Such people are called demon-possessed.

(S) Fourth. Evil spirits try to destroy people through false teachers and their false teachings.

Evil spirits attach themselves to idolatry. In Deuteronomy 32:16-17, Psalm 106:37-38 and 1 Corinthians 10:18-21, we read that evil spirits like to attach themselves to idols and the sacrifices to idols! Thus, idolatry is really a worship of evil spirits! Evil spirits also like to attach themselves to false teachings. In 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 1 John 4:1-6, we read that evil spirits are very much involved in the false teachings of religions, philosophies and ideologies of the world. 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 teaches that an evil spirit can appear as an angel of light, pretend to be sent by God and speak a message that is completely false. Evil spirits often control false teachers and their false teachings. Deuteronomy 18:9-13 teaches that evil spirits also control occultism, like sacrificing people in fire, divination, sorcery, interpreting omens, witchcraft, casting spells, mediums and spiritists, consulting the dead and the other detestable ways of the nations.

(T) Fifth. Evil spirits stir up the nations and their leaders against God and his people.

In Revelation 16:13-14, John describes three unclean or evil spirits who come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. These evil spirits are compared to frogs in order to indicate their abominable, loathsome, repulsive character. They represent the satanic, hellish *ideas, plans, projects, methods, enterprises*, which are born in hell and introduced into the minds of people through Satan himself and his two agents, the beast and the false prophet.

One. The beast is Satan's antichristian persecutor, who operates in and through the nations of this world and especially through their political leaders.

Two. The false prophet is Satan's antichristian religious head, who operates in and through the false religions and philosophies of this world and their false prophets and false teachers.

Three. Babylon, the great prostitute is Satan's antichristian moral seducer. During the first century A.D., the temptation to become worldly and to deny Jesus Christ came from three directions: From the side of antichristian persecution, like the sword, the wild beasts, the stake, imprisonment and the constant accusations before the Roman courts. From the side of antichristian religion, like the emperor worship, Gnosticism and the Mystery religions. And from the side of antichristian morality, like the temptations of the flesh. People were constantly invited to join in the immoral feasts of the heathen, in order to make their social position secure and to enjoy the pleasures of the world. In the vision of John, these evil spirits go out to the nations of the whole world in order to deceive them and to stir them up against God and God's people. Their activity will increase during the last days just before the second coming of Jesus Christ.

(S) **Sixth. Evil spirits try to deceive people through performing miracles and through immorality.**

The above mentioned *unclean* or *evil* spirits (Rev 16:13-14) perform miracles in order to deceive the political and religious leaders of the nations and turn them against the God of the Bible and against Christians.

Evil spirits are often called unclean spirits, because they pervert people in a religious sense and in a moral sense. It is therefore possible that many evil spirits have a strong influence on the moral corruption among people, like pornography, adultery, prostitution and homosexuality on the one hand and on bribery, extortion, dishonesty, corruption and persecution on the other hand. Again we must make it very clear that not all evil originates from Satan or his evil spirits, because the Bible says that the greatest problem is not Satan or evil spirits or even the evil world. The greatest problem is the sinful heart of man (Jer 17:9)! Satan, evil spirits and the evil world only have an influence on people because people have a sinful nature!

(T) **POINT 3. THE DISARMAMENT OF THE EVIL SPIRITS.**

In Colossians 2:14-15, Paul says that when Jesus Christ died on the cross, he cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us. He took it away by nailing it to the cross. He also disarmed the powers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. By his death on the cross Jesus Christ *cancelled* the ceremonial law, which functioned as *the impersonal accuser* of Christians. He also *disarmed* the evil powers and authorities, who functioned as the *personal accusers* of Christians (cf. Rom 8:33). Evil spirits or demons are only creatures, angelic beings that resist God. But God disarmed them. Colossians 1:13 says that God *rescues* Christians from the dominion of darkness and brings them into the kingdom of the Son he loves through the redemption and forgiveness believers in Jesus Christ receive.

2 Timothy 2:25-26 says that the devil has taken people captive to do his will, but God causes people to *escape* from his trap. God rescues these people from Satan and his evil agents by granting believers repentance that leads them to knowledge of the truth and coming to their senses. Through his death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven, Jesus Christ has conquered and bound Satan and all his evil spirits. He has *disarmed* (G: apekduomai, part, aor, med) them once for all time, so that they no longer can control the minds and hearts of people in all the countries of the world.

Colossians 2:10 says that from now on Jesus Christ is the head over every power and authority. By the great redemptive acts of Jesus Christ, his death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement (Col 2:15, Rev 12:10, Eph 1:20-23), God “publicly exposed to disgrace” (G: deikmatizo, ind, aor, act) these evil powers, “leading them captive in triumph” (G: thriambeuo, part, aor, act), chained, as it were, to his triumphal chariot! Through the triumphant Jesus Christ, the God of the Bible has achieved victory over Satan and all his evil angels!

(S) **POINT 4. EVERY CHRISTIAN’S SPIRITUAL WARFARE AGAINST SATAN AND HIS EVIL SPIRITS.**

First. Christians should resist the attacks of evil spirits.

Although Satan and his evil spirits have been conquered and their absolute power over people has been bound, the Bible still teaches that Christians should be watchful and should wage spiritual warfare against them. Christians need not fear these evil spirits or demons. They were *disarmed* and *bound* by Christ at his first coming. However, the spiritual war against them will have to continue until the second coming of Christ. On the one hand, these evil spirits or demons still do great harm to the world without Christ. On the other hand, they still try to hurt Christians.

One. Christians must be watchful against Satan’s strategy. In 1 Peter 5:8-9, Peter warns that Satan prowls around Christians, looking for an opportunity to attack them. Christians must therefore *stand firm in their faith, live a self-controlled life and be alert against his attacks.*

Two. Christians must resist Satan and the attacks of evil spirits. James 4:7-8 urges Christians to *resist* Satan. He promises that Satan will flee from them, but then they must live lives submitted to God.

Three. Christians must avoid Satan. In Ephesians 4:27, Paul urges Christians *not to give any foothold* to Satan. They should not entertain certain relationships or occupy themselves with certain activities or go to certain places where Satan could get a foothold in their lives. Christians should *resist the temptations* of evil spirits.

Four. Christians must not believe every spirit. In 1 John 4:1, John urges Christians *not to believe any spirit*, that is, to believe any kind of teaching. They must first test the spirits, that is, test the teachers to see whether they come from God or from Satan, because many false teachers have gone out into the world. God gives to some Christians the gift of distinguishing between spirits (1 Cor 12:10). Christians should *resist the false agents* of evil spirits. Christians should resist false teachers and false prophets.

(T) **Second, Christians should wage war against the evil spirits.**

In Ephesians 6:16-17 we read, "Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ... Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The flaming arrows of Satan are his attacks on the body, mind and spirit of Christians, for example with lies and false accusations. However, Christ has given Christians faith as a shield to extinguish these flaming arrows. He has even given them the words of the Bible as the sword of the Spirit to attack and conquer Satan's attacks. Christians should counter the attacks of the evil spirits with God's words and extinguish their lies.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 describes what Christians should do in spiritual warfare: "Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." Christians should demolish the strongholds of the evil spirits and rescue people who have formerly been taken captive by them.

(S) **Third, Christians should break the power of the evil spirits.**

One. Christians should not only resist Satan, but should attack his territories. They should allow Christ to continue to *tie up* (bind) the evil spirits in people and in communities through their prayers and the proclamation of the gospel. Thus, Christians become Christ's instruments to rob people out of Satan's dark domain and bring them into God's kingdom (Mt 12:29; Col 1:13). As people turn to Christ and are set free from Satan's oppression, then according to Luke 10:18-20, Satan continues to be hurled out of the air and smacked to the ground!

Two. Christ gives to some Christians the authority and power to break the power of Satan and his evil spirits. In Luke 9:1-2; 10:17-20 and Acts 26:18, Christ gives authority to his apostles and other gospel workers to drive out demons and overcome the power of the enemy. Like Jesus, they rebuked the evil spirits and the evil spirits left the people. In Acts 13:6-12, Paul did the same against a sorcerer, who opposed Paul's preaching and tried to turn people from the faith.

(T) **Fourth, Christ will finally judge the devil and all his evil spirits.**

In Revelation 16:13-16 and 20:7-10, we read that just before the second coming of Christ, during the great tribulation, Satan and his demons will be the driving force of rebellion against God. However, at the second coming, Christ will throw them all into hell, from where they will never escape and where they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK.**

First. Teach new believers what the Bible teaches about evil spirits and spiritual warfare. Encourage Christians to believe in the victory of Christ over all the evil forces!

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net.

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".