

## **URBAN CHURCH PLANTING AS SPIRITUAL WARFARE (PART 1)**

**Damian Emetuche**

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In the following article I wish to demonstrate that beyond theological convictions and missiological paradigms, church planting is a spiritual warfare especially in urban context. It is actively being involved in the incessant warfare between God and the devil. No sinner can be saved and transformed without first binding the strongman that holds him or her captive. As Jesus said, “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.” (Luke 11:21-22) Without this understanding, much of our principles and strategies would amount to nothing because lives would not be transformed even if they join our churches. This will be followed at a later date with Part 2.

### **Introduction**

When Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” (Matthew 16:18) what does he mean? How is he building the church? In respect to the first question, much debate has been on Peter since he was the one that answered Jesus’ question, “But who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15) However, it should be noted that the “you” in the question was plural, and was addressed to the twelve. Peter can be seen either as answering for the group or giving his personal answer revealed to him by the Father. Whether answering for himself or the group is rather inconsequential, the most important part is that he received the answer from the Father, that Jesus is the Messiah, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16)

However, the difficulty in the passage has to do with the response of Jesus to Peter's confession in verses 18-19 of Matthew 16, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The controversy of this passage sets Catholics against Protestants and evangelicals. To the Catholics, Jesus by this statement, elevates Peter to a preeminent position in the church, while to the Protestants and evangelicals, it is rather the faith and confession of Peter that Jesus was referring to when he said, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." Peter's name means rock, and Jesus stated that "upon this rock I will build my church." Was Jesus playing on words? I am not sure, but was he drawing attention to the confession of Peter and his faith, probably yes. There is no denial that Peter was the spokesman of the Twelve, he played important role on the Day of Pentecost by preaching the gospel, and he was the one that received a revelation from the Father concerning the identity of Jesus Christ, but understanding what Jesus meant by "I will build my church" will require looking beyond the passage to see what "the church" means and how one becomes a member of Christ's church.

Church in the scriptures has nothing to do with the institutionalized church as we know it today. It was not an organization or denomination but a reference to the transformed individual lives saved from the bondage of the evil forces to the kingdom of God. The church is made of people called out, who have renounced themselves and placed their faith in Jesus Christ. It is first and foremost a spiritual body. Secondly, members must have encountered the claim of the gospel that there is no salvation outside of Christ, confessed their sins and invited him as Lord and Savior (Romans 10:8-13). Then, they are given authority to be children of God. (John 1:12-13)

They received the Spirit of Christ as Paul recorded in Romans 8:9-11, “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

In other words, the building of Christ’s Church is done not by bricks and mortar, but through the transformation of the lives of those who trust Jesus and confess him. Going back to the passage in Mathew 16:16, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.” Whatever meaning and prominent position one may or may not incline to assign Peter, the church is still being built every day even after the life and ministry of Peter. If Jesus has continuously built his church for over two thousand years, it means that while Peter’s confession is important, he is not the real “Rock” but Jesus is. Furthermore, “Jesus did not mean that the Church depended on Peter, as it depended on Himself, and on God the Rock, alone. He did mean that the Church began with Peter; in that sense, Peter is the foundation.”<sup>1</sup>

Peter was transformed, he received revelation from the Father, he placed his faith in Christ, and he became an instrument in the hand of God for building His church. Therefore, “The church is built on Christ alone, who can use weak men like Peter (or John or Paul) as stones in his temple, when they confess that he is the son of the living God and trust in his power.”<sup>2</sup> In the same vein, anyone who repents of his or her sin and believes in Jesus Christ will also be added to the church, becoming a living stone. Peter in his first sermon declared to his listeners on the day of Pentecost, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the

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<sup>1</sup>Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 423.

<sup>2</sup>*The Interpreter’s Bible* Volume 7 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979), 450-451.

forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” (Acts 2:38-39)

Jesus, in the same passage of Matthew 16:16, while speaking about building his church, stated, “And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The “Gates” in this passage symbolize power, defense, and fortification, Leon Morris noted. “Gates were important parts of fortifications in the first century and were usually flanked by bastions. Wooden gates would be overlain with bronze. They thus lend themselves to the imagery of strength. The gates of Hades were probably regarded as especially strong.”<sup>3</sup> But Jesus by this statement specified that Hell, or Hades is not strong enough to withstand the church which is built on Christ the Rock. Some scholars believe that “the gates of hell” may be rendered, “the power of death” because the Greek word is not ‘*Gehenna*’ but ‘Hades’ “which stands for Hebrew *Sheol* or place of the dead. The phrase ‘gates of Sheol’ is found in Isaiah 38:10. Death itself will not be able to destroy this church.”<sup>4</sup>

This makes sense as the book of Hebrews insisted that Jesus’ mission was to destroy the devil that had the power of death. “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”(Hebrews 2:14-15) Non-believers in Christ have no defense; they are under the bondage of sin and Satan, kept as prisoners under the Gates of Sheol. Before we come to faith in Christ Jesus, “we were subject to oppressive influences from both within and without. Outside was the world (the prevailing secular culture); inside was the flesh (our fallen nature

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<sup>3</sup>Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 425.

<sup>4</sup>*The Interpreter’s Bible* Volume 7, 452.

twisted with self-centeredness); and beyond both, actively working through both, was that evil spirit, the devil, the ruler of the kingdom of darkness, who held us in captivity.”<sup>5</sup>

From the onset of his ministry, Jesus proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God, “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’” (Mark 1:14-15) His coming was an assault to the kingdom of darkness controlled by the prince of the power of the air. (Ephesians 2:1-3) Therefore, there can be no transformation of life without a spiritual battle. There is an incessant battle on every individual head, community, city, nation, and region. The enemy the devil would like to keep the status quo, cultural bondage, self-centeredness, and sinful habits because they fit his grand plan, “to steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10), however Jesus is fiercely engaging the enemy through salvation and the transformation of lives that can come only through him. “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10) For this reason, any preaching of Christ, living out the gospel message, or kingdom lifestyle amounts to subversion of the kingdom of darkness, hence, spiritual warfare, whether the Christian is aware of it or not. Church planting from this perspective is taking an active role in combating and liberating the unsaved from the clutches of principalities and powers to the kingdom of God.

### **Kingdom Battles Among the Nations of the Old Testament**

Although the Jews in the first century had an idea of the kingdom of God, and earnestly waited for the Messiah who could deliver them from Roman oppression, the concept and promise of the kingdom of God was rooted in the Old Testament. The phrase, “kingdom of God” was never used, but God was frequently referred to as King, not only to Israel, but to all the earth

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<sup>5</sup>John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), 75.

(see the following: Exodus 15:18; Deut. 33:5; Isa. 43:15; 2 Kings 19:15; Isa. 6:5; Jer. 46:18; Ps. 29:10; 96:10; 99:1-4). God is seen as the king, and the children of Israel, his subjects. In summation, “While God is King over all the earth, he is in a special way the King of his people.”<sup>6</sup> However, his rule was only partial and incomplete; hence the prophets “look forward to a day when God’s rule will be fully experienced, not by Israel alone but by all the world.”<sup>7</sup>

In Psalms 98:8, we have the following declaration, “Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.” Micah the prophet envisioned the time the Lord and King would come to his people for judgment and deliverance; “For behold, the Lord is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.” (Micah 1:3-4) In the book of Daniel, Darius issued a decree in recognition of God as the supreme ruler. “I make a decree that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.” (Daniel 6:26-27)

Ultimately, Daniel gave a picture of God as the Ancient of Days, enthroned to rule and judge the earth. “As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in

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<sup>6</sup>George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 46.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

judgment, and the books were opened.” (Daniel 7:9-10) However, the Old Testament did not only present God as a king, but as a warrior king. (Exodus 15:3)

Generally, in the Old Testament there is no sharp distinction between the physical and spiritual realities. They are seen as intertwined. Consequently, “biblical authors frequently see battles between nations as participating in God’s ongoing battle with cosmic forces. For example, the evil character and threatening power of Rahab on a cosmic level was understood as to be revealed in and channeled through the evil character and threatening power of Egypt (Ps. 87:4; Is. 30:7; cf. Jer. 51:34; Ezek. 29:3; 32:2).”<sup>8</sup> Consequently, Boyd observed, “Israel’s defeat of an opponent was sometimes construed as the Lord once again defeating cosmic forces of chaos (Isa. 17:12-14). When Yahweh freed the children of Israel from Egypt, for example, this was considered his defeat of the raging waters (Hab. 3:12-13; cf. Nahum 1:4); And when he further delivered Israel by parting the Red Sea, this was seen as a new application of Yahweh’s victory over Rahab (Psalms 77:16; Isaiah 51:9-10).”<sup>9</sup>

Israeli neighbors were assumed to have their own gods who directed their affairs and battled for them. Joshua challenged his contemporaries to choose either the gods of the nations around them or to serve the living God. “And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15) The conquests of the Canaanites were seen as God giving an inheritance to his people. Jephthah, in his conflict with the king of Ammonites, said,

And the LORD, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them. So Israel took possession of all the land of the Amorites, who inhabited that country. And they took possession of all the

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<sup>8</sup>Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing A Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2001), 32.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 32-33.

territory of the Amorites from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan. So then the LORD, the God of Israel, dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel; and are you to take possession of them? Will you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess? And all that the LORD our God has dispossessed before us, we will possess. (Judges 11:21-24)

When King David came to power, he established the kingdom of Israel and became a symbol, a standard, and the pinnacle of the reign of God in Israel. Every other king was measured and evaluated by the life of David. He fought God's battles, was used by God to defeat nations, expanded the territory of Israel, and his son would be known as a man of peace because David had defeated all their enemies and there was no need for him to fight. Paul, in the New Testament, said that David served God's purpose. "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption." (Acts 13:36) It was during *the* reign of David that Nathan prophesied that the kingdom of David would never end. "And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:16)

With the divided kingdom after the reign of David, the prophets started speaking and prophesying of the future kingdom and the Messiah who would be a descendant of David whose reign would be in righteousness.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

### **Making Sense of the Old Testament Wars**

In our modern culture that places great emphasis on human rights, there is a possibility that some could read the Old Testament stories of the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites and consider the killing of the Canaanites as genocide. However, the wars of the Old Testament



could not be considered as genocide as the possibility of that will contradict the nature of God as Love, and his stated mission in Genesis 12. From the calling of Abraham, God determined to bless all the nations through him. Therefore, whether dispossessing the Canaanites to establish the nation of Israel, incessant battles of the nation of Israel with their aggressive neighbors, or punishing Israel for their idol worship, God was fighting a spiritual war. Other nations were under the control of the powers of darkness, and they worshiped and elevated these demons as national gods. God the Creator thus had to fight to establish his will in order to fulfill his redemptive purpose in the world. Moses reminded the Israelites of this truth in Deuteronomy 9:1-3;

Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you have heard it said, 'Who can stand before the sons of Anak?' Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you.

Again, the people of Israel were reminded that it had nothing to do with their righteousness, rather it was God at war fulfilling his divine plan, and God would deport them from the land just like other nations if they lived like them because that would be obstructing the will of God.

Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. (Deuteronomy 9: 4-5)

The spiritual nature of the wars of the Old Testament is underscored by the account of the battle between the Amalekites and Israelites in Exodus 17:8-13,

Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.' So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

This passage is unusual and defies the rules of war. First, the battle was not won in the battlefield because of the courageousness of the fighting force. Second, the military hardware and weaponry of the soldiers were inconsequential. Third, the direction of the battle was rather determined by the raising of the staff of God by Moses. Fourth, Moses would need the help of Aaron and Hur to support him before victory could be won. It was not by the military might that Israel prevailed but by the power of God as symbolized by the raising of the staff of God. The battle was more spiritual than physical.

Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid in their book, *God Is a Warrior*, outlined the development of the 'divine warrior' motif throughout the Old and New Testaments. They began with Israel's conflicts with her enemies and led into the New Testament concept of Jesus' battles with the principalities and powers. Among other things the authors made the following observations. "Holy war was always initiated by Yahweh, never Israel. God did not agree to grant victory in every circumstance in which Israel found itself. There were two ways in which God directed Israel to wage war."<sup>10</sup> In some circumstances, He would reveal his will to the Covenant mediator, who passed the message to the nation, or in other occasions, leaders of Israel would inquire of the Lord to seek his permission before engaging in battle. (See the following passages, Deut. 7:1-2; Jos. 5:13-15; 6:2-5; I Sam. 23:1-6).

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<sup>10</sup>Tremper Longman III, and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 33.

In other circumstances, wars were portrayed as an act of worship. The armies of Israel who assembled before God had to be spiritually prepared. The importance of spiritual preparation is illustrated in Joshua chapter 5. The people had to consecrate themselves to the Lord before they could engage their enemies. “On the eve of the battle against Jericho, the Israelite men were circumcised. Needless to say, this act was not wise from a military perspective. They were within marching distance of the powerful, hostile city, and circumcision would have left them weak and unable to defend themselves effectively (cf. Gen.34). Nevertheless, it would have been even more dangerous to enter the battle uncircumcised, and therefore unclean before the Lord.”<sup>11</sup> It was after the men had been circumcised, and the people of Israel celebrated the Passover, that they were ready to stand before God for battle.

Because God was in the camp of the Israelites as the commander of the army, the camp had to be clean. (See Deuteronomy 23:9-14) Again, Longman, and Reid noted, “Many of the acts that preceded a war in the Hebrew Bible indicated the religious nature of conflict. Circumcision, vows, oracular inquiries, ritual cleanness—each of these elements announced Israel’s understanding that God was present with them in battle.”<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, since God was the warrior and fought the battles, the number of troops and weapon development were of no serious value. Rather, a large number of troops was considered inappropriate as they could rob God of his glory (Judges 7). On the contrary, prayer and praise, as illustrated in the story of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles chapter 20 became an instrument of warfare.

And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and said, ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever.’ When they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir,

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another. (2 Chronicles 20:21-23)

As stated before, the wars of the Old Testament were not genocide, and were not because God loved Israel more and other nations less. On the contrary, God's plan was for the salvation of the world; fighting for and protecting Israel was part of the spiritual battle of fulfilling his promise to Abraham that in him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:3) The truthfulness of this fact is also demonstrated by God fighting against Israel when their lives constituted an obstacle in fulfilling the will of God. He used other nations to discipline them. Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians and other nations are some of the examples. In some cases, God became their enemy and fought against them. In the book of the Judges 2:11-15, the Scripture says,

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger. They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroath. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for harm, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.

Furthermore, in the first book of Samuel, we have this account. "So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died." (1 Samuel 4:10-11) In their celebration, the Philistines attributed their victory to their deities and were in turn punished severely.

The hand of the Lord was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, 'The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god.' So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, 'What

shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?' They answered, 'Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath.' So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. But after they had brought it around, the hand of the Lord was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, 'They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people.' They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, 'Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.' For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. (1Sam. 5:6-11)

In reaction to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity, Jeremiah wrote, "The Lord has become like an enemy; he has swallowed up Israel; he has swallowed up all its palaces; he has laid in ruins its strongholds, and he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. He has laid waste his booth like a garden, laid in ruins his meeting place; the Lord has made Zion forget festival and Sabbath, and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest." (Lamentations 2:5-6)

The Bible historian in 2 Chronicles recounted the reasons why God turned against Israel and became their enemy. "The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy." (2 Chronicles 36:15-16) God defended Israel and punished them within the context of Abrahamic covenant in the same way he punished other nations in respect to their wickedness. But like laws of the Old Testament, even the battles of the nations are "shadows of things to come." (Hebrews 10:1)

### **Revelation in the Book of Job**

The book of Job gave a foretaste of what is to come in the New Testament. It is a book like no other. Its account of the demonstration of the evil forces unleashed on an individual is

unparalleled, and it is a pictorial description of what Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” (John 10:10) It should be noted that in much of the Old Testament, it is taken for granted that God is responsible for everything that happens, for good or for ill. If you are blessed with wealth, health, and children, it is because you are in the right relationship with God. But if you lack these things, it might be because you have not been blessed by God and you are a sinner. The book of Job challenges this presupposition, and like the book of Daniel, raises questions about the possibility of spiritual conscious beings outside the realm of human knowledge and control. It also introduces the notion of an invisible evil being that possesses the power to disrupt God’s plan.

In the book of Job, this evil spirit is not only the accuser of the righteous, but also can impose his influence into human affairs. I am aware of some authors that have suggested that the idea of demons were a later development. For instance, according to Ladd, “This rudimentary idea of a supernatural spirit who opposes the well-being of God’s people was developed in later Judaism to an elaborate demonology with host of fallen evil angels, sometimes with and sometimes without a head; and it appears in the New Testament in a far more restrained form than in much Jewish literature.”<sup>13</sup> However, whether the idea of a supernatural spirit is an earlier or a later development in Judaism, the reality and consequences of demonic attack can be seen in the account of Job.

In the book of Job, the following can be observed: 1. Job and his friends were not aware of the presence of Satan in their experience. This ignorance accounts for the reason why Job’s friends accused him of suffering because of his sins, and Job in turn accused God and demanded a mediator between him and God. “If I wash myself with snow and cleanse my hands with lye, yet you will plunge me into a pit, and my own clothes will abhor me. For he is not a man, as I

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<sup>13</sup>Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, 118.

am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. There is no arbiter between us who might lay his hand on us both. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not dread of him terrify me. Then I would speak without fear of him, for I am not so in myself.” (Job 9:30-35)

2. God allowed Satan to tempt Job to prove his accusation wrong that Job served God because of the material blessings. It was never God’s desire to subject Job to pain and suffering. Here is the testimony of God himself, “And 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, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.’” (Job 2:3) In other words, Job’s experience became a battle of God’s glory, honor, and integrity and Job’s faithfulness will determine who wins the battle.

3. Satan marshaled all possible arsenals within his reach to force Job to abandon his faith in God. His wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.” (Job 2:9) Satan used natural disaster, economic and financial misfortune, ill health, the destruction of his children, and the taunting words of his friends and his wife to tempt Job to renounce his faith.

4. When God answered Job, he asked him questions about his knowledge of what was going on in the world, creation and its governance. “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: ‘Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?’” (Job 38:1-7, see also chapters 39-40).

5. When Job responded to the questioning of the Lord, he confessed speaking without knowledge and repented in dust and ashes.

Then Job answered the Lord and said: 'I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know....therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' (Job 42:1-3, 6)

6. The friends of Job were also rebuked for their false accusation that Job's suffering was a consequence of sin, and they were commanded to offer sacrifice for the atonement of their sins.

After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: 'My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.' So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer. (Job 42:7-9)

In summary, while the Old Testament revealed much in respect to spiritual battles between God and forces of evil seeking to obstruct his salvation for humanity through the battles the nation of Israel fought, revelations granted to prophets like Daniel, (Daniel 10) Isaiah (Isaiah 14), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 28), and the recorded personal experiences of Job; the ultimate battle, however awaited the New Testament era with Jesus leading as the warrior king. Gregory B. Boyd insisted,

Though the cosmic warfare motif occurs throughout the Old Testament, it never takes a center stage. This foundational stage of written revelation affirms that there is a 'world in between,' that there is genuine conflict within this 'world,' and that this spiritual conflict affects affairs within earthly domain.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, whether the Old Testament portrayed the evil as a battle against "Leviathan, Rahad, Yamm, Behemoth, hostile waters or wayward rebellious gods (e.g., 'prince

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<sup>14</sup>Gregory A. Boyd, *God At War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 1997), 171.



of Persia, Chemosh, Satan), and whether it is portrayed as a battle that took place before the creation of this world or as something that is taking place in the present, the Old Testament clearly assumes that something profoundly sinister has entered God's creation and now perpetually threatens the world. Not all is well in creation."<sup>15</sup> The Old Testament was a partial and gradual revelation of the battles in the spiritual world. But in the New Testament, spiritual conflict takes a center stage with Jesus leading the charge, exposing the secret works of darkness, and setting humans free. It is in the light of spiritual warfare that we can fully comprehend the ministry of Jesus and the early church. "Jesus' teaching, his exorcisms, his healings and other miracles, as well as his work on the cross, all remain somewhat incoherent and unrelated to one another until we interpret them within this apocalyptic context: in other words, until we interpret them as acts of war."<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, to understand the battle of the ages, the spiritual battle for souls, Jesus is the primary example. In the New Testament, he is the incarnate word of God (John 1:1-3), the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:15), and as the writer of Hebrews said, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power." (Heb. 1:3) Consequently, understanding his perspective on spiritual warfare and how he fought his battles as the incarnate word of God is very crucial on how we are to engage in our battles—remembering he said, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." (John 20:21) Again, John said, "...as he is, so also are we in this world." (1 John 4:17b)

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 180.