

Jesus' Present Ministry: Implications for Spiritual Battle

From the first pages of Scripture, it is clear that we are in a spiritual battle. In Genesis 3 the serpent whispered lies to Eve leading Adam and Eve to disobey God. As a result they were cast out of the Garden and God's immediate presence. And as a result all of humanity shares in this fall. But God did not give up on humanity. Rather, He set in place a plan to redeem fallen humanity and to defeat Satan and the other lesser gods who had rebelled against Him. This spiritual battle continues today. We live in this battle! And so the truth that Jesus, in His present ministry, is enthroned at God's right hand is good news and gives us confidence in this battle.

Opening Question: Is this topic of spiritual battle a new idea for you? Explain.

Read Exodus 12:12, 20:3-5; 34:10-17

1. How do you see the spiritual battle reflected in these passages?
2. When these passages refer to "gods" to what does that refer? Are these merely idols of wood and stone that the nations worshiped or are they real spiritual being?

Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-8 (also Ephesians 2:1-2, 3:8-10, 6:12)

Note from Steve's sermon: Some understand "the rulers of this age" to refer to the Jewish and Roman rulers. I'm fairly convinced that "rulers" here is a reference to the spiritual powers (as in Ephesians 2:2, 3:10, 6:12, etc.). If this understanding is correct, Paul is saying that the powers of darkness "would not have crucified the Lord of glory" if they had understood what it would accomplish. As we'll see in a few minutes, the crucifixion, resurrection, and enthronement at God's right hand has defeated the powers of darkness. They are still powerful and active; but their authority over the nations has been rescinded.

3. What terms do you find in these verses that refer to spiritual beings opposed to God?
4. Steve made the point that making disciples of all that nations (Matt. 28:18-20) is God's plan for winning the spiritual battle. In what sense is this true (see Col. 1:13)?

Read Ephesians 1:18-21, 2:4-7

5. What does Eph. 1:18-21 say about Jesus' current position and His present power in reference to evil spiritual beings? How can this give us confidence in the battle?
6. In Christ, where is the believer (Eph. 2:4-7)? And what is the significance of this for the spiritual battle we face?

Read Ephesians 6:10-20

7. What resources do we have for the spiritual battle?
8. What is our responsibility in the battle?

Steve said:

So how do we engage this spiritual battle? Through the core habits of discipleship described in verses 13 through 20. There are times when people engage the spiritual battle more aggressively and directly; on some occasions a demonic presence needs to be confronted (as we see in Acts 16:16-18). But the everyday way that we engage the spiritual battle is through core practices of discipleship such as truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, the word of God, and prayer.

9. Though there may be times when we do need to confront evil spiritual forces aggressively and directly, do you agree that the "core habits of discipleship" are the everyday way we engage the spiritual battle? Why or why not?
10. What is your main take away from this study?