

# Summary of Biblical Themes in Spiritual Conflict

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## *The Characters of Spiritual Conflict*

1. God is the Creator (Gen. 1:1; Neh. 9:6) who is sovereignly in control of all the universe (Ps. 89:5; 103:19). He is the owner of the earth (Ps. 24:1) who does whatever pleases Him (Ps. 115:3). His sovereignty extends to our daily lives (Ps. 139:16b) and even over apparently random events (Exod. 21:13; Prov. 16:33). Nothing is too difficult for Him (Jer. 32:27).

- a. God the **Father** is in complete control of the heavens (Matt. 6:10) and the earth (Luke 10:21; including the wicked and the righteous; Matt. 5:45). He knows every event--past, present, and future (Matt. 24:36). He is able to meet our every need (Matt. 6:25-34), including our eternal destiny (John 6:37, 39), because nothing is impossible for Him (Matt. 19:25-26). He is our Father (Matt. 6:9), the giver of good gifts (Matt. 7:11), the One who watches over even the little ones of this world (Matt. 18:14).

He is the compassionate, comforting (2 Cor. 1:3), patient (2 Pet. 3:9), faithful (1 John 1:9), loving (1 John 4:8), immortal, invisible, eternal King of Kings (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:14b-16) who is over all, in all, and through all (Eph. 4:6) and in Whom all holds together (Col. 1:17). He created and governs the world (Acts 17:24-28) and gives generously to all He created (Jas. 1:5-8, 17). His plans for peace (1 Cor. 14:33a) cannot be thwarted; indeed, parts have even been put into effect by wicked men (Acts 2:23). His foolishness is greater than our wisdom; His weakness greater than our strength (1 Cor. 1:25).

- b. God the Son, **Jesus**, is the embodiment of God's paradigm--He shows us what it means to be truly human--sinless and totally dependent on God (John 5:19-23; 8:46). He best manifests the life of a spiritual warrior--He does not focus on the glory of winning battles with demons as much as He does the eternal realities of winning the war by living in a relationship with God (Luke 10:20). He teaches that the Kingdom of God is now spilling over into the world (Matt. 4:17). Through the use of parables, He teaches many things about God's kingdom. One primary focus seems to be that the Kingdom does not belong to this world (John 18:36-37), and its rules are not the same as the rules of the world. For example, things the world considers to be a curse are seen as blessings in light of the kingdom of God (Matt. 5:3-10).

He the reality of God's plan for people (Col. 2:17). Because He came as a humble, obedient servant, God has chosen to exalt Him above all other names (Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 2:9). He is the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8) who is now seated at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:20).

- c. God the **Holy Spirit** is the Power (Luke 1:35) who directed and empowered Jesus' earthly ministry (Matt. 4:1; 12:28; Luke 4:1, 14-19). He points us to Jesus (John 16:12-15).

He knows the intimate thoughts of God (1 Cor. 2:10) and gives life (2 Cor. 3:6).

2. **All** that He created was declared very good (Gen. 1:31; NIV). Thus, goodness finds its reference point in the creative activity and character of God. Evil, on the other hand, is defined as that which actively opposes God's created goodness (and not just as an absence of good; see Gen. 2:18). Good, being rooted in God's eternal nature, exists independently of evil, but evil by definition is contingent on the existence of good. The physical created order was exposed to the effects of evil through the fall (Gen. 3:17-19), though it still proclaims God's glory (Ps. 19:1-6).

3. God created **woman and man** in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27). We are created for God's glory (Isa. 43:7); we glorify Him by worship (Ps. 29:2) and by walking in His truth and fearing His name (Ps. 86:8-11). Further, we are crowned with glory by Him (Ps. 8:3-8)--we are invested with a dignity second only to God's,

and serve as His rulers on earth (Gen. 2:28-30).

**People** continue in their rebellion against God by choosing to walk in darkness (John 3:19). In spite of the fact that we have rejected God, each person is of infinite worth (Mark 8:36-37), and has the hope of resurrection to a new life (Luke 20:34-38). In some sense, we are fragmented beings, seen in the fact that even though the flesh is weak, our spirit may still be willing to do as God wants (Matt. 26:41). Finally, Jesus teaches that outward cleanliness is not proof of true inward spirituality (Mark 7:14-23).

We are very clearly split into two camps, those alive in Christ and those dead in sins (Eph. 2:1-5). Those who are dead in sins are more clearly shown to be in direct rebellion against God (e.g., Rom. 1:18-32). Even among believers, there is a fleshly part of us that is against the Spirit of God (Rom. 7:14-25; Gal. 5:16-24).

4. The created order is not limited to the material universe; it includes **spirit beings** as well:
  - a. First, we note the **spirit beings aligned with God**, of which several designations are found: angels (1 Kings 19:5; 2 Kings 6:15-19; Ps. 91:11-12), sons of God (Job 1:6), cherubim (Gen. 3:24), seraphim (Is. 6:1-4), the angel of the LORD (Gen. 16:7-13), the commander of the LORD's army (Josh. 5:13-15), and angelic princes (Dan. 10:21). Gabriel (Dan. 8:16) and Michael (Dan. 12:1) are the only good angels named in the Bible.

These **angels** are God's messengers, sent by Him to perform their duties (Luke 1:11-13). They may appear to humans physically (Luke 2:8-15) or in dreams (Matt. 1:20-21). They have great powers (Matt. 28:2-7) which they employ in serving God. They will participate with Christ in the final harvest (Matt. 24:31), and have great interest and delight in the conversion of sinners (Luke 15:10). They do not marry and cannot die (Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34-36).

They exercise control over natural forces (under the direction of God). We see this in the four angels with power over the winds of the earth (Rev. 7:1), the angels with power over fire (Rev. 14:18) and water (Rev. 16:5), and the many end-time plagues which they will unleash (Rev. 6-18).

- b. Second, the Bible acknowledges the existence of **spirit beings who incite people to evil deeds** or accuse them before God. Designations for these beings include Satan (Job 1:6), demons (Deut. 32:17); prince (Dan. 10:13), evil spirits (1 Sam. 16:14), gods (Deut. 32:17), and starry hosts (Zeph. 1:5). Spirit beings of this category are not prominent in the OT. Further, the OT does not portray them as free, independent agents. Rather, they operate as God sends them (Deut. 32:15-17; 1 Sam. 16:14, 19:9).
    - i. **Satan** is the deceiver (Gen. 3:1-6; 13), the inciter (1 Chron. 21:1), and accuser (Zech. 3:1) of people and God (Job 1:9-11 and 2:4-5), but operates only on the leash that God allows (Job 1-2). His defeat is foretold by God (Gen. 3:15), so it is sure. It is debated as to whether or not his fall from grace is described (Isa. 14:12-20 and Ezek. 28:11-19; these passages, if indirectly referring to Satan, describe him as one who fell from the top level of the created order to become the top level perverter of what God has made).

He is the tempter (Matt. 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-11) who deceives (Rev. 12:9). He has a murderous lying and nature (John 8:44). His forces were completely defeated at the cross (Col. 2:15-22). Though that total defeat has not yet been fully manifested (Heb. 2:8), it will be in God's timing (1 Cor. 15:24-26). For a season Satan and his hosts are allowed to continue to exert authority here on earth (e.g., demons are the powers behind idols [1 Cor. 10:9-10]). However, nothing in all of creation can separate us from God's love (Rom. 8:38-39). He remains unoriginal;

in Revelation in particular, we gain a picture of his counterfeit kingdom as a perversion of God's created order (e.g., Rev. 16:13).

- ii. Satan leads a **demonic hierarchy** (Mark 3:22) whose destiny, together with him, is Hell (Matt. 25:41). Demons can bind people physically, emotionally, and spiritually (e.g., see Mark 1:23-27; Luke 4:31-36). Just because they leave once is not proof that they will not seek to reenter, and they are able to cooperate in their work (Matt. 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26). They are organized in a hierarchy to do their leader's bidding (Eph. 6:12). It is possible that they are one-third of the original angelic force who fell under Satan's sway and revolted with Him against the creator (Rev. 12:4). If this is a literal number, angels outnumber demons two to one! The vocabulary for demonic beings in the epistles is rich, including principalities (Eph. 3:10), powers (Eph. 1:21), dominions (Eph. 1:21), thrones (Col. 1:16), names (Eph. 1:21), princes (1 Cor. 2:6), princes of this world (1 Cor. 2:8), lords (1 Cor. 8:5), gods (1 Cor. 8:5), angels (2 Pet. 2:4), demons (1 Cor. 10:20), spirits (1 Cor. 12:10), wicked spirits (Acts 5:16); seducing spirits (1 Tim. 4:1), and elemental spirits (Gal. 4:9).

*The Interrelationships among God, People, and Spirit Beings in the OT*

1. **People and spirits:** People chose to side with Satan when we fell prey to the serpent's temptation in Eden (Gen. 3:1-15). As a result, there was a radical restructuring of our relationships with God, others, and self, including the breaking of our intimate fellowship with God. Not only have individuals fallen; nations are fallen as well (Gen. 10-11).

There are people who actively seek to interact with and relate to spirit beings, but God's people should avoid any practices associated with this (Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:9-14) as well as the demons behind those practices (Deut 32:17; Ps. 106:36-37). There are definite limits to the types of relations allowed between humans and spirits (Gen. 6:1-4).

Satan has been given authority over the kingdoms of the world (Matt. 4:8-9), and can snatch God's word away from those who refuse to believe it (Matt. 13:19; Mark 4:15; Luke 8:12). However, he must ask permission to 'take hold' of believers (Luke 22:31-32). It appears that his fundamental desire is to manifest a perverted anti-kingdom through establishing anti-parallels to God's plan for people (seen, for example, in the demoniac in Mark 5:1-20 and parallels).

The 'invisible' realities of Satan's activities are more fully exposed in the NT than in the OT, though there remain multiple layers of hiddenness. Examples of how his activities may be seen as either more overt or more covert include:

Overt Activity	Parallel Covert Activity
Tempting Christ face-to-face in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11)	Tempting Christ through His closest associates (Matt. 16:21-23)
Visible demonization of individuals (Mark 5:1-20)	Demonic oppression through sickness (Luke 13:10-17)
Keeping the masses in bondage through worldly kingdoms (Matt. 4:8-9)	Keeping the masses in bondage through "righteously" oppressive religious structures (Matt. 23; John 8:42-47)

The unbelieving world (or domination system) is under Satan's sway, being held captive to his schemes. He blinds them (2 Cor. 4:4); they are dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-3); they are slaves to his tactics and nature (Gal. 4:3, 9). Even when they use Jesus' name, they do so at their own peril (since they

have no claim to His authority; Acts 19:11-20).

2. **God and people:** God chooses and sets apart people (Ps. 40:1-3) to bring glory to Him (Isa. 43:7) and thereby demonstrate His reign over the universe to an unbelieving world. The people are chosen on the basis of His mercy, not their own merit (Deut. 10:12-16). He tests His people by sending false prophets (Deut. 13:1-5) and allowing imitation miracles (Exod. 7:8-13, 20-22; 8:5-7, 16-19; 9:8-12) to see if they give full allegiance to Him. This allegiance may be described as the "politics of separation": we are to be separate from the people who do not know God and from their practices. This is focused especially in the theme of holiness (Lev. 11:44-45).

The Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteous, and judgment (John 16:7-11). He is the one responsible for our spiritual birth (John 3:5-10); the gift of God given to people who ask (Matt. 7:11; Luke 11:13), whose role in our lives is to speak the words of Christ and thereby guide us into the truth (John 16:12-15).

Though God is high and holy (transcendent), he also lives with those who are contrite and lowly in spirit (immanent; Isa. 57:15). His focus is not on our power, but on our purity and dependence on Him (Isa. 30:15). He desires broken hearts (Ps. 51:17) and truth in the inward parts (Ps. 51:6). His call is not impossible to obey--it is within our reach (Deut. 30:11-16). Spiritual "power" is not proof of purity (e.g., holy and unholy can be seen close together in that Saul was prophesying when an evil spirit came on him; 1 Sam. 18:10-11). God longs to lavish His mercy on those who walk in His ways (Ps. 84:11; Isa. 30:18), and He has plans of prosperity and hope for those He loves (Jer. 29:11).

We have a loving (Rom. 5:8) Daddy (Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:4-6) who exercises His sovereignty in several ways:

- a. He is the One from whom all things come and for whom we live (1 Cor. 8:6); He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3-10), sealing us with His Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5) and effecting our rescue from Satan's domain (Col. 1:13-14).
- b. He Himself does not tempt us (Jas. 1:13), and He moderates every temptation we experience (1 Cor. 10:13). He is able to keep us from falling (Jude 24-25), but, even when we do fall, He comforts us in our troubles (2 Cor. 1:3-4) and continues to work all things for our good (by conforming us to the image of Christ; Rom. 8:28-30).
- c. He works in us (Phil. 2:12-13), enabling us to grow (1 Cor. 3:7) and to do the works He has already prepared for us (Eph. 2:8-10).
- d. He is the One all nations will worship (Rev. 15:3-4)

Christians, having been declared a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) who are God's children (Rom. 8:15-17; Eph. 1:4-5), and given Christ's authority (Col. 2:10), are called to engage in the kingdom conflict (Acts 26:18) in the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 10:3-5). We are to live in submission to God and resist Satan (James 4:4-9; 1 Pet. 5:5-9). Based on our submission, we are not to wage not just a defensive battle, but are to actively and offensively engage the enemy of our souls using God's rules of engagement, including overcoming evil with good (Rom. 12:21) and returning curses with blessings (1 Pet. 3:8-12). On the human level, we are to *gently* instruct those who oppose us (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

Whoever believes in Jesus has crossed from death to life (John 3:36; 5:24) and become a child of God (John 1:12). Those who do not believe are children of the devil (John 8:42-47).

It appears that the disciples did not always exercise (or access?) Jesus' authority to the fullest extent (e.g., Mark 9:14-29 and parallels). This delegated authority is given to all believers, as the gates of Satan's kingdom shall not overcome the church (Matt. 16:18-19).

3. **God and spirits:** God mediates at least some of His judgments on people through spirit beings, including angels (Gen. 19:1-26; Ezek. 9:1-11) and the angel of the LORD (2 Sam. 24:15-16). Evil spirits also are instruments used to initiate or bring His judgment (e.g., through dissension [Jud. 9:22-25] and torment [1 Sam. 16:14]).
4. **God (Jesus) and Satan:** The central thrust is the reality of the kingdom conflict between Jesus and Satan (Matt 4:23-24).
  - a. This is manifested in Jesus' life through
    - i. His **resisting** of Satan's temptations (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; Matt. 16:21-23).
    - ii. His **action** in driving out demons (Matt. 4:23-24; Mark 1:39; Luke 6:18-19),
    - iii. His **teaching** that the kingdom of God is among us (Matt. 12:22-29; Mark 3:22-27; Luke 11:14-22),
    - iv. His **proclamation** of the purpose for which He came to earth--to set the captives free (Luke 4:17-21).
  - b. Jesus is successful in His mission to destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8) and set people free from fear of the power of death (Heb. 2:14-15).
    - i. The path to victory came by following God's rules of engagement rather than Satan's. This is seen especially in the cross (Col. 2:15-19), where Jesus became a curse for us (Gal. 3:10-15). Rather than pursuing a violent destruction of Satan, Jesus submits himself to Satan's violence in order to deligitimize Satan by exposing his true nature (1 Cor. 2:8).
    - ii. Jesus also demonstrates His power to snatch victory from the jaws of apparent defeat through the resurrection, God's final stamp of authenticity on His work on our behalf and the proof that we can find true life in Him (Rom. 1:4; 6:5; 1 Cor. 15).
    - iii. "He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, and was taken up in glory." (1 Tim. 3:16)
  - c. Jesus exercises God's authority over demons through the power of the Spirit (Luke 11:20). That authority is exercised 'with a word' (Matt. 8:16; Mark 1:32-34; Luke 4:40-41; Mark 1:27). After commanding His disciples to pray for God to send out laborers into the harvest (Matt. 9:32-38), Jesus sent them out, having given them His authority over demons (Mark 3:14-15; Matt. 10:1, 5-10; Luke 9:1-6).
5. Interwoven in all of **Satan's** strategies is his central character as the father of lies. He and his agents (both human and spiritual) utilize a multitude of strategies evolving from their nature of untruth, including
  - a. Attacking our minds through clever arguments (2 Cor. 2:10-11; 11:2-4);
  - b. Masquerading as angels or ministers of light (2 Cor. 11:14-15) though presenting a different Jesus (2 Cor. 11:4) or doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1-4) and displaying counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders (2 Thess. 2:7-11);
  - c. Tempting us to meet our needs outside of God's will (1 Thess. 3:5) so that Satan can disgrace us later through revealing our pitfalls (1 Tim. 3:6-7);
  - d. Frightening or intimidating us to keep us inactive while he goes about his business (1 Pet. 5:8);
  - e. Pitting us against each other to destroy the unity we share in Christ and discredit us with the world (2 Tim. 2:24-26);
  - f. Through their human agents, trying to secretly introduce destructive heresies, inventing stories to convince believers to follow them (2 Pet. 2:1-6);
  - g. Through false religious experiences, such as empowering idols which are worshipped as gods (1 Cor. 10:19-21) or false ecstatic experiences (1 Cor. 12:2-3)

6. **Angels** worship and praise God (Rev. 4:1-11, 5:8-14, and 7:11-12). This worship and praise will continue eternally. Unlike too many of us, they never grow weary of honoring our Creator! They have a ministry to the saints (Heb. 1:14), seen in many areas. For instance, they are able to rescue us from trouble (Acts 12:6-11). On special occasions, they surround the people of God and protect them (Rev. 7:1-4). They are sent by God to bring His messages to people (the Law; Acts 7:53 and Gal. 3:19) and to show what must take place, Rev. 22:6). They can interpret visions for us (when directed to do so by God, Rev. 17:7). They are in some way involved in bringing our prayers before God (Rev. 5:8, Rev. 8:1-5), and may carry us to heaven when we die (Jude 9). Finally, they continue to serve as God's guards/army. Angels will guard each of the twelve entrances to the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12).

Physically, people are no match for the power of angels (2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chr. 32:20).

#### *Levels of Spiritual Conflict*

1. Several core aspects of spiritual conflict may be noted:
  - a. God is in complete control, and Satan's defeat is accomplished, though the full manifestation of that defeat has not yet been revealed;
  - b. Christians, individually and corporately, have been delegated the authority and power to live lives pleasing to God even in the midst of a world dominated by the Prince of the Power of the Air;
  - c. To experience the victory that is ours in Christ, we must be aware of the enemy's schemes and appropriate our resources in Christ through allowing Him to enable us to live disciplined lives which are pleasing to the King of Kings. In so doing, we refuse to engage in conflict by Satan's rules; rather, we overcome evil with good.
  
2. **Personal:** Spiritual conflict is the individual and the community of God's people reversing the restructuring that took place as a result of the fall. This is accomplished through participating in God's covenant of peace (*shalom*--wholeness, completeness, soundness; Isa. 54:10), which is entered by faith in Jehovah (Gen. 15:6; including trusting in His power to totally deliver) and living a life of obedience in the light of His word (Micah 6:8) no matter what the cost (Gen. 22:1-18). This is possible because God's covenant people live in the shadow of His wings (Ps. 91:1-16).

Though people are oppressed, we have chosen the path that leads to oppression by following the ways of the world rather than the ways of God (John 3:19). In spite of the fact that we chose against God, He still sent His Son to redeem us because of His love for us (John 3:16-21).

- a. We are called to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength (Matt. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:28-34). In and of ourselves, we cannot do that, so Jesus sends the Holy Spirit, who is with us forever (John 14:26) as a divine helper (John 14:16-17), telling us what to say (Matt 10:19-20) and guiding us into truth (John 16:12-15).
  
- b. We have been set free and are called to participate in the kingdom conflict of setting others free through bondage to Christ (John 8:31-37; Matt. 28:18-20). We are the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16), and are called to function as preservers who shed God's light wherever we are:
  - i. As light, we are to live lives pleasing to God. We are to display kingdom ethics (i.e., ethics built on God's sovereignty over our lives) by following in the footsteps of Jesus, including taking up our crosses and following Him (Matt. 16:24). We are to live such exemplary lives that others will see us and praise God as a result (Matt. 5:16). We are to expose Satan's kingdom of darkness by

- proclaiming the kingdom of God and the light of God's word so that the world may see God living through us.
- ii. As salt, we are to act as preservers of the societies in which we live by manifesting God's sovereignty to the world around us. Of great significance to spiritual conflict in this regard is our need to wage spiritual conflict by God's rules, such as turning the other cheek (Matt. 5:38-42), loving our enemies (Matt. 5:43-48), forgiving others as Christ forgave us (Matt. 6:14; 18:21-35), and teaching others how to forgive as well (Matt. 28:18-20).
- c. The ultimate issue in spiritual conflict for all people is not power over the spirit realm (Matt. 7:15-23; 24:23-31), but the freedom and eternal destiny of those who belong to Christ (Luke 4:18-19; 10:17-20). We are privileged to participate in Christ's victory, and we do so not by means of redemptive violence but through submission to God and self-denial, taking up the cross in imitation of Christ (Matt. 10:38; 16:24).
  - d. Personal spiritual conflict is fought with spiritual weapons (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Of particular importance are the spiritual disciplines, including:
    - i. Believing the truth that God declares: we have been given a totally new nature (2 Cor. 5:16-17), transferred to a new kingdom (Col. 1:13), and seated with Christ in the heavenlies, far above all Satanic powers and principalities (Eph. 1:18-23; 2:4-6);
    - ii. Standing firm against Satan's attacks, enabled (2 Cor. 1:21) and protected by God (2 Thess. 3:3) by putting on His armor with prayer (Eph. 6:10-18) and not counting our lives as important (Rev. 12:7-9);
    - iii. Extending forgiveness to those who offend us (2 Cor. 2:10-11) and refusing to allow Satan to gain an advantage over us through anger or bitterness (Eph. 4:25-5:1);
    - iv. Taking every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-6) and refusing to be captivated by hollow and deceptive philosophies (Col. 2:8) and thus avoiding being "friends with the world" (James 4:4-9);
    - v. Rejoicing in and living in the light of the fact that death has no hold over us (1 Cor. 15:50-58), and we have nothing to fear from it (Heb. 2:14-15);
    - vi. Refusing to give in to Satan's intimidating tactics, secure in the knowledge that he has no hold on our destiny (1 John 5:18), that the One in us is greater than the one in the world (1 John 4:4), and that it is through the Church that Satan will be crushed (Rom. 16:20);
    - vii. Being ever joyful, prayerful, and thankful (1 Thess. 5:16-18).
3. On the **corporate level**, it is God's intention that His wisdom be made known to spiritual powers through His church (Eph. 3:10). The church has been given the resources it needs to walk in victory in the battle (Eph. 3:14-21):
    - a. The Holy Spirit, who empowers and enables us to live so as to please God (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:18-21);
    - b. Doctrinal standards to evaluate spiritual events (Gal. 1:8). Those standards are found in God's word, which contains and all that we need to know about spiritual conflict (1 Tim. 3:16-17);
    - c. Awareness of Satan's fruit and schemes, which enable us to know his tactics (2 Cor. 2:11; e.g., continued sin--1 John 5:18) and discern his agents (e.g., false teachers; 2 Pet. 2:1-6);
    - d. The total body of Christ with all of its giftedness (Eph. 4:7-11; Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12-14; especially the gift of discerning spirits [1 Cor. 12:10]);
    - e. The freedom (and responsibility) to test the spirits (1 Thess. 5:19-21; 1 John 4:1-5);
    - f. The strength to withstand Satan (2 Thess. 3:3);
    - g. The authority and freedom from fear of death to come against Satan in Jesus' name (Acts 16:16-18; Rev. 12:10-11; Heb. 2:14-15);
    - h. Walking in the light (1 John 1:5-7), abstaining from evil (1 Thess. 5:19-22);

- i. Refusing to submit to the judgment of this world and its standards (Col. 2:8; 15-22), which vary from culture to culture and time to time. In addition, rather than putting hope in the world and the riches it has to offer, we are to put our hope in God (1 Tim. 6:17).
4. **Political:** One major focus is the establishment of a literal theonomous kingdom in which God's chosen people (as individuals and as a nation) were given a choice (Deut. 30:19-20) to live a life (including religion and politics) pleasing to their Creator. God promises to use His angels to go before Israel and 'clear the land' (Exod. 23:20-23; 33:2). There is no single 'battle plan'--each battle is fought in unique fashion in dependence on Jehovah, and several battles are fought in completely nontraditional ways (e.g., Jericho).

The Israelites fail to establish the kingdom, but not because they (or their God) are not powerful enough. Every victory they win is because of their faithfulness to God, and every loss is a result of their unfaithfulness (e.g., both are seen in the story of Ai in Joshua 7-8). Rather, their failure is due to the fact that they do not maintain their holiness, intermingling with those around them and falling short of the demands of God. They do this physically through intermarriage (Ezra 10:2), spiritually through idolatry and syncretism (2 Kings 21:1-6; 2 Chron. 28:22-23; Ps. 106:34-39), and politically by demanding a king (1 Samuel 8:19) and making alliances not pleasing to God (Deut. 7:1-7; e.g., Ahab with Ben-Hadad, 1 Kings 20:26-42).

There is no overt attempt to form another theocratic earthly kingdom. Jesus does note that a new kingdom has come (Luke 11:20), though it has not yet been fully manifested (Luke 17:17-21). Though He avoids confronting the political system formally (Matt. 22:15-22), He actively engages the world as a system of domination which controls the lives of people. Though the domination system ("world") rejoices in His death (John 16:20), that death is the means by which Jesus overcomes it (John 16:31-33). This domination system, not knowing God, hates those who follow Christ and persecutes them (John 15:18-21).

5. **Cosmic:** Spiritual conflict also takes place in the cosmic realm. God "chairs" a council of angels (2 Chron. 18:18-22; Job 1-2; Ps. 89:5-8). Angels do battle over nations (Dan. 10:4-11:1). There are powers in heaven which appear to correspond to kings (Isa. 24:21) or nations (Deut. 4:19; possibly Deut. 32:8 and Dan. 8:9-12) on earth.

The kingdom conflict is not a "trickle-down" dualistic battle between evenly matched foes or a type of chess game in which the better strategist will prevail. It is the creature vs. the Creator of all, and the creature (Satan) has already lost the war.

The "bottom line" on which we stand is that the Prince of Eternity has already defeated the Prince of this world (John 12:31). Because Jesus withstood Satan at every turn, Satan has no hold on Him (John 14:30) and stands condemned (John 16:11). Jesus is the stronger man who has bound the strong man (Satan), and the strong man's house is now available for plundering (Luke 11:14-22), which is modelled for us by Jesus not just in demonic confrontations but also in proclaiming the Kingdom of God (Matt. 4:23-24).

All of creation groans, awaiting God's redemption (Rom. 8:18-22).

- a. We also see direct angelic/demonic engagements (Jude 9). The most massive is the battle between Michael and the angels and Satan and his angels (Rev. 12:7-9), which is won by Michael. The last direct engagement is when an unnamed angel binds Satan and casts him into the abyss for 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-3).
- b. More importantly, Satan is unwittingly used of God to accomplish His ultimate glory. Through many examples we see that, at every step, God lovingly and mercifully thwarts Satan's attempts to pervert God's ultimate control over the universe:

- i. Satan, together with all of creation, owes his continued existence to the grace and mercy of God (Col. 1:17);
  - ii. The powers of this world crucified Jesus, which God used to effect our salvation (1 Cor. 2:6-8);
  - iii. He was allowed to send Paul a thorn in the flesh, which taught Paul to depend on God and kept him humble after incredible revelations (2 Cor. 12:7-9);
  - iv. Erring believers were given over to him for the preservation of their souls (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:19-20).
- c. Angels will be directly involved in ushering in the end of the age. Their roles include, among other things, the heralding of the judgements of the seven seals (Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1), trumpets (Rev. 8:3-9; 12:11:15-19), and bowls (Rev. 15:1; 16:1-17).