

Study 10 - The Spiritual Conflict Between Two Kingdoms

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

(Ephesians 6:12)

Introduction

We are living in times of great conflict! Many people are aware of the wars and acts of political unrest that are taking place around the world, but most people overlook the invisible spiritual conflict that takes place daily between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. Each person on earth, without exception, is aligned with either one kingdom or the other, whether he realizes it or not. There is no neutrality. Simply put, obedience to God and His delegated authority aligns us with the kingdom of God, while disobedience to God aligns us with the kingdom of darkness.

To truly fathom this conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, we must have a thorough understanding of how these two kingdoms are diametrically opposed to one another. In this study, we will learn how God’s kingdom rules and then contrast it with how the kingdom of darkness functions. We will also further examine how Jesus thoroughly defeated Satan through His death and His resurrection.

Study Questions

Part I: How the Kingdom of God Rules

▽ Through Fatherhood

The kingdom of God is not just a system of laws and statutes, nor is it merely the association between a sovereign and his subjects. It is the relationship of a Father to His children, and vice versa. God is a Father to us in numerous ways. He provides us with identity as His children; He affirms, nourishes, strengthens, and disciplines us for our good; He reveals our purposes and enables us to fulfil them. It is essential for us to relate to God as our Father to serve in His kingdom.

1. When we have “seen” Jesus—His love, power, priorities, and so forth—whom have we “seen” at the same time? (John 14:9b)

2. (a) When we become God’s children, what else do we become in relation to Him? Complete the following:

Romans 8:17: “If children, then _____; _____ and _____.”

(b) What is our heavenly Father’s ultimate goal for us? Complete the following:

1 John 3:2: “... when [God the Father] is revealed, _____, for we shall see Him as He is.”

▽ Through Revelation, or Revealed Knowledge

3. Through whom do we receive knowledge from God? (John 14:26a)

4. (a) After they had ministered to the Lord and fasted, what instruction did the leaders at the church in Antioch receive from the Holy Spirit regarding Saul (Paul) and Barnabas? (Acts 13:2)

(b) How did the leaders respond to this instruction? (Verse 3)

(c) What revelation did the prophet Agabus receive? (Acts 11:28b)

(d) How did the disciples respond to this message? (Verse 29)

(e) What revelation did Paul receive regarding the man who had been lame since birth? (Acts 14:9b)

(f) What did Paul do based on that revealed knowledge? What happened after that? (Verse 10)

▽

▽ **Through People's Voluntary Obedience and Submission**

5. (a) Record some statements that Jesus made, showing that God invites us to enter His kingdom of our own free will and receive its benefits.

Matthew 16:24: _____

Matthew 11:28: _____

John 7:37b: _____

(b) As God instructed the Israelites, what should we do to “eat the good of the land”? (Isaiah 1:19)

Being under authority is the key to exercising authority.

Part II: How the Kingdom of Darkness Rules

▽ **Through People's Spiritual Ignorance**

6. (a) What is one method by which Satan, as the “god of this age,” prevents people from believing the gospel and keeps them in spiritual ignorance? (2 Corinthians 4:4a)

(b) What does Satan do when people hear the word of the kingdom but don't understand it? (Matthew 13:19)

The kingdom of darkness and of “religion” thrives on our tendency to continue in spiritual ignorance.

▽ **Through People's Disobedience**

7. What term did Paul use for the people through whom the devil is working to advance his kingdom of darkness? (Ephesians 2:2b)

8. What are some of the works of disobedience? (Colossians 3:5b NIV)

Any religion that is unable to deal with a person's rebellion is ineffective.

KEY DEFINITIONS: Satan is called the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). The Greek word translated “prince” is *archon*, which means “one who is first in rank or power,” “chief,” “magistrate,” “prince,” or “ruler” (STRONG, NASC G758). The word translated “power” is *exousia*, and among its meanings are “authority,” “jurisdiction” (STRONG, G1849), and “power to act” (NASC, G1849). From these two Greek words, we can conclude that Satan is a ruling fallen angel; he is the chief of the realm or jurisdiction of the “air.”

REFLECTIONS ON THE “PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR”

The word “*air*” in Ephesians 2:2 refers to the atmosphere adjacent to the surface of the earth. When Satan was defeated by Jesus, he had to let go of his dominion of the earth. However, the iniquity of those who are still disconnected from God and who remain under the devil’s sway allows him to retain some measure of rule. Satan’s kingdom has access to people’s lives directly through their own sin and rebellion. It also can manipulate and tempt people through the avenue of the earth’s atmosphere. Even though the atmosphere is not a tangible territory, we can recognize the influence of Satan’s dominion there by the transmissions of unhealthy programming, music, and Web content that people distribute over the airwaves through television, radio, and the Internet. The church must take a stand and exercise dominion over the airwaves by broadcasting programs containing God’s Word and His principles, to dispel this negative atmosphere.

▽ **Through Domination and Control**

9. (a) What did Satan inflict on a slave girl in order to dominate and control her? (Acts 16:16a)

(b) How did Paul remove the kingdom of darkness from the girl? (Verse 18b)

10. Paul asked of the believers in the church at Galatia who had “bewitched” them (Galatians 3:1), thus dominating them by drawing them away from the true message of the gospel of the kingdom. What error did Paul indicate they had fallen into? Complete the following:

Galatians 3:3 (NIV): “After beginning with the Spirit, are you now _____ _____?”

11. Though it often seems as if our conflicts and problems are caused by other people, what are we ultimately battling against? (Ephesians 6:12b)

The law of the kingdom of darkness is domination and control over people. The law of the kingdom of God is submission freely offered to Him.

--- To be Continued next week