SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND TERRITORIAL SPIRITS

In this article we shall be looking at the modern teaching concerning what are called “territorial spirits”. According to this teaching there are specific, evil spirits that rule over a community, village, town, city or country; that is, they rule over a geographical area, and so are called “territorial spirits”. It is further taught that these territorial spirits have power and authority to keep the people in their geographical area in darkness, bondage and sin. Even more significantly than this, the promoters of this teaching tell us that these territorial spirits have such a hold on the local community or city, that the Gospel itself cannot be effective, gain entrance or spread in this area until these territorial spirits are first identified and then bound, overcome and rebuked in prayer. They teach that people will not turn to the Lord, be converted and delivered from sin, darkness and bondage in any significant numbers unless we first identify and then bind and rebuke the power of these territorial spirits. This is what they say and teach.

This is an outline of the teaching in the simplest form possible, and I’m sure you will agree that if this teaching is true, it is of the utmost significance. The spread of the Gospel and the conversion and salvation of souls depends upon the knowledge and application of this teaching, if it is true! This dare not be a matter of opinion or private interpretation, because it will also effect our very understanding of the nature of what the Gospel is and what Jesus accomplished at Calvary.

As in the other articles, I first want to look at what the scriptures themselves say and teach. So we shall not, at the moment, look at scriptures in which people imagine to find these things taught. This matter is so vital and fundamental that we cannot leave it to human guesswork or just human deductions. So what we are looking for are the scriptures where these things are clearly and explicitly stated or taught.

Where are these things taught in the NT?

The simple, comprehensive and conclusive answer is, “Nowhere!” We do not find this teaching concerning the identifying and binding of territorial spirits anywhere in the NT! Jesus did not use or teach this approach.

Nowhere do we read that Jesus identified a territorial spirit over a locality, village or town, and then bound and rebuked it before beginning to preach and do miracles there. Nowhere do we read that Jesus taught His apostles or anyone else that the Word of God can only really have power and success in a region if you first identify the spirit of that region and bind and overcome its power through prayer. We never read of Jesus employing this strategy or teaching this strategy.

The apostles did not use or teach this approach.

Nowhere in the Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles do we read of the apostles, or anyone else, using this strategy. The apostle Paul visited many towns in which there was terrible idolatry, immorality, witchcraft and sin. Nowhere do we read of him identifying what kind of territorial spirits rule over a city or of him praying against such spirits in order for the work of the Gospel to prosper.

Nowhere in their writings to the churches or to individuals, do the apostles even mention such a strategy, let alone teach it. There are various exhortations to pray in the NT, but nowhere do the apostles indicate that territorial spirits have power over people in a certain region and that it is necessary to pray against these spirits and to break their power, in order for the Gospel to prosper and for men and women to be saved.

There is no such teaching in the NT. On this ground alone we can safely reject these doctrines.

But neither is this approach taught in the OT, nor do we have a single example in the OT of someone having to identify a territorial spirit and bind its power before the work of the Lord can be successfully accomplished. To be sure, these modern writers refer to certain texts in the OT, and we shall look at them later, but none of the references support the approach and strategy that is propagated by these writers.

A False Obligation

How can these modern teachers say, “You must employ this strategy in order to ensure the effective evangelisation of the world”, when the scriptures do not exhort us to do this? They are laying obligation on
the people of God where the scripture lays no such obligation. In other words, they are adding to the word of God and exercising an authority over the Lord’s people that is not God-given. It is a very serious matter. It is one thing to say that because the scriptures don’t forbid them to use these methods, therefore they feel at liberty to employ them. (However, even this argument is not valid, because their teachings touch upon such fundamental truths of the Gospel and its effective spread, that they would have to show where these things are explicitly taught in scripture before teaching and employing these methods.) But they actually teach that these methods of theirs are essential for the spread of the Gospel! This is a deception and can only bring the Lord’s people into confusion, bondage and danger if they receive and follow such teachings.

If these strategies of identifying and binding territorial spirits are essential for the successful spread of the Gospel, then why did Jesus and the apostles not teach and reveal these things to us? We are being told by these modern teachers that intercessory prayer against principalities and powers over geographical regions is required before the Gospel can really penetrate a region. Were the apostles ignorant of this strategy, or did they just fail to reveal to us what is necessary for the spread of the Gospel and for the salvation of souls? Has the church been deprived of vital truth for 2000 years? No! The church has not been deprived of vital truth and the Gospel has spread down all these centuries, as Jesus said it would, without the church teaching or employing the strategies that these modern teachers have invented. From the time of the Acts of the Apostles to this very day, there have been revivals where people have turned to the Lord in great numbers and have been saved from sin, darkness and the devil’s bondage, without these strategies being known, taught or employed!

Inordinate Desire for ‘Results’

But one of the main concerns of these modern preachers and teachers is to see ‘results’ quickly. One of the church leaders who believes in using this method is reported as saying that if his church didn’t grow from 1000 members to 2000 within two years, then they haven’t been trying properly! In other words, if we employ the right strategies we should expect our church membership to double in two years! They are treating the church and as if it’s some kind of business where we have to find the best methods to produce results and reach targets. Even churches are now producing “missions statements” and their “targets” for success. This approach has been directly borrowed from the world of business. All this honours Christ Jesus who is Head of His church and who has shown us in His word how we are to conduct ourselves. Some of them openly say that they are more interested in what ‘works’ than in what is true. Thus they already begin to lay the foundation for their own deception. In departing from the clear guidelines of scripture they expose themselves to the deception of the devil as they pursue methods that bring some kind of quick and impressive results.

Jesus in praying to the Father says, “Your word is truth”, John 17:17. Now as God’s people we all desire and pray that the Gospel should reach and save the souls of many people around us and throughout the world. But as God’s people, our praying, our works and our teaching should be according to God’s word, which is the truth. Our desire to ‘see results’ should not lead us to ignore or abandon God’s word as revealed in scripture, or to develop our own strategies or systems of thought just for the sake of getting what appears to be some sort of quick ‘result’. Much of these modern teachings are driven by the idea of ‘success’. In an attempt to find something that ‘works’ and that is ‘successful’, these modern teachers are continually inventing new ideas and systems of teaching. No one seems to ask themselves how it is that every few years there needs to be some new ‘fashion’ in theological outlook – a new “wind of doctrine”! No one seems to ask what was wrong with the last “wind of doctrine”, or to realise that the church does not need a new fashion in doctrinal teaching but a return to what is already clearly revealed in scripture. If we are honest, we have to confess that many of these teachings that are driven by the idea of success and results come directly from the business culture of the United States, where everything depends on targets, results and success. Christians, mainly in the United States, have borrowed this mentality or adopted this outlook and disposition from the world and have brought them into the church. And this has led to the invention of bizarre teachings and practices. (Obviously, I am not saying that the idea of territorial spirits comes from business culture, but this drive for success – which has led these Christians into inventions and deceptions.)

A writer and teacher who is one of the leading propagators of this teaching illustrates for us the point I have made above, concerning the lack of scriptural support for this teaching. In his Introduction to the book he compiled, called, “Territorial Spirits” (Sovereign World Ltd, © 1991, C. P. Wagner), Wagner says that he had looked at 100 books in a theological seminary that dealt with the subject of angels and demons, in order to discover any teaching concerning territorial spirits. He states that there is a great need today to do research into this subject. But haven’t we got the Bible? Shouldn’t research into the Bible be enough? Is God’s word not sufficient to instruct us concerning such fundamental matters? Apparently not, for he isn’t calling for research into the Bible. Although he of course tries to find evidence for this teaching in the scriptures, as we shall see later, nevertheless he has to go elsewhere to see if he can find confirmation for these strange inventions. But he
tells us that *only five* of the 100 books made *any mention* of the subject of territorial spirits, and *only three* of these said anything helpful, but *none* of it was worth including in his book. This is no surprise, since these teachings are not found in the Bible - and until now no one had invented or used them in this way, as far as I am aware. So in this book he includes contributions from mainly modern-day writers who are among those who are also propagating these ideas. Wagner was doing research into the principles of church growth and prayer when he came across some church leaders who were practising this kind of intercessory prayer against territorial spirits. This then led him into further study of the subject. As we have seen in the other articles, these men do not start with the Bible but with their experiences and spiritual ‘revelations’ that they receive. They then use what scriptures they can and *make or force them* support their revelations. We shall be looking at those scriptures later. But I have to say even those church leaders who believe in these strange doctrines, do not always agree among themselves concerning these teachings and how they should be applied. Finding no real support in scripture, it is no wonder that one of the proponents of these ideas resorts to saying that because God is sovereign He is revealing *new and better strategies* for world evangelisation. What they mean is that God is revealing this *extra-biblical revelation to them*, and so ascribe to themselves apostolic authority! All this represents a departure from faith, as they exalt their own revelations and experiences above God’s word.

Let us now look a little more closely at what is taught about spiritual warfare by these modern writers.

**Their Teaching on Spiritual Warfare.**

They divide spiritual warfare into 3 categories. Firstly, there is what they call, “ground-level” warfare, by which they mean using the authority that the Lord has given to His church to cast demons out of individuals. This is portrayed clearly in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles and so is not really an issue of controversy for us. The second category is called, “occult-level” warfare, by which they mean confronting and binding spirits of witchcraft, Satanism religious idolatry and so on, which usually exercise their evil influence through a certain individual. The “highest” level of spiritual warfare is called, “strategic” or “cosmic-level” warfare, where intercessory prayer is required to identify and bind high-ranking evil spirits, or principalities and powers, which rule over geographical regions.

These last two categories are the speculations and inventions of these modern writers, as we will see. The second category is not such a prominent feature and overlaps somewhat with the third category, so I will comment on this second category when we look at the relevant passages later, but it is the third category that their teaching focuses on, so we will largely deal with this last category, as it also represents the real deception and danger.

How are these evil spirits identified and confronted? Well, those who believe they are called to be involved in this kind of warfare, spend considerable time in prayer as they seek to identify, by means of their spiritual gifting and ‘discernment’, the name or type of spirit or spirits that have a hold over the area – it may be a spirit of pride, greed, lust or witchcraft. They then confront them in prayer battle and bind their power. This can take some days, if not weeks. To identify which spirits have rule over a city, they also teach the need of what they call “spiritual mapping”, which involves investigating the history of the city - its religious, social and ethnic condition and background as well as evil perpetrated in, or by, or against the city – going back hundreds if not thousands of years! It is taught this will help us identify which evil forces may be holding the city in their grip so that we can effectively then pray against and bind their power! I dealt with this superstitious idea in the first article.

Some of these modern preachers say that they will not preach the Gospel in an area until they have identified the ruling evil spirit and bound its power. But Jesus did not employ this approach in any of the towns he went to. We don’t read of Peter or Paul engaging in this kind of “spiritual warfare” before visiting a town or preaching the Gospel there. We read nothing concerning Paul binding a spirit of idolatry, greed or lust over the cities of Ephesus or Corinth before beginning mighty works there. Nor do we read anywhere that the apostles in their letters exhort the saints to pray against territorial spirits, as these modern writers and preachers want us to do!

**Two Fundamental Errors**

This teaching is not just an addition to scripture but actually misrepresents and undermines the whole work of Christ at Calvary and the nature of the Gospel. We will start by looking at **two fundamental errors** that this teaching brings people into.

**Firstly,** it denies or detracts from the comprehensive victory that Jesus accomplished on the cross. The teaching doesn’t truly acknowledge the utter victory that Christ has gained over spiritual forces, on behalf of His church as well as for mankind, nor do these teachers truly honour and respect the total sovereignty and right that God has in directing His people and building His Church.
Before Calvary, Christ Himself went about *preaching* the good news of the Kingdom of God. He also sent apostles and disciples to *preach* the Gospel of the Kingdom and to *cast* demons out of *people* and heal the sick. Later, having secured forgiveness and victory over evil forces at the cross, Christ called, sent and used the apostles as well as others in building His Church. We know that many were converted through the *preaching* of Peter. Philip was sent by God to turn many away from sin and witchcraft, Acts 8. In Acts 11: 19-21, we read that the Lord was *with* them who *preached* the Lord Jesus to the Gentiles and a great number turned to the Lord. Paul was *called* of God, Acts 26:13-18. In Acts 13: 2, Paul was *sent* of God. Paul travelled to towns and cities but we also see that Paul was a man who was *lead* of God, Acts 16:6-10. All these people preached the word of God to others, acknowledging what Christ had done at Calvary and multitudes turned to the Lord. The apostles also delivered men and women of evil spirits and rebuked demons operating through individuals, Acts 13:8-11; 16:18; 19:12. All this happened *without* there being any teaching about, and *without* the use of, this modern approach which is called "strategic-level warfare".

Let me say here that it should also be clear to us, that not *any and every* preaching that is carried out is necessarily effective. Paul was keen to preach Christ but he submitted himself to his brethren and to the church and he was willing to return to his home town of Tarsus, Acts 9:26-31. We find him later as one of the prophets and teachers at Antioch, Acts 13:1. He didn’t just preach anywhere according to his own plans and designs but being in fellowship with God and submissive to the Spirit and to the church, Paul was called by God to preach the Gospel, Acts 13:1-3, and instructed by the Spirit into which regions he should go and into which regions he should not go, Acts 16:6-10. Thus Paul declares in Romans 10:14,15, “...and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall the preach *except* they be sent?” Paul and others were well aware of his *divine* commission – 1 Cor.9:16,17 – and he was well aware that he could only function according to his *calling*, 2 Cor.10:13-18.

If we go beyond divine calling and gifting; if we go beyond divine timing in our lives; if we go beyond the word of God, then we cannot expect the fruit that God desires. We are to be servants of God. This means we are to do what he says and be submitted to His directions and timing in our lives. We should also *not go beyond* our gifting and calling. Could it be that some go without being sent? Could it be that following little or no success from their preaching such zealous and impatient preachers seek to devise or invent some method or strategy that *shall make* their work effective and 'successful'? Could it be that they *go beyond* what scripture teaches in order to achieve this? I think that these things could also play a role in this whole matter of 'effective' evangelism and the development of 'new strategies'. All this does not mean that if we are sent of God that we will always see 'great results', but if we desire to serve God and bear fruit to Him and truly bring His word to people, then we are to walk according to His word and Spirit.

As we read the Gospels and Acts we see that the Lord’s people preached and testified to His death and resurrection in obedience to His commands and leadings or as opportunities presented themselves. Although they knew Christ had spoiled principalities and powers, there is no sense, as we read these accounts, of the Lord’s people taking evangelism ‘into their own hands’ and trying to do God’s work for Him. The apostles didn’t become *presumptuous* in using the Lord’s name or in using the power and authority that He had given them. They obeyed God and were led of God, and God turned multitudes to Him and displayed His great power. And God got the Glory! All this was done *without* identifying or binding territorial spirits! They didn’t try to add anything to what God had said and done in order to make evangelism more successful! But these modern teachers and preachers presume to imply by their doctrines, that what Christ had done on the cross was not sufficient. Yes, they proclaim that Christ gained the victory on the cross, but apparently, He hadn’t spoiled principalities and powers *sufficiently* for them, because these preachers believe that evil spirits still have a *legal right* to keep people in darkness and bondage and that the Gospel *cannot* really penetrate a region ruled by such evil spirits. They teach that one *must first* do spiritual battle *directly* with these principalities and powers in prayer, and overcome their power through prayer before God can turn souls to Him! This thinking has more to do with superstition and the realm of the occult than with the thinking and teaching of the scriptures. This focus on territorial spirits and their power, and this kind of concentration in prayer against evil spirits is not found in scripture. It can only magnify the devil at the expense of the true knowledge and power of Christ in His saints and through His church. It makes people devil-conscious instead of Christ-centred and thereby *actually gives* the devil more power and glory and robs the saints of true faith in God. The scriptures say that, “Although we don’t see all things under His feet, yet we see Jesus.” Amen! But these modern teachers want us to see demons! It is as unhealthy as it is unbiblical, and those who have propagated these teachings are the first to acknowledge in their books that people have been damaged through trying these methods. This teaching is a slight against the sovereignty of God and it is an attack on the complete victory that Christ has gained on Calvary, which allows Him to build His Church according to the good pleasure of His own will and according to that power which God used to raise Him from the dead ( Eph.1:19-23 )!
Of course we recognise what the scriptures teach, namely that the prince of the power of the air is the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, Eph.2:2. The devil goes about as a roaring lion and has many captive to his will and he does nothing but kill, rob and destroy. He deceives and keeps many in bondage. This and other things are all taught in scripture and this is not the issue here. I am not saying we can’t pray to the Lord about such issues, where we know of situations and of people who are in need of God’s grace, mercy and salvation. But when it comes to the spread of the Gospel, and the means by which it spreads and changes peoples lives, then we must say that these modern teachings have gone right away from scripture and into error and delusion – such as makes them the victims of deceiving spirits. They confess that Christ has gained the victory at Calvary over the devil and yet they believe they must gain a further victory over spirits that rule over whole regions of people. What gives these territorial spirits the legal right to hold such authority over people to the extent that even the Gospel will not really be of any effect among them? Well, they say it is the past sins of that community or region and the curses laid upon it because of those sins! I tell you the truth, these modern teachers are filling the minds of the Lord’s people with anti-Gospel superstition and error. Christ has borne the sin of the whole world and paid an immeasurably great price to do so. Christ is Supreme. The devil can only go as far as God allows him. Yes, the scriptures acknowledge that there is a need for prayer, preaching, evangelisation work and delivering individuals from demons; but as far as the preaching of the Gospel is concerned, the scriptures do not acknowledge that there is a need to further for the sins of a community beyond what Christ has universally already purchased on the cross; nor do the scriptures acknowledge that those past, “historical sins” of a region give “territorial spirits” a legal right to hinder the Gospel; nor do they acknowledge the need for the saints to engage in direct spiritual combat with those territorial spirits as though they needed to be bound before the Gospel can effectively spread. (Please see the first article, where this matter is fully gone into.)

When Paul was at Athens, not many people turned to the Lord, but neither Paul, nor the scriptures anywhere, attribute such a lack of response to the superior power and authority or the right of evil spirits to oppose the Gospel or a work of God. Paul did not start engaging territorial spirits in prayer because of a seeming ‘lack of success’ of his ministry. Paul had far greater knowledge and revelation than these modern preachers and yet he didn’t resort to “strategic-level warfare” to overcome the “spirit of idolatry” that presumably “reigned” over Athens, in an attempt to overcome this lack of response among the people. You see, these modern teachers say that people are not really free to respond to the Gospel until we have bound the territorial spirits! One of their leading writers actually suggests that the ruling territorial spirit over Athens may have been too powerful for Paul to overcome and that’s why he had so little ‘success’! But neither Paul nor the scriptures make any such conclusion about this kind of ‘lack of success’. Paul simply carries on his travels in the will of God and when he comes to Corinth, we don’t read about him engaging in binding territorial spirits, and yet multitudes turned to the Lord! The scriptures do not particularly explain why more people turn to the Lord in one area more than in another, yet they do give certain indications and point to certain principles which we shall look at in a moment. But one thing is abundantly clear, they do not attribute “success” or “lack of success” to whether one has been able to overcome ruling territorial spirit or not!

I suppose that if these modern teachers had been there at the time of Paul’s visit to Athens, they would have suggested that he attended one of their theological seminaries in order to study “the principles of church growth”! Perhaps they would have told him that his methods of evangelism were obviously “not working” very well and so he ought to learn “new” strategies of “successfully” spreading the Gospel, that were guaranteed to bring success! They would have told him that he had got it all wrong - the problem wasn’t the Athenians themselves but the territorial spirit of idolatry that was preventing the people there from responding to the Gospel. Paul would have to be taught about spiritual warfare if he wanted success in spreading the Gospel! He would have to learn about identifying the names of evil territorial spirits and how to go about binding them in prayer! He couldn’t expect success unless he knew how to do these things! But considering how he dealt with false teachers who had crept into the Galatian churches, I don’t think he would have been impressed at all, rather he would have strongly rebuked them for corrupting the Gospel of Christ.

This is why I say that this teaching is a slight against the sovereignty and wisdom of God, who calls and sends men to preach the Gospel according to the commands and teachings that He has laid down for us. These modern writers call God’s own wisdom and sovereign rule into question. They would call Paul’s ministry to the Athenians something of a “failure”. So keen are they to find success, that they quite easily push Christ’s own command – to go into all the world and preach the Gospel - into the background, and go about to establish their own commands, and so they set themselves up against God’s sovereign wisdom and rule in these matters. Whether God blessed or whether He allowed them to be tested and tried; whether there was much response from people or little response, the early apostles together with the church kept centred on God, submitting to Him, believing Him and magnifying Him! This was their approach. If there wasn’t much response, they didn’t doubt God and run off to study and invent “new principles of church growth”! They were prayerful, they preached and were active in faith and love, such as we read in the Acts, but they didn’t get involved in the kind of
praying against territorial spirits advocated by these modern writers.

Although these modern writers acknowledge Christ’s victory at Calvary, their teachings make the salvation of souls dependent on the outcome of some kind of direct battle between spiritual forces and beings – evil spirits on the one hand, confronted by the spiritual gifts and intercessions of Christians on the other. This battle is an invention of their own minds (which copies ideas from the realm of the occult and perhaps from fictional books, such as Frank Peretti’s novels) and it tries to add to the victory that Christ gained on the cross. In their writings, it is almost portrayed at times as equal opposing forces fighting over souls. If you can’t overcome the local territorial spirit, then the work of the Gospel and the saving of souls cannot truly be effective! In their desire for “successful methods”, these preachers and writers do not submit to God’s word and directions contained in scripture and they undermine the truth about what Christ has accomplished on the cross – all for the sake of “results”. Again, these ideas do not glorify God - they glorify the devil.

An unproven teaching which causes confusion and discouragement.

However, let me say here, that their case is not proven! It is certainly not as though they can truly show that communities have been transformed because of these teachings. Far from it! Many of the proponents of this teaching live in the U.S., yet what change has it effected there? The pastor of a large church in New York wrote a book about the work of his church and how God has blessed them. In it he recounts how he came across this modern teaching, and how he too was grieved in his heart at how such an unbiblical notion should grip the minds of the Lord’s people and be taught up and down the country. But he puts the very real and relevant question of why, if this teaching is correct, it isn’t transforming American cities? We are told by others that southern California represents the pornographic centre of the world! Where is this great change in American cities if this teaching is correct? Are things not getting worse there? But one could ask the same about many other countries, cities and towns. This teaching has been going around England for at least 15 years, as far as I am aware, but where are these great changes in communities that these teachings promise? I think many people would agree that not only society, but also the church is in a worse condition now, generally speaking, than 20 years ago. One of the factors that has caused confusion, division, heart-ache, splits in churches, as well as the disintegration of churches, is this very proliferation of new winds of doctrine!

The proponents of this teaching have made a video to convince people how effective this kind of “spiritual warfare” is. Others who have investigated the claims in this video, by visiting or getting first-hand information from these areas, tell us that many of the claims are exaggerated and often false. Those who believe in this doctrine, naturally enough also believe that it “works”, and try to show that it is their brand of praying against territorial spirits that has been the main factor when the Gospel has made an impact on particular communities. But there is no scriptural support for it and neither can it be shown to have been the “key” or “solution” to evangelism in practical terms, despite their anecdotal claims. (For extensive information on the claims and teachings in these videos, please see: www.deceptioninthechurch.com - Articles on George Otis and Transformation Videos.)

In fact a book has been written, which I mention later, precisely because there has been confusion and heart-ache resulting from these teachings. The author himself also believes in spiritual warfare against spirits, but he tells us of the discouragement and fear that has gripped Christians who had high expectations of success from this teaching, but then found it didn’t work as they had hoped and even resulted in calamities! This left them feeling vulnerable, fearful and confused! Although he tries to point out that things went wrong because of people’s own excesses and ignorance of the principles of this kind of warfare, nevertheless this book also underlines the fact that this new wind of doctrine is not what its proponents claim it to be, and it does not produce the results in the way that these modern writers would lead us to believe!

In his book “Territorial Spirits”, (pages 17,18), Wagner acknowledges that in many situations this approach does not produce the desired results. What reasons does he give? Well, he tells us that the devil “obstructs the process”. Does this mean, that it is because the devil has superior power that people don’t get saved? He doesn’t clearly explain. But he tells us of the devil’s cunning and power, and that the devil obstructs the saints, through spirits of different rank, from properly discerning God’s will! And the higher rank that a territorial spirit has, the more power is needed to overcome it!! He also tells us that many Christians are not equipped to deal with such high ranking spirits! So it seems the devil is able to hinder people discerning God’s will in this battle, and even if they do discern the type of spirit to be dealt with, yet many do not have the spiritual stature to overcome them. This gives a lot of glory and power to the devil. So the conclusion we draw from this, is that the salvation of people’s souls depends on certain gifted individuals having the power to discern things in the “spirit world”. Without the ability to “discern” the name and nature of territorial spirits and without the personal “spiritual power and stature” to overcome them in prayer, there can be no effective evangelism! Surely, if you can believe this, you can believe anything. To show how close these teachers get to occult teaching, let me
quote what he says at the end of these above comments: “...when we find that we are impotent in binding (terrestrial spirits)......we do well to search for a possible cause in the spirit world.” Look for the cause, not in scripture, not from God, but in the spirit world! Do they want us to become mediums? Witchdoctors? Spiritualists? Without realising it, this is what is happening among them. They are not walking spiritually; there is no true spiritual discernment; this is not spiritual prayer. This is deception. They are making contact, illegitimately and dangerously, with the spirit world and are being deceived. ( By “spirit world”, I mean they are making contact with evil spirits, or putting themselves into a state where they can be influenced and deceived by evil spirits.) We shall look at this a little bit more later. Here we see that in order to explain the failure of their teaching and the heartache it has caused, they simply resort to inventing further errors.

Let me mention here what I have said elsewhere, namely, we know that the Lord is building His church and He honours the preaching of His word and surely takes note when His people humble themselves in prayer and seek His face with their whole heart. It may be that God is working in some special way among people, and that some of those in leadership may hold these teachings, but His work of grace does not validate all the teachings held by the people who may be leading a work. We know this from history and we can see this principle in scripture as well. But I say again, God moving among a people in saving power does not validate every teaching held by those who happen to be in leadership; and they are a long way off from showing that these new methods really do “work” or that these methods are responsible for bringing people into the Kingdom of God!

In the matter of the spiritual background to events and why things happen or don’t happen, the scripture doesn’t always answer our questions nor does it reveal everything. And it is at this point that God warns us in Deut.29:29, that: “The hidden things belong to the Lord, but that which is revealed belongs unto us ...” We are not to intrude into matters that God has not revealed in his Word. It is His wisdom that has kept certain things out of our knowledge. But we are to give our attention wholly to those things which He has revealed. They will be of true benefit to us – in increasing our knowledge of God and in strengthening our faith. But in their efforts to secure results all the time and in every place, these modern preachers and writers intrude into things unseen, where they boast of their visions, revelations and supernatural experiences, which are the product of their own carnal minds, as we are told in Col.2:18, and they do not hold to the Head of the church, Christ Jesus. Although Paul is particularly speaking about those who want to return the saints to Jewish customs, the whole passage, Col.2:6-19, is very instructive for us concerning the matter of this modern teaching.

**A scriptural comparison – the church at prayer**

The church in Acts behaved and prayed quite differently from what these modern teachers prescribe. When there was persecution in Jerusalem, the church did not confront evil spirits in prayer. The church did not acknowledge that territorial spirits were keeping men and women from coming into the Kingdom of God. They prayed *to God* and acknowledged *His* Sovereignty and Lordship. There was opposition to the preaching of the Gospel and who would deny that the devil stirs the hardened hearts of those that don’t believe to oppose the work of God? But listen to how the church prayed in Acts 4:24-30. First they proclaim the superior wisdom and power of God over all else, getting their instruction and inspiration from the scriptures! Then they declare:

“And now Lord behold their threatenings, and grant to your servants, that with all boldness they may speak your word, by stretching forth your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of ...Jesus!”

They are threatened, but their prayers are directed towards the Lord, not against some kind of territorial spirit ruling over Jerusalem. The have a sense of God’s sovereignty and of His victory over all things, and ask, not for territorial spirits to be bound, but that they may speak His word with boldness and that the Lord might work mightily among them. But even though they acknowledge God’s sovereign rule and His victory through Christ, this does not lead them into presumption – they don’t take from God His great power and seek to use it in order to fulfill their own desires and plans for church growth. They remain submitted to God and His wisdom, acknowledging that they are only His servants. This is a church for whom Jesus is exalted high above all else, and though men and demons may rage, they remain focused on Christ and what He has accomplished through His death and resurrection – both in their thinking and praying. They do not seek to add to the complete victory of Calvary, or to rob it of its power and meaning by ascribing to “territorial spirits” a power which they do not possess! Their praying focuses on Christ and His authority, and glorifies Him, not the devil or territorial spirits. (Concerning prayer and the Church, as well as the preaching of the Gospel as God’s means of saving those who believe, please read Part 2 of the first article on “Repenting for the Sins of the Nation”.)

Of course we see that they have good reason to think and pray in this way. In Colossians 2:15, we read about Christ’s death on Calvary that, “…having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”; and
therefore God was able to “deliver us from the power of darkness and translate us into the Kingdom of His dear Son.” Col.1:13.

And in Hebrews 2:14 we are told that Jesus Christ took on flesh and blood that “through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

And the apostle John agrees with this when he says in 1 John 3:8, “…for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

Christ’s divine supremacy and authority over all things is declared in Col.1:16, “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him.”

There is no call for the church to further “spoil principalities and powers” by binding and rebuking territorial spirits as though they had “a legal right” over souls. Jesus Christ bore the sin of the whole world and therefore He is the saviour of all men (1 Tim.4:10) whether they believe and receive this salvation or not. He has purchased the forgiveness and salvation of mankind with His own blood and therefore it is written that “God was in Christ,… not imputing their trespasses unto them…” For those who would believe the gospel and be reconciled to God, God would not hold their past sins against them, 2 Cor.5:19, but freely forgive them. Those who reject and oppose God’s free salvation and hold on to their sins, they shall be counted worthy of eternal judgement. This modern teaching actually makes the blood and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, ineffective. This teaching denies Him the right and sovereignty that He has purchased and gained as the Saviour of all men through the shedding of His blood. Christ has already secured the forgiveness of all who will believe. But this modern teaching undoes the work of the cross by ascribing to territorial spirits a legal right to keep people out of God’s Kingdom, because of what they call the unconfessed and unforgiven sins of a geographical region or community! They teach that evil influences still prevail over any site where past social or other evils have been committed. Such beliefs are held by New Age psychics of today and that is where such beliefs come from rather than the Bible! They say these past evils need to be “atoned for” by Christians confessing and repenting for those sins, and applying the blood of Jesus, before the territorial spirits can be bound! So they heap one error on top of another. This matter is fully looked into in the first article, so I shall not pursue this particular matter any further here.

We all recognise that everyone in the world is not automatically now forgiven, saved and delivered from the devil’s power because of the cross. No, of course it’s not all automatic. But Christ having purchased this free and full salvation from sin, condemnation and the devil’s power, the Bible now boldly declare that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes! Rom.1:16. This is what the scriptures teach, and because of the cross this salvation comes without the need to identify and bind so-called territorial spirits – except if you want to undo the efficacy of the blood of Jesus and His victory over principalities and powers.

However, to show that I am not exaggerating the seriousness of this matter when I say that this teaching represents an attack on the Gospel of Christ, let us look at what a leading figure of this new theology (George Otis Jr.) declares. In lecturing to a YWAM gathering in Tacoma, Washington in 1981, he says, among other things,

“…Christ has not redeemed us by giving His life as a ransom for our sins in order that He might release us. If we accept the premise that Jesus literally purchased… our salvation with His blood… and He paid the Father… then this approach, first of all portrays God the Father as being vindictive and blood-thirsty and totally incompatible with biblical forgiveness.”

“For forgiveness… is the relaxation of a legitimate claim… it would be impossible for God to have, as one hymn put it, “paid the debt and forgave me all my sins.””

“The essence of Christ’s Atonement existed in His obedience to the moral law on behalf of sinners. Christ obeyed during his life the moral law for us and that’s really the essence of the Atonement.”

Although he does not now apparently express himself in these terms, yet it seems that he hasn’t renounced these ideas as such, and some believe that what he has written since then also contains echoes of these ideas. (Recognition for above and for further information on Otis and his teaching, as well as on the video mentioned in this article, see: www.bibleguide.com and www.deceptioninthechurch.com and the articles on “George Otis, Jr.”). The organisation that Otis heads is also responsible for producing the video (they have now produced a second one) which I mentioned earlier, which purports to show how certain communities have been transformed through this teaching about territorial spirits. Otis is also reputed as the originator of the idea of “spiritual mapping”, which we shall look at when considering Ezekiel chapter 4.
As I have pointed out, the foundational truths concerning the sinfulness of man and his need of repentance and regeneration – and the nature and purpose of Jesus’ death on the cross – become at least obscured if not directly opposed by these new teachings! I hope you can see from the statements above, that they represent both an attack on, and a denial of, the salvation that Christ has dearly purchased with His own blood. It is a denial of the sinfulness of man which separates him from God and it is a denial of the need and nature of our wonderful salvation from sin and its dominion. Peter tells us that we have been redeemed (bought back) with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18,19), and Paul tells us we have been bought with a price (1 Cor.6:20), and much, much more could be written to illustrate this truth. But these modern ideas result in another gospel! It is a false gospel! Amazing as such statements above are, they represent a logical basis (however erroneous!) for the belief that territorial spirits are the real or main problem in preventing people from responding to the Gospel, and not their own hardness and sinfulness of heart. These false teachings also open the door for these modern preachers and intercessors to ignore God’s sovereign power and wisdom in the salvation of souls and to apply their own methods and efforts in an attempt to achieve ‘results’.

Another Gospel?

This now brings us to the second fundamental error of this teaching, which is perhaps more dangerous than anything else in the way it undermines and attacks the very heart of the Gospel. This teaching makes the central problem, not the sin, hardness and unbelief of my own heart, but spiritual evil forces which prevent me from responding to God. It is not so much me and the state of my heart that is the problem, but wicked spirits that keep me back from God and bound in darkness. Under this new teaching, sinners have now become (innocent?) victims of evil spirits, and it is not so much the state of their own hearts that is the problem, but these territorial spirits which are holding these sinners back from responding! It is not so much now the sin of the individual that is the problem, but the sin of the community or city for which territorial spirits are responsible! Because they believe these things, they also believe and teach that the chief means of bringing salvation to people is not the preaching of the Gospel, but the binding of territorial spirits! The preaching of the Gospel takes secondary place and is only effectual once evil spirits have been bound! This teaching represents another Gospel. It is an attack on the very reason why Jesus died on the cross. It is a denial of Christ’s own teaching concerning man, concerning sin, concerning the devil and concerning judgement.

Some of these modern writers are also strongly influenced by worldly humanistic teaching and New Age thinking. Humanism sees people as victims of past wrongs, injustices and bad experiences, resulting in what they call ‘low self-esteem’ and ‘hurts’. People are not regarded as bad in themselves, but rather any bad actions on their part are seen as the consequence of past bad experiences. They say that people are suffering because of all these wrongs and bad experiences of the past and that we need to discover and understand the nature of these ‘hurts’ and ‘wrongs’ to bring ‘healing’ and restoration to these people. Many modern preachers and teachers borrow unashamedly and directly from such humanistic ideas which at their heart are anti-Gospel and anti-God. They do not represent God’s love, compassion and truth, as they have no basis in scripture and provide no true cure for the condition of the human heart.

There are New Age thinkers who also believe that a geographical area can be influenced by evil forces because of past wrongs and injustices that occurred there. Again, these modern preachers and teachers are reflecting New Age outlooks and not Bible truths. These New Age outlooks are themselves derived from pagan religions and occult beliefs, where people believe a geographical area can be troubled by evil spirits because of past crimes committed there. Thus to bring peace to that area you have to either make good past wrongs in order to appease those spirits or break their power. Can you find a single such example or such a teaching in the Bible? When Israel sinned, the judgement that came upon the physical land of Israel was an indication of God’s judgement. The answer was repentance towards God, not deliverance from ‘territorial spirits’. I know that the devil may be at work in people’s lives to keep them in sin and darkness, but today peace is brought by the proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to men and women and by them repenting and believing this Gospel. However, some of these modern teachers talk of wrong or sinful ‘corporate agreements’ (I believe this refers to ‘corporate sins’) made by past generations, that are the result of hatred, fear, pain, grief, loss, anger, hurts and injustices. They tell us these things are passed down from one generation to another, giving rise and power to territorial spirits who operate over that geographical area because of these ‘wrong agreements’. Their whole language paints a picture of people who are the victims, and suffering because they are under the power of evil spirits who operate in their lives because of the wrongs of previous generations – and of course nothing can really be done for these people until these evil powers are dealt with! But the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ comes to people with the message that they are to repent of their own sins, which are the real barrier between them and God. However, one writer says about a place he visited that a particularly terrible thing must have happened there in the past to cause all the fear, pain, loss, anger, etc. that he saw among the people there, and because he actually saw the ruling territorial spirit in the sky! His answer was to lead the church in
prayer, confession and repentance concerning the ‘wrong agreements’ that people had made in the past in that area. This was supposed to bring deliverance from the territorial spirits and also a kind of ‘reconciliation’ between people, thus allowing the Gospel then to have effect there. This clearly shows how this modern teaching sees people as virtually innocent victims of the past and that it is these past wrongs together with the associated territorial spirits that are responsible for their woes. Whatever human factors there are in these human situations – and they can be terrible - the Bible in general and the NT in particular knows nothing of this approach, or of this kind of teaching or this kind of praying. It is not human factors that are the real problem, whether present or past, nor the territorial spirits associated with them; God addresses the spiritual condition of our own heart and provides the remedy through the Gospel of His Son Jesus Christ.

King David got it right when he prayed, “Against you, you only have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight.” Psalm 51:4. He had done many evil things to others on this occasion but he realised that he had primarily sinned against God. His own sin against God was the chief thing and that needed to get put right first before he could properly do anything else. David didn’t first approach God about his sin against others. He certainly didn’t try to excuse his sins by referring to what others had done to him in his life – which is an idea that these modern teachings could promote! His real problem was his own sin against God. And this is the real problem for every human being. God is full of compassion and He understands us and what we’ve been through. But He speaks through it all in the Person of His Son bidding us repent and turn from our own sin, which in the light of Calvary, is the real problem – not ‘territorial spirits’. But these modern writers subvert biblical truth. Instead of the major problem being my own sin against God, these writers make excuses for the sin of men and women by portraying them as victims who are suffering because of past wrongs. The Bible does not do this. When Daniel, whom these modern writers love to quote, was praying, he never mentioned or confessed any injustices committed between Israel and other nations or tribes. His only concern was the sins of Israel ( that is, God’s people ) against God! ( This kind of praying by Daniel is never undertaken on behalf of unbelievers, sinners or the world – whether it be a community, city or country - anywhere in the Bible. That is the invention of modern writers! ) Essentially, Israel was not in bondage because of ‘historic injustices’ between communities or nations; it was in captivity because of its sin against God. ( Any injustices that Israel had committed would only be seen in the context of Israel sinning against God.) Historic injustices had not given territorial spirits power to send Israel into captivity – the Captivity was God’s own judgement on Israel, and God’s own mercy was going to restore them back to their own land. ( We shall look at the prayers of Daniel later but please see also the first article where the matter of Israel’s sins is further explored. ) In these days the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to whosoever believes, because Christ has borne our sin and the judgement associated with it, and spoiled all principalities and powers!

The simple fact is that from the days of the Apostles down to this day people have been, and are being saved, without this teaching being known or applied - people who have the most awful backgrounds and who come from communities where there have been all sorts of ‘wrongs’ and suffering have known salvation and deliverance without the help of these strange doctrines. Praise God! Down the centuries God has been saving those who believe through the ‘foolishness’ of preaching Christ and Him crucified. Why do these modern preachers and teachers want to change both the content of God’s truth and God’s declared method of saving people?

One writer tells us about a prominent church leader in South America who normally prays on his own for about a week before beginning a campaign in order to identify and bind the principalities and powers over the town he has come to. When he feels he has achieved his purpose, he then holds public meetings, announcing to the people that they are now free to come to Christ! ( These people exalt themselves and their teaching above Christ and above the apostles, who never made such claims to people they came to preach to! Christ and the apostles came preaching the Good News and exhorting men and women to repent! ) In other words, they are teaching that the real problem is not the sin and hardness of my own heart, but a territorial spirit, which needs to be discerned and bound! It’s not the resistance in my own heart that’s the problem, but the resistance of territorial spirits that keep me out of the Kingdom of God. It is territorial spirits that are now responsible for the pride, lust and hardness of my heart – as well as my unbelief – not me! Once someone has bound the territorial spirits over a community, then sinners are “free” to come to Christ! ( I am well aware that there are towns and communities where sin and idolatry seem to abound and it seems that the devil has the whole area in his grip, but let me say again that the scriptures do not exhort us to this modern kind of approach in order ‘to deal’ with such situations. See comments on the book of the Revelation below.)

Other evangelists will not preach in a city until they feel they have overcome in prayer the territorial spirits that hold that city in their power, and one prominent church leader and a promoter of these errors declares, “I knew beyond any shadow of a doubt that great preaching wouldn’t cause souls to be saved and the church to grow...No, only the tearing down of strongholds that were holding back people from experiencing God in their lives would cause the church to grow.” ( Article by Larry Lea in “Territorial Spirits” by Wagner, page 91, excerpted from Charisma & Christian life © 1989, Strang Communications Company. Italics mine ).
Do not these people blaspheme by opposing Christ Himself? The above writer is absolutely sure that even great preaching cannot save souls or build the church! But the Son of God told His disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised shall be saved.” Mark 16:15,16. The apostle Paul echoes the same truth, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.” Rom.1:16. And again in 1 Cor.1:17,18,21, “For Christ sent me not to baptise but to preach the Gospel……for the preaching of the cross……is the power of God unto us who are saved…..it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” Many other scriptures could be quoted to confirm God’s own declared means of saving the lost and building His church. But these modern writers directly oppose these truths with their doctrines. Christ didn’t tell His disciples to “Go and identify and bind the territorial spirits that are preventing people from being saved.”!

Although these writers very much believe in the preaching of the Gospel as the means for saving souls, yet they make the binding of territorial spirits the primary and foundational activity of the church, and the preaching of the Gospel becomes secondary and wholly dependent on this approach of praying against territorial spirits. This is as gross an error as saying, “Yes, it is only through Jesus Christ that you can be saved, but you need to be circumcised first!” Remember, that in the Galatian churches they believed many good and right things concerning Christ and the forgiveness and salvation that we have in Him, but they added anti-Gospel teaching that undermined and threatened the validity of their whole faith! Paul says that they had become “bewitched” by those teachings. And although these modern preachers, who teach warfare against territorial spirits, may also believe many good and right things as well, and however much they have been genuinely involved in God’s work, nevertheless this teaching concerning territorial spirits is a bewitching falsehood that is undermining the faith of the Gospel.

This teaching does not come from Jesus or from the apostles. Or what shall we say? Did Jesus fail to discern and bind the ruling spirits over Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida? There was very little response to His teaching there even though He had done most of His mighty works in them; Matthew 11:20-24. Can we blame the lack of response of the people of these cities on territorial spirits, or on a failure to discern the names of those territorial spirits? Or did territorial spirits have authority to “block” the ministry of Jesus because He hadn’t yet died on Calvary? No! None of these ideas are true. Jesus said that if the works which He did in those cities had been done in Tyre and Sidon, then they would have repented long ago, and even Sodom would have remained unto this day! Jesus upbraids the people of these cities of Israel because they didn’t repent. He upbraids them because of the hardness of their hearts. In the face of all He had said and done they still didn’t turn away from their sin. They refused to believe Him and to let Him change their lives. It was their own hardness of heart and unbelief that resulted in their lack of response, and it was for this that Jesus pronounced such a severe judgement on them. They themselves were to blame and not the devil or territorial spirits! If we are looking for explanations, this is the teaching of scripture. In the Acts of the Apostle we don’t read of Paul shutting himself away for days on his own to engage by direct combat evil spirits, before preaching the Gospel in a city – as though this were a necessary strategy! No! We know that he was a man of constant prayer, but on arriving in towns and cities, normally we read of him going straight into the synagogues or market places to preach Christ Jesus to people. When the Jews resisted the truth of the Gospel, Paul put the blame squarely on their own hardness of heart, Acts 13:45,46.

When Paul was at Athens and saw the whole city given over to idolatry, he didn’t enter the “spirit world” to bind the spirit of idolatry. No. He went into the synagogue and the market place and preached Christ and the resurrection! Acts 17:16-19. Not many were converted at Athens and after leaving there he went to the city of Corinth. Later, when writing to the Corinthians, he tells them that he had come to them, after leaving Athens, determined not to know anything except “Jesus Christ and Him crucified”, 1 Cor.2:2. Perhaps this determination of his was strengthened in him when he saw the futility of human wisdom that so many at Athens were caught up in, which kept them from receiving God’s truth. Whether this is so or not, Paul makes clear to us why it is that some people do not receive the Gospel of truth:

“For the Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness.”

He then goes on to tell them that not many wise, mighty or noble are called, 1 Cor.1:22-29. He clearly points out that it is human wisdom, or we could say pride, that keeps people from accepting the truth of God – not a territorial spirit! It is wonderful to see how the Bible itself is the best commentary on the Bible. The Jews want some kind of sign or miracle and the Greeks glorify their own wisdom – people with such attitudes are not willing to receive the word of God with meekness of heart, but exalt their own approach against the truth of God. In the light of these truths, we can see why it is that not many people responded at Athens. In verse 18 Paul declares, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness, but unto us who are being saved
it is the power of God.” In 2 Cor.4:3,4 he expands this idea a bit more, saying that the Gospel is hid to them who are lost. Then he goes on to explain, “in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them that don’t believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ…should shine unto them.”

In this passage he is explaining that the devil has ground for his evil work because of the unbelief, or hardness of heart, of people. It is people’s own hardness of heart that gives the devil the opportunity to deceive them and keep them captive to sin. Here Paul is explaining the spiritual condition of those who resist the Gospel. This passage does not represent a strategy for “spiritual warfare”. Paul is not telling us here that we should “bind” the god of this world through intercessory prayer so that these ( otherwise innocent? ) people can be “set free” to believe the Gospel.

In harmony with this, are the words of Jesus Himself. In talking about “His hour”, which refers to His death on the cross, in John 12:31 He says, “Now is the judgement of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”

This truth is repeated when Jesus talks about the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will convict men of judgement because, “…the prince of this world is judged.” John 16:11

Jesus directly links the judgement of the prince of this world, which He was going to accomplish at Calvary, with the judgement of the world, that is, of the people in it. Bearing the sin of the world on the cross, Jesus would rob death of its power("the sting of death is sin", 1 Cor.15:56; 2 Tim.1:10 ), and He would undo him who had the power of death, namely, the devil, Heb.2:14. For everyone that believes Christ Jesus, both death and the devil have lost their right and authority over them, because the Lamb of God has borne their sins - all their sins - and so robbed death and the devil of any right over them. More than this, since Christ has died for all mankind, He has a right over all of them, and therefore commands all men everywhere to repent! ( Acts 17:30 – we are at Athens again!) From the beginning of His ministry and of preaching the Gospel, Christ's exhorted people to repent, and the Apostles carried on with the same message, Mark 1:14,15, Acts 2:38. Are these modern writers saying that men and women can't repent until the local territorial spirit is bound? Is that why the people in Capernaum failed to repent, because Christ had failed to bind the territorial spirit over Capernaum? This teaching makes nonsense of the NT! Christ spoiled principalities and powers at the cross because He remained without sin and yet bore the sin of the whole world, and His resurrection is the seal of our eternal salvation, 1 Cor.15:12-22. Having robbed the devil of his power, Christ can extend, by the grace of God, the power of His own Life in those that believe. Having cleansed them from sin, Jesus also breaks the dominion of sin in our lives by the power of His resurrection life in us.

"Now is the judgement of this world", because the devil and his power have been judged and annulled at the cross! In other words, you can't blame the devil – not where it counts! Yes, of course the devil keeps people in darkness, sin and bondage – that is, people who don’t believe. And he only comes to rob, steal and to destroy peoples' lives. But because of Calvary, you can no longer say that the way to Christ is barred to people until the hindering territorial spirits are bound! This only undoes what Christ came to die for! No. The onus falls on you and me to believe the Gospel. If we don’t believe, of course we give the devil and sin opportunity and ground to work in our lives. Of course the devil is still an active, evil force in the world, even as the scriptures declare. But the scriptures also declare loud and clear that Jesus Christ has overcome sin, the devil and death, and bids men and women to accept a free way of escape through the offer of salvation in Him, that is presented through the Gospel.

Because of these things also, Jesus said that this is the work of God, “…that you believe on Him, whom He has sent”, John 6:29. For what reason will the Holy Spirit convict men of sin? Jesus says it is because they believe not on Him, John 16:9. This now is the sin for which men and women will be judged. Other sins Jesus can set us free from because of what He accomplished at Calvary, but the only way to receive this salvation is by believing Him, and if we don’t believe Him, then we are lost. Paul sums it up wonderfully for us in Eph. 2:8, “For you were saved by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” And what kind of people were these Ephesians? Well, Paul tells us in verses 1-3 of this second chapter – they were dead in trespasses and sin; they lived according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience and were like others, children of wrath. So here we have a people sinning and pleasing themselves, under the devil’s control and influence because of their disobedience, and therefore under God’s judgement. And we are told this is the condition of all who don’t believe. But how did things change for these Ephesians? Well, He who called Paul, also sent him to the Gentiles to “open their eyes, and to turn them form the power of darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins…”", Acts 26:18. This was part of the ministry that God, who defeated principalities and powers through Christ at Calvary, gave Paul. Paul didn’t have to earn or fight to get this ministry and authority by
binding territorial spirits! No! Paul was among the Jews first for three months in Ephesus and then among the Gentiles for two years, speaking, discussing, persuading and preaching. And many people turned to the Lord! And how were these Ephesians saved? Well, Paul tells us in chapter one, verse 13 — they put their trust in Christ after they heard the word of truth, the Gospel of their salvation! It was through Paul preaching the Gospel of Christ to them and them believing the Gospel, that they were turned from the power of Satan to God! Praise God!

When Christ went to His own country, Mark 6:1-6, He could do no mighty works there apart from healing a few people. Was this because the territorial spirit was too strong? No! The Bible gives us the reason — Jesus “was amazed because of their unbelief!” He wasn’t amazed because of the strength of some territorial spirit; He was amazed at the hardness of heart and unbelief of the people there! Mt. 13:58 tells us, “...He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” It is faith in Christ that brings salvation, not the binding of territorial spirits; and faith comes by hearing the word of God, Rom.10:17!

Thus Jesus tells us in John 3:18,19: “He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he hasn’t believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgement, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

The teaching of Jesus is that the chief reason for judgement is that people don’t believe Him, and the reason they don’t, in the end, come to Him, is that they love their sin. If they are like this, then of course the devil will do everything he can to harden and seal them into this condition. But it is their own hardness of heart that is responsible for all this. The prince of this world has been judged!

This modern teaching simply causes confusion and makes a mockery of the teaching of the Bible. It makes territorial spirits responsible for people’s evil behaviour and unbelief. If only we can bind these territorial spirits then people will be free to respond to the Gospel and our churches will grow like you’ve never seen before. This fundamentally contradicts the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. These modern teachers say that if a city is particularly characterised by greed, pride, alcoholism or lust, then it is a territorial spirit of greed, pride, alcoholism or lust that rules over that city and this needs to be bound in intercessory prayer. There is nothing like this in the Bible. What? Rebuke a territorial spirit of greed or lust and then the people of the city will be set free from these sins? What? The real problem is not in people’s hearts but in the power of territorial spirits? This is not biblical teaching. The Bible recognises the real problem to be the human heart, or in the human heart. The real problem is not that we are controlled by some outside territorial spirit – the real problem is the sin in my own heart and my love of it. The real problem is the hardness of my own heart. These modern teachers think that if you bind a “spirit of alcoholism” in an area or community, then the power of alcohol addiction will be broken over the whole community enabling all people to be set free from this! You cannot banish a “spirit of alcoholism” from an area as if that is what is keeping people in this sin! What are they thinking? But you can preach the Gospel to all and if by God’s grace many individuals respond and are converted, then you may certainly see a big decline, if not the disappearance, of certain vices, as a result of people turning from their sin to the Lord! Acts 19:19,23-27. At Ephesus many burned their books of witchcraft and the worship of the idol of Diana dramatically declined – but this happened as a result of many turning away from their sin through Paul’s preaching (verse 26)! Throughout the whole Bible God’s word comes directly to people’s hearts and sees the real problem and resistance as lying there. We can mention Jeremiah 4:1-4 and Luke 13:34,35 as two examples among a multitude of others in the Bible. Though God’s people are to pray to Him, there is no teaching regarding the binding of geographical spirits as though these represent a force keeping people in bondage and stopping them from responding to God.

This is another fundamental error of this modern teaching — it is dangerously dualistic. The problem of good and evil is seen as a struggle between two opposing cosmic or spirit powers, and not seen as responsible choices that people can make as those created in the image of God! It’s as if sinners are not really the problem and they’re not considered as playing the significant part in their conversion. The battle is not in, or for their hearts, but somewhere in the “sky”! It’s not so much my personal sin and unbelief that is the problem, but I am caught up in some supernatural struggle between spirit forces - I’m there, in the middle, almost like some innocent victim, just needing a superior spirit power to overcome a local spirit power to set me free! What a sad, confused teaching of delusion this is. The gospel of Christ is the power of God to everyone that believes. The salvation of souls is not dependent on overcoming any territorial spirits! But these modern teachers have now invented a “new” gospel of redemption through spiritual warfare!

As I have said in the first two articles, these teachings are carnal. They focus on outward things, not the truly inward. They portray the devil as wanting to take territory that he regards as his. And they say this is geographic territory! The devil is the god of this world since this is the sphere of his work, but whatever angelic beings,
principaliates and powers there are, the scripture makes it clear that the ground that the devil wants to possess is our hearts, minds and souls! Demons don’t want to inhabit dry dust and air, they want to take up residence in human beings, Matthew 12:43-45. They find no rest in dry places but want to dwell in people. And this is the “territory” that Jesus died for and shed His blood, to prepare a place for Him and the Father to dwell! John 14:18-23; 17:20-23. **We** are to be a habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph.2:22. Through believing the Gospel of Christ we are forgiven and are brought into the kingdom of God by a new birth! But the devil wants to make us a habitation of his spirit – not through the power of a superior territorial spirit, but through wanting us to believe the lies that he suggests to us; by tempting us to go our own way and please ourselves; by tempting us not to believe God. This is the battleground. And to this battleground of our hearts and consciences, God commended His own love to us by sending His own Son to die for us and bid us turn away from evil and receive His free salvation – it is a gift of God!

But the deception of these teachings gets deeper and deeper. After they believe they have bound the ruling territorial spirits over a town, some of them then appoint “gatekeepers” - people who will pray to keep evil spirits from re-entering the town. To this end they will also stand at strategic points in and about the city – on major roads in and out of the city and so on! They impute to regional spirits a power to control whole communities as if the people have no choice in the matter and to such an extent that even the Gospel of Christ cannot effectively reach and save them! This is not the Gospel of Christ. They are playing occult games without realising it! So of course they believe if you can bind these spirits, then God’s Spirit can reign over the region; people are now free to respond to the Gospel and Christians can then establish God’s rule in the local social order - in the various governmental and social structures of the town! This is seen as establishing God’s kingdom on earth and “winning back” territory from the devil! These new intercessors are fighting for land – dust and earth – that they say needs winning back from the devil. Some of these writers have another teaching, which put simply, states that because of his sin in the Garden of Eden, Adam lost control of the territory of the earth to the devil, who then had legitimate rights not only to rule over territory, but the people who live in that territory! They say Jesus died on the cross to win back control over this dust and earth – geographic territory. **But**, we are further told by these modern writers, that the cross has not yet spoiled all these principalities and powers. No, we need to use the power the Lord has now given us, to bind these evil spirits that reign over a region and then the people of that region will be free to receive God’s reign! This is a carnal gospel. According to this teaching, the primary battle is not for the souls of men and women, but for dust! And as soon as we have bound the spirit that rules over that piece of dust or land, then the people who tread or live on that piece of dust will be free to respond to the Gospel and come into God’s Kingdom! All these carnal teachings blind people to the truth of the scriptures, concerning the nature of sin, salvation and the Kingdom of God.

Let me say here, that I think we all understand that a certain area or community may be characterised by certain specific sins that appear to predominate. And of course anyone born in such an environment can be influenced by the sinful customs of a community, and these sinful customs are no doubt inspired by the devil and he can use them to stir up opposition to the Gospel in those who don’t believe, Acts 19:23-28. But exactly such were many of the communities and cities that the apostle Paul went to. There was prevailing idolatry in many towns. Occult religions and witchcraft abounded in certain communities. There was greed, pride and uncleanness. Corinth was a place characterised by such things. But combating territorial spirits to release men and women from their idolatry, immorality or witchcraft, has no biblical foundation at all.

Truly, the apostle Paul chooses his words accurately when he asks the Galatian churches, “who has bewitched you?” These teachings are like an enchantment, and the more one learns of these modern teachings, the more one sees how they simply resemble what one would consider to be the teaching and methods of the occult or of mediums. As these teachings spread around the world, they perhaps develop their own characteristics from one country to another, as people, in their enthusiasm for something new, apply them in different ways. For example, there is a magazine that encourages and exhorts all the Christians to pray against territorial spirits over certain cities and towns. This magazine busies itself with finding out just what kind of gross sins, especially witchcraft, are being committed in the country, and then publishes these findings so that Christians can pray against those particular territorial spirits which are supposed to be responsible for all those sins, even exhorting Christians to face the geographical location of a city as they rebuke the evil spirits. **But** the leading books written on this subject do not encourage Christians generally to enter into “spiritual warfare” against territorial spirits. On the contrary, they warn against this and tell us that only mature, “properly gifted” and “called” Christians should enter into this battle. Although they say that this warfare is essential for the successful spread of the Gospel, yet they declare that it is a risky, scary and dangerous warfare, incurring many casualties! All this is a baptism into superstition and deception.

**Spiritual Warfare – a dangerous activity?**
Why should this warfare be “scary” or “risky” or “dangerous”? Well, they say that “ordinary” Christians do not have the authority and maturity to deal with the power of “higher-ranking” territorial spirits. They also tell us that there have been and will be “casualties” in this “warfare”! These writers tell us of pastors who they believe have fallen into sin because of engaging in “strategic-level spiritual warfare”! These writers tell us of marriage break-ups, illnesses, immorality, people making shipwreck of their faith and even of deaths – because of their involvement in this kind of warfare! (Whether these problems really arose because of people’s involvement in this kind of warfare is another question and a debatable point!) There has been so much confusion and heart-ache because of these teachings that a leader of a certain Christian Ministry in America has written a book about it, (“Needless Casualties of War” by John Paul Jackson, Kingsway Publications, Copyright © John Paul Jackson 1999. ). He is also in favour of warfare against spirits, but in his book he makes some very good points and warns against excesses, which he claims are responsible for terrible tragedies in the lives of Christian people. But the belief in this false doctrine of binding of territorial spirits, blinds all these writers to the truth revealed in the scriptures, and they easily depart from, and show no real regard for what the Bible teaches in order to justify these errors. They spread erroneous teachings; people follow these teachings and apparently get into serious trouble; so these teachers invent new errors in order to explain why there are casualties! So, even the writer just mentioned explains that “normally” Christians are in Christ Jesus, Col.3:3, but if we get involved in any kind of spiritual warfare, then we are exposed as a target to demonic powers! (p.42). He says that even just praying to God concerning demonic forces is a form of spiritual warfare! It’s like a fox, who putting his head out of the safety of his hole, becomes a possible prey for a roaming predator! These are the kind of delusions that these modern writers spread. This is an attack on the scriptural revelation concerning our safety and salvation in Christ. What? We are “normally” in Christ, but when we engage in spiritual warfare we are not in Christ? Or not completely in Christ, just partly in Him?! What? And so we become the targets of evil spirits who can cause marriage break-ups, illnesses and death if we aren’t careful?! This is nothing but a baptism into superstitious and occult teachings. The NT teaches the opposite of this teaching, namely, it is only by walking in all the armour of God and fighting the good fight of faith, that we abide safe from the devil’s fiery darts – this is true spiritual warfare and has to do with our spiritual walk, and not with fighting against evil spirits in prayer, as we shall see later in Eph.6:10-18.

The scriptures neither teach such deceptions, nor do they promote or instil this kind of fear into our hearts. We are told that “greater is He that is in us than he who is in the world”, and that nothing can “separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus”, and this includes principalities and powers! We are “seated together in Christ Jesus in the heavenlies” and our lives are “hid with Christ in God”. Many are the encouragements and promises of God assuring us of nothing but safety and blessing when we keep His word and believe Him. We read nothing about being attacked by evil spirits or of our lives being damaged because we pray as the scriptures exhort us to! The bible does not acknowledge any “casualties” among those who pray. Or can you find any exhortation to prayer in the Bible that warns us about possible “casualties”? Or where does the Bible refer to a special, elite group of Christians, who alone are called to spiritual warfare, because it is too dangerous for the ordinary Christians? This is what they teach, but it is simply bringing people into a madhouse of superstition and error.

All the exhortations to pray in the NT are to all believers and none of the exhortations contain any warnings that it might be “dangerous” to pray, or that a special kind of praying can only be carried out by believers with a special calling!

What is this special gifting that these intercessors are meant to have, according to this teaching? We are told that they need to be mature Christians and that they must particularly have the “gift” of discerning the name and nature of territorial spirits and an ability to “hear from God”, who also communicates to them what spirits can, and need to be bound. These “gifts” are considered essential for spiritual warfare. So, these intercessors will spend days or weeks in prayer in an attempt to discern the name or type of territorial spirits that rule over a city and wait on God concerning what spirits can be prayed against. Some of them testify that they feel they enter another realm, where they encounter evil spirits. Sometimes they will see these evil spirits, either as in a vision or even physically. They can appear as horrible creatures and we are told that the “conflict” can sometimes be fierce. One pastor argued with and challenged an evil spirit about how many streets in the city he – the evil spirit - should give up! (Presumably, those people who lived in the streets that this evil spirit “surrendered” to the prayer warrior, could respond to the Gospel. In the streets that the evil spirit didn't give up, people couldn't be saved!) After they believe they have overcome and bound these territorial spirits, they then proceed to hold meetings believing that people are now free to come to God!

The dangers of these modern teachings – erroneous teachings leading to deceiving experiences.

They say that this kind of “spiritual warfare” is essential for the success of the Gospel. Of course this is a
delusion. But they then tell us that there will be “casualties” among Christians, because many Christians are not “equipped properly” for this kind of warfare or they don’t understand “how to conduct” this kind of warfare! But the idea that being involved in true spiritual warfare can result in an evil spirit attacking you and destroying your family life, is an irresponsible and unbiblical teaching. This is more like some kind of occult teaching that can only produce fear in hearts. Whether the cause of these calamities that we are told befall Christians, is their involvement in this kind of unscriptural spiritual warfare, is a debatable point, as I have said, so I would now like to make two serious points.

Firstly, all sorts of problems will of course occur in our lives if we don’t live by God’s word. In Ephesians 4:11-14, Paul talks about ministries being given by God to the church so that we all might attain to maturity in Christ. We are to grow and to become strong in the knowledge of Christ, and not remain as little children or as carnal people who are carried about by every wind of doctrine, looking for the next “new thing” to excite us and so become the victim of the cunning deceptions of men.

There has been a proliferation of dangerous “winds of doctrine” or serious errors in the churches for some years now. These errors either originate or find strong support from believers in the Americas. These teachings are not based on God’s word but are the product of people’s own imagination and “private revelations”, as well as their own personal experiences, that have no true parallel in scripture. These doctrines are propagated by some “well-known” names, some of whom are the leaders of large organisations with access to much money which all helps them to spread their message. Others are then carried away with these winds of doctrine, not considering what the Bible actually says or teaches, and since they depart from being instructed by God’s word it is no surprise that their conduct also becomes carnal. If we depart from God’s word, then we shall also depart from holy and sanctified living. Jesus said, “Sanctify them through your truth; your word is truth.” John 17:17. People’s lives are not being built on the Rock of Christ Jesus, on the rock of obeying God’s word, so it is no great wonder that many are encountering trouble in their lives. There seems to be a widespread departure from the word of God in these days which is resulting in lifestyles among Christians that are carnal and unstable, with people falling into all kinds of sins and pitfalls and piercing themselves through with many sorrows. In this context, I think it is easy for these writers to say that people are encountering problems in their lives “because of” involvement in this kind of spiritual warfare, because there are many who already have problems anyway. But the real cause of their problems might indeed lie elsewhere.

Let me make a general point before introducing my second major consideration. A consequence of not believing and living by the word of God is, as we see, carnal behaviour. If we persist in carnal behaviour without giving heed to God’s word, without taking notice of the warning signs in our own behaviour, without mortifying the deeds of the flesh or putting off the “old man”, without turning away from unholy and ungracious behaviour and turning to God, then there will inevitably be certain consequences. We will be living a life that lacks that deep and abiding joy and peace of the Lord, which doesn’t depend on our circumstances, but on us walking and living in the Spirit, on us growing in grace and on obeying God’s word. Circumstances will tend to get on top of us and we will fail to recognise God’s hand and goodness in our daily lives. We will feel troubled, perhaps depressed and condemned, as well as feeling unloved, unwanted and useless. We will lack grace in dealing and being with other people. The other thing that will happen is that we will become bored, if not disillusioned, with the truth of God, as it is in Christ, as well as becoming bored with the ways of God. I refer to the condition of Israel in the wilderness. They persisted in disobeying and not believing God. They got bored with His ways and the truths He was trying to teach them. It is interesting that Paul writes to the Corinthians and warns them about falling into the same state as Israel in the wilderness. 1 Cor.10:1-12. The result among the Israelites was that they became bored with the ways that God was leading them, and they became bored with God’s message through Moses. They lusted after something new, something more, something instant, something that would appeal to their flesh, something that would entertain them. In the end, they left the true God and made themselves a golden calf as their new god. They provided themselves with entertainment – music and dancing, food and drink! This they loved but not the ways of God. Among the Corinthians there were those who considered Paul’s preaching boring – they considered his presence and ministry unimpressive, 2 Cor.10:10. They didn’t want him back at Corinth. They wanted something more exciting. They too were behaving carnally and loved things that appealed to the flesh. In this condition, they too were keen on anything new that came with some sort of power – any kind of power – and were ready to receive it, even though it represented another gospel and another Jesus. “Just keep us excited”, might have been the inner cry.

This is not unlike things today, where Christians, who are not finding the grace of God in their lives, who feel unfulfilled, frustrated or empty, are forever looking for something new, something dramatic, something that will fill the emptiness inside, something that will provide a quick and easy answer and that puts the blame for my impoverished spiritual state, not on me but on something else! And instead of shepherds recognising the great need there is for preaching “Christ and Him crucified”, some leaders are themselves in this impoverished state as they themselves testify in their books. They talk of being “burnt out, frustrated, unfulfilled, empty and
depressed", until they came across some new move of God or “wave of the Spirit", that filled them up again – for a time. But of course, inevitably they find that one experience in itself cannot keep you filled or bring spiritual maturity into your life, so they soon become somewhat dry, empty or frustrated again. But instead of looking for the answer in believing and keeping God’s word, they run after another “quick solution", after the next move, or any move of God or “wave of the Spirit", as they call it. So the preaching of “Christ and Him crucified" is becoming more and more rare, as both leaders of certain movements together with multitudes who follow them, chase after the latest “anointing", the latest “wave" of the Spirit, the latest wind of doctrine and the latest “experience"; ever seeking that maturity and abiding stability in Christ, but never finding it. Ever seeking God as they chase the latest thing, but never really finding Him. This whole cycle is like the taking of drugs, where you have to increase the dose with time, in order to get the same kind of excitement. So this state of things keeps the Lord’s people in a state of spiritual infancy and carnality, which then exposes them to deceiving spirits and leads them into ever worse deceptions and teachings that are not of God.

So, we see that carnal teaching also leads to carnal behaviour, and carnal behaviour results in failure and frustration in our spiritual life. Instead of repentance and people looking in God’s word for the answer, this failure and frustration results in a craving for an “experience" – any experience - that will "lift them up", that will comfort and thrill them, that will take away their disappointments. So, not being based on God’s word, these people expose themselves to deception. It is not only erroneous teachings that are the issue here, but deceiving experiences.

This now brings us to the second area of deception which concerns this teaching of territorial spirits. Some of these preachers and writers report of experiences they have had, but they are not of God at all. But their teachings stem from these experiences, which are produced by deceiving spirits! Not only do they teach these errors but they also want others to follow them into the same experiences. This is very dangerous ground. Now, I do believe that people can get into serious trouble by following this approach to spiritual warfare – not because they are misunderstanding a legitimate and commendable scriptural principle or strategy, but because this whole approach and methodology is illegitimate and unscriptural. It leads people into false experiences. It leads people into making contact with the spirit world, which is forbidden by God, where deceiving spirits will give them all sorts of feelings, sensations and visions in order to deceive them. Even deceive them into thinking they are gaining a victory over territorial spirits! People who go this far into following this approach do invite serious trouble into their lives – but only because this teaching and this approach are both unbiblical and bring you into a realm that is forbidden by God. The idea that special people need to spend days in fasting and prayer, in order to clear themselves of every other thought and association and to focus on evil spirits and to identify them in order to do battle with them; the fact that they say they “feel" transported into another realm and start seeing evil spirits and that they can “feel" the presence of evil; the fact they say that if you don’t do these things properly, then the evil spirits can destroy your life – all this together represents an approach and practice which has nothing to do with the Bible, but is similar to the method and practice of mediums, the occult and witchcraft. Emptying your mind of all else and focusing on contacting spirits in another realm; feeling yourself transported into another realm – all this together is the way of psychic mediums or witchdoctors, which is forbidden by God! Deuteronomy 18:9-14. ( I know that when we are in prayer we may indeed have, and do have, a sense of being in the presence of the Lord, and the scripture describes accounts of the saints seeing visions, of being “in the Spirit" and so forth. This is not the issue, and that is why I said above, it is the whole combination of factors involved in their type of praying, that has no foundation in scripture but does have parallels in occult practice. The blessed experiences that the saints in the Bible have are the result of praying to God and focusing on His goodness, mercy and power.) Yes, I am serious in what I am saying. I believe that some of the teachers of these doctrines have borrowed the techniques used by mediums and occult practices in the world, though they are ignorant of this. Perhaps these people already possessed some of these abilities before turning to Christ, and these ungodly “spiritual" abilities have not been recognised and properly dealt with and abandoned. Or perhaps, on the contrary, they were pleased to see that they had “special powers" and allowed themselves to develop these powers because they brought them into supernaturnal experiences. The result of this “special" gifting is that these people start to see themselves as “anointed prophets and apostles". Indeed, the preachers and teachers who propagate these doctrines are well-known to one another and they mutually recognise one another as holding some special position in the church of Jesus Christ. So the devil is deceiving them and leading them into pride. But this is not total ignorance on their part, for the only way they can continue in these teachings and in these experiences, is by ignoring and opposing what the scriptures say and teach. And this they do.

These people are not entering a spiritual battle at all. They are entering a spirit world – which is quite different - where they are being deceived, and out of which comes another gospel, another Jesus and another spirit. They are developing their own “psychic" powers and becoming the victims of deceiving spirits, who are convincing them that they are engaged in a spiritual battle and that they are winning! What in fact is happening, is that more and more people are being deceived and robbed of the true knowledge of God and of the salvation that is in Christ. Yes, I can imagine that anyone who follows this methodology and these beliefs into similar experiences
can get themselves into serious trouble. They are transgressing God's word and they are transgressing into illegitimate realms!

It might be helpful to look at 2 Cor.11:1-15 to help us understand how these things can be. (Please see the first article where the condition of the Corinthian church and the basis of their deception is looked into.) In the church at Corinth many of the Lord’s people were behaving carnally. They loved to have the “power and the glory”. This carnal behaviour and this carnal desire for power and position caused them to stray away from the teachings of Christ. Persisting in this behaviour and attitude exposed them to, and made them victims of, the devil’s deceptions – very serious deceptions! We are told that Satan himself can transform himself into “an angel of light”, verse 14. I believe that some of the experiences of these people are to be understood in this context. In verse 13 he talks about “false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.” In verse 4 he shows us that even the Lord’s people can be led by these deceptions into receiving “another” Jesus, “another” spirit and “another” gospel. How these things can be, is not fully explained to us, but that these things can happen to us if we leave God’s word, is made very clear to us. And if this could happen among the apostle Paul’s own converts, who were also in measure still guided by his teaching and oversight, then we should not think these things impossible today! And this is why these articles are written, because these modern teachings represent the cunning of the devil to corrupt the minds of the saints from the simplicity that is in Christ, verse 3.

In Jeremiah 5:30,31, we find a striking resemblance to what Paul says in 2 Cor.11:13-20 – false prophets deceiving God’s people; their leaders ruling with force over them, and the Lord’s people loving all this! Of the prophets God says in Jeremiah 14:14, “Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spoke I unto them. They prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart”. Such things as these have always happened, both then and today.

In Acts 8 we read of Simon the sorcerer who still wanted “the power and the glory” even after he “believed” and was baptised. This is a different kind of example but it is an indication of someone who had occult abilities wanting to continue in the same disposition and function after he had “become” a believer.

We also have the account in Acts 16:16-18, where a woman with a spirit of divination declared things that were true, yet from a wrong spirit! In the end Paul was so grieved that an evil spirit was interfering with the work of the Gospel that he cast the spirit out of the woman.

The account concerning Balaam in Numbers 22-25 can also be very instructive for us, although there may be things that puzzle us and for which the Bible gives no clear explanation. Balaam was not a man of God nor did he know God in the true sense. He was ignorant of God’s true nature of holiness and righteousness, for the scripture uses him as a symbol of unrighteousness and covetousness. He did not really want to know God’s will, otherwise he would never have asked God concerning cursing Israel. For he should have known that God was with Israel, even as other nations had already heard of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt under the hand of God. No, he was after money, that’s why he asked God. All he could do was make communication with the supernatural world and use his mediumistic powers to curse people. *This was his business* – not honouring and worshiping the true God. That’s why he didn’t go with the messengers of Balak the first time – not because he didn’t want the money. It was because he wanted the money that he foolishly asked God a second time if he could go. He didn’t understand nor was he interested in God and His righteousness – he was just there to “receive divine communications”, just like a medium. And when he said that he could only do what God told him, this was not because of any righteousness or any loving obedience to God. Not at all. His reputation, his power and his glory depended on being able to communicate with the supernatural world. And if he received the communication not to go, well then he couldn’t go – because he couldn’t risk failure of his cursing power and skills if he went and nothing happened! It is no wonder that the angel of the Lord stood in the way of all his unrighteousness to slay him! We also know that later Balaam gave king Balak evil council that lured Israel into sin.

Although there are things in this passage that are not easy to understand, (and I’m not saying that I am necessarily right in every detail of my interpretation), it clearly shows us that an unrighteous man can communicate with the supernatural world, but his only influence on the Lord’s people was to corrupt them.

I have quoted the above passages to show that people can make contact wrongly with the supernatural, including Christians. Although obviously not all these passages would apply to these modern writers, yet, in some ways I think they have transgressed the boundaries of what is legitimate, even as indicated in 2 Cor.11:1-15.
I was reading a book which encompasses all the errors I have looked at in these three articles. While reading it, I believed the writer had transgressed and had fallen into deception. I then read that the author himself was aware of these things. He is of American Indian background and testifies that even as a Christian, his old mystical (or perhaps we could say mediumistic) abilities which came from his Indian culture, would rise up in him and he could do "mystical" things (operate in the spirit world?) which, he honestly admits were not the gift of the Holy Spirit. (I believe these things can happen and that they are happening today.) But then he goes on to say that he asked the Lord to put those old abilities to death. That's good. But then he proceeds to say that the Holy Spirit reached down into those old skills and cleansed them to use them even more fully! That's not good! And as one reads the book one sees it is a testimony to his own "psychic" abilities taking him into a deception of strange supernatural experiences that are not of God. They have invented a new teaching and experience which they called "the council of the Lord", where you are "summoned" into the Lord's presence for a kind of conference. It's not your choice. The writer of this book once felt called together with another person into the presence of God where the Lord asked them if God should now finally judge this earth. And because of their intercessions the world was spared from universal judgement at that time, according to what these two men both saw and heard together in their visions! On another occasion he believed that he together with eight of his friends were being called to a council of the Lord, but he wondered how nine people could all hear the same things and see the same visions at the same time. Nevertheless he felt he had to obey and they got together, and he recounts how they all saw the same things, "in spirit", and heard the same things - voices and visions which they all experienced together! This is the stuff of séances, mediums and occultism! None of this is of God. It has no parallel in scripture. They have seriously erred and are being seriously deceived and it will have serious consequences. These are strange fires indeed! He recounts these visions in detail in his book but they are of the most bizarre nature and not reflecting anything that has a biblical or godly basis to it. It is from such men and women, with such experiences, that these new teachings come. As it was in Corinth at the time of Paul, so it is happening today. Men puffed up by their own visions, bringing in another spirit, another Jesus and another gospel. They believe, as far as I know, that they are serving God in these things, but they are tragically mistaken.

All these things are a deep grief to many today as they see such deception and confusion causing heart-ache and divisions; causing the Lord's people to err and robbing them of the truth and bringing them into bondage. It is not within the scope of this article, but many of these modern writers and preachers are pushing for ecumenism as well. They want to forge a unity among Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Charismatics, Catholics and conscientious liberals! This kind of unity does not represent Gospel love and grace at work, but compromises that are anti-Gospel. It does seem that today the devil is doing what he can to deceive even the elect if possible. What means does he use to try and achieve his end? According to Jesus, false christs (that is, those with a false anointing) and false prophets shall arise and show great signs and wonders. Signs, wonders, false prophets and false anointings are the means whereby the devil will seek to deceive even the elect. Mt.24:24.

Surely this is a genuine heart concern today. It is not just that there has been a proliferation or erroneous teachings in these last few years among Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Charismatics, but people are being led into false experiences; they are being blinded to the truth by deceiving spirits. On a widespread basis, people are being encouraged to receive another spirit and another Jesus and another gospel. If anyone can produce any kind of signs and wonders, or make themselves out to be some mighty apostle or prophet, then many of the Lord's people seem ready to receive any teaching that goes with it! Such are the days we live in.

So if people are having trouble in their lives, the main reason is that they are not living by faith in, and obedience to, God's word. Today it is both false teachings and false experiences that are leading the Lord's people away from the Truth and from living by the Truth. It is not the act of engaging in scriptural spiritual warfare that is creating problems; it is the erroneous teaching of this kind of spiritual warfare, that is the cause of so much confusion, deception and trouble.

The Passages of Scripture they use.

We will now look at the kind of texts these writers refer to in order to justify these errors. One of the main ones is found in Ephesians 6, and we shall look at this passage first, together with a brief consideration of what true spiritual warfare is, before we look at other passages.

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

This is perhaps the most significant and oft-quoted (or, often misquoted) passage which is used to support this teaching concerning territorial spirits. It is often used by these modern writers in order to define spiritual warfare as consisting of praying against, and binding, principalities and powers, which includes territorial
spirits according to them. As we look at this passage, we see that it does no such thing. ( I also dealt with this passage in the first article when considering prayer in the NT )

In verses 10 and 11 Paul exhorts us to be strong in the Lord and to put on the whole armour of God that we may be able to stand against the cunning of the devil. Why do we need God’s armour? Because our enemy is a spiritual one and our conflict is spiritual. Verse 12 tells us that our conflict, or battle, is “not with flesh and blood but with principalities and powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” ( At this point we won’t try to define all these spiritual forces, but rather continue to follow Paul’s reasoning here. ) Because of this, we need to be spiritually equipped. On our own, we are no match for such spiritual opposition and cunning! Now, having made this clear in verse 12, what does Paul exhort us to do? Does he say, “Since our opposition is spiritual, now take to yourselves God’s armour so that you can pray against these principalities and powers and bind them in the name of the Lord!”? Is this how Paul understands spiritual warfare? Is this the way to get victory? No! This is not his reasoning at all! He tells us in verse 13 that we should put on the whole armour of God so that we may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, to stand! Paul is talking about the armour that enables us to stand against all the various trials and temptations that evil spiritual forces would put us through; and to stand victorious to the end. He is talking about our spiritual walk in the Lord.

So Paul encourages us “to stand”, that is, to resist and overcome the devil’s temptations in our daily life. To do this we are to secure ourselves with God’s truth, and put on the breastplate of righteousness ( verse 14 ). God’s truth will deal with the devil’s lies and also edify and encourage us. Standing in the righteousness that we have in Christ will keep our hearts cleansed and protected. The testimony of Christ is always to be alive in us so that we are prepared to share this Gospel with others ( verse 15 ). Then in verse 16 Paul exhorts us, above all else, to take the shield of faith by which will be able to quench all the fiery arrows of the wicked one. What he is talking about here, is dealing with and rejecting all the accusations, lies and suggestions of the devil, which he throws at us in order to make us doubt God and His love for us; in order to make us feel condemned, useless and alone; in order to make us feel sorry for ourselves or to please ourselves – we are to deal with all these things by putting our faith and trust in God and in what He has said. All of us are tempted and tried along this line. We all know what this is like. But this is our spiritual warfare and we are to take the shield of faith and not let ourselves be affected by the devil’s lies and suggestions. It is right at this point that many of us fail. We do not stand as Paul exhorts us, and so we lose our confidence, joy and peace in the Lord. We end up feeling condemned and useless, wondering if God loves us or cares. In this condition we don’t really grow in the Lord and there is a lack of fruit towards God. This passage here hits right home at the centre of our spiritual walk and warfare.

These truths that Paul is expounding here are essential for our spiritual walk and warfare. They are crucial and decisive. They lie at the heart of living spiritually and victoriously. This is what spiritual warfare is about, not rolling up your “spiritual sleeves” and shouting and rebuking the devil and territorial spirits. Without question, it is much easier and more appealing to the flesh to pray against territorial spirits in prayer meetings than it is to daily live in faith, love and obedience to God, standing in God’s armour. The latter represents spiritual warfare according to the scripture, the former does not!

Paul continues in verse 17 by exhorting us to take the helmet of salvation – which will keep and protect our minds in Christ – and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Having now put on all the armour of God, Paul now exhorts us to pray ( verse 18 ). Well, is it now that we are to pray against principalities and powers and bind them? Now that we have got the armour of God on, are we to stand against territorial spirits and bind their power? No. Not according to Paul. But isn’t that what the armour is for? To empower us in prayer to bind evil spirits? No. Not according to Paul. Paul doesn’t mention praying against spirits and binding them. He speaks of “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints and for me…”

So walking spiritually and successfully withstandsing the devices of the devil in this spiritual warfare, enables us to pray effectively for the saints. Clearly prayer is an essential part of our spiritual walk before God, but how effectively do we pray when we are doubting God’s love and care for us, when we are feeling condemned, useless or unloved, when we have bitterness, unforgiveness or hardness in our hearts, when we are in unbelief? So we can see that Paul gives us the right order in this passage – our relationship with God and our walk before Him must be right before we can be spiritually effective in other areas. So spiritual warfare is to do with resisting the devil’s temptations and lies in our day-to-day walk with the Lord – putting on the whole armour of God. This then enables us to pray as we should for the saints.

This whole passage of Paul’s does not represent some strategy or mandate to attack and bind evil spirits through prayer! He is simply saying that because our enemy is spiritual, so our armour needs to be spiritual in a conflict that involves us resisting the temptations, lies and suggestions of unbelief that the devil would sow
into our hearts and lives. In fact, apart from demons being cast out of individuals, there is no example in scripture of any saint directly confronting and binding any principality, power or territorial spirit in prayer. All prayer in the Bible is directed to God. In prayer, God’s people acknowledge and magnify His divine attributes and they make their request according to the revelation of His glorious divine nature, and much of the praying is on behalf of God’s people, as indicated by Paul in this passage.

**Spiritual Warfare according to the Scriptures – in brief**

We cannot look at this subject in depth in this article but I would like to give an outline of this most vital truth, while we are considering Ephesians 6.

Let’s start at the beginning. In the Garden of Eden everything was good but then the Serpent came in. Was this demonic invasion of God’s territory? Was this a surprise attack and an unwanted intrusion to spoil God’s purposes? Humanly, we might think it a great pity that the devil was allowed access into the garden. Everything was fine and perhaps we are tempted to think that Adam and Eve would have made good progress if it hadn’t been for this devilish intrusion. We might think it would have been good to have called a prayer meeting to bind and rebuke the devil, or for God to have used His power to expel the devil or to have prevented him from entering the garden in the first place. But perhaps we can gain a better understanding and insight into this event from looking at other scriptures.

If we look at Deut.8:2,3; Job 1:6-12, and Matt.4:1, we see that God allowed His people and His own Son to be tried and tempted through circumstances and by the suggestions of the devil. God’s purpose is not that any one of His people should be harmed, destroyed or fall into sin, but that they should pass through circumstances that test and try them. It is these very circumstances that will require them to make choices, both with regard to what they think and to what they do. And it is through making the right choices, by choosing to believe and obey God that they will grow spiritually in stature and in the knowledge of God. Such trials and difficulties are to be the means of them actually growing in the grace and knowledge of God. God doesn’t want His people to fall or sin. That is against His nature! He wants to bring them into the knowledge and image of Himself by them refusing the evil and choosing the good. The following scriptures have a bearing on this truth that we are looking at: Rom.5:3-5; Hebrews 5:8,9,13,14; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-8.

The purpose of God in allowing the Serpent to test Adam and Eve was that they should grow in the grace and righteousness of their God, and in their love for Him. And when confronted with the suggestions of the devil, the answer for Adam and Eve is not to call a prayer meeting to cast the devil out of Eden, but to put on the whole armour of God and reject the devil’s lies and not allow his suggestions to gain a foothold in their hearts and minds! The latter represents spiritual warfare, the former does not! If they had done the latter, then the devil would have left them, James 4:7.

When the serpent came to her, Eve could have used the sword of the Spirit against him, for she knew God’s word that they would die if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But she didn’t take the sword of the Spirit against the devil’s lies. She didn’t take the shield of faith against his persuasive suggestions. God had been so good to Adam and Eve in creating everything for them and creating them after His own image so that they could have fellowship with Him. Eve should have put her trust in both God’s word and in His revealed goodness to them, and rejected the devil’s temptations to disbelieve God. But Eve left herself without the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation, as she allowed evil thoughts about God to be sown into her heart and mind. The evil thoughts of unbelief that the devil sowed into her heart, made God out to be someone who doesn’t really love or care for us; that He is holding something good back from us; that He doesn’t really want to do us good but do us evil. God had told them not to eat of that tree for their own good and salvation. He wanted them to become like Him. But the devil suggested that God was forbidding them this fruit because He didn’t want what was good for them; He didn’t want them to become like Him! Truly the devil is the father of lies! He can only speak lies and his purpose is to discredit God and His Nature in the hearts and minds of people, so that they don’t put their faith and trust in Him. Certainly, without faith it is impossible to please God, and he who doesn’t believe has made God a liar, 1 John 5:10. Without faith we cannot avail ourselves of the grace and salvation of God that is given to us in Christ. This the devil surely knows and this is where he concentrates and directs his activities, namely, to make us doubt God!

The devil comes to sow reasonings and vain imaginations in the hearts of people, including God’s people. With his persuasive suggestions he seeks to exalt these reasonings against the knowledge of God and to destroy the image and knowledge of God. These lying suggestions act as strongholds in the minds of people who receive them. They are “high things” that oppose the knowledge and glory of God – 2 Cor.10:4,5. In this passage in the second Corinthian letter, Paul is illustrating a similar truth to that in Ephesians 6, namely, that we do not war according to the flesh, but that our weapons are mighty through God to the pulling down of such “strongholds” – lying reasonings in people’s minds that oppose the truth and knowledge of God. This passage does not
represent a strategy for binding territorial spirits which are in the sky somewhere, but indicates the godly weapons that we have in dealing with lying reasonings of the devil! The solution for Eve was not to try and bind the devil, but to resist and reject his lies, and then he would have fled from her – James 4:7.

Such trials are allowed of God. When Jesus was baptised, He was immediately led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted of the devil! Mt.4:1. This was divine direction. It was not demonic intrusion! This was according to the pre-determined purposes of God; it was not an unfortunate incident to spoil God’s work. It is through these very trials that we are to become stronger in God and to grow spiritually. We read in Luke that Jesus went into the desert full of the Spirit, but that He later came out in the power of the Spirit! ( Luke 4:1,14 ). And that is God’s purpose with us – but He expects us to choose, love and believe Him! If we don’t, then the trial reveals a weakness or wrong motive in our hearts – Deut.8:2,3. This significant passage in Deuteronomy shows us that God allows trials in order that we may learn to trust Him more than anything else. Even in the face of need and suffering, His word is to be more important to us than any temporal outward blessing. Our love and faith are to be extended and deepened at such times – and such faith and love not only will cause us to grow in spiritual stature, but it will also glorify God!

Notice how Jesus deals with the devil in the desert. Jesus didn’t shout at the devil and bind him for daring to approach Him! Indeed, He had been led by the Spirit into the desert in order to be tempted by the devil. And the devil always comes with the same kind of suggestions, “Where is your God? Are you really His Son? You’re hungry and in need. Does He really care for you? Why don’t you do something now to meet your need? Act to help yourself! Act to save yourself! Do something! Do something now if you are God’s Son! If you please yourself, look what you’ll gain and how much easier things will be for you!” Such are the nature of his suggestions. But how did Jesus respond? He responded with the sword of the Spirit – with the word of God. And He quotes from Deut.8:3! Israel had been in the desert for 40 years and Jesus spent one day in the desert for each of those years, being tempted, even as they had been tempted. But Jesus had no concern for His own “needs” nor did He give any time to the devil’s suggestions – Jesus lived by the word of God, honouring and worshipping God above all else! Jesus resisted the devil and the devil left Him - for a season.

But Israel failed in the desert. They didn’t live by the word of God as they encountered difficulties and needs. They didn’t take the shield of faith but let the devil fill their hearts and minds with lying suggestions about God, and these suggestions then became strongholds in their thinking and they opposed God and blasphemed His Character. The nature of the devil’s spiritual warfare is to lead people into a state of mind and heart, where they think as Israel thought. In Deut.1:27 we are told that Israel actually believed that God hated them and that He had brought them into the wilderness in order to destroy them! This is what they thought even after seeing God’s wonders in Egypt and in the desert! Such is the deceitfulness of sin and unbelief! Such is the devil’s tactics, to make us think wrong things concerning God and to doubt His Goodness towards us. It is in this way that the devil seeks to bring or keep us out of God’s grace, salvation and the inheritance that He has for us! We may sin, but if we humble ourselves and trust in God, seeking His forgiveness, then He will forgive according to His word. But if a person doubts the very Nature of God and His Goodness, how shall that person receive anything from God? We know that Israel lost out because of unbelief. But they couldn’t blame the devil for their own state of heart. God was expecting them to believe and obey Him. These trials simply revealed the condition of their own heart. It is the devil’s work to get people to believe such things, but we are responsible, as God’s children, if we allow ourselves to be persuaded into believing such things! That’s one of the main reasons why Paul writes what he does in Ephesians 6.

As it was with Eve in the garden, with Israel in the desert and with Jesus in the wilderness, so it will be with you and me. The devil comes to sow doubt against God into our hearts. This sin of unbelief breaks our fellowship with God and it prevents us from receiving the good things God has for us; it blinds our hearts to the truth and gives ground to the devil to make us captive to all sorts or wrong attitudes and actions. Therefore, we are to resist him and to fight the good fight of faith, by which we are kept safe and grow, and by which God is honoured!

One of the main propagators of this modern teaching suggests that Jesus was engaged in “strategic-level spiritual warfare” when He was being tempted in the desert. He says that this temptation represented some kind of high-level spiritual conflict with the devil, which few or none of us could ever possibly experience. This of course is quite wrong! All of us pass through exactly these kinds of temptations in our lives – regularly! The devil doesn’t appear to us as some kind of monster with horns to urge us to do wrong. It would be too obvious! We would see through such a tactic and recoil! The devil uses cunning. He comes in the midst of trials and difficulties and tries to sow what seem to be “reasonable” or appealing suggestions and thoughts into our minds. But all his suggestions have only one aim and lead us to one state of mind – to doubt God and act independently of Him! “Where is your God now? Does He really care for you? Why don’t you choose an easier way?” These are the kind of thoughts that the devil would sow into our minds. And we can see from the above scriptures,
that if we are more interested in satisfying our flesh or ourselves, than loving and obeying God, then the devil's temptations will have an appeal to us. Of course the devil will not come to us and place us on top of a building, nor will he come and offer us the world if we worship him. These particular circumstances are indeed unique to the temptations of Jesus. But what isn’t unique, is that the devil comes with the same kind of temptations to each of us. If the devil cannot get us to doubt God, then he tries to get us to go too far in what we believe so that we become presumptuous and end up tempting God — which of course was what the devil was trying to do by encouraging Jesus to jump off the top of the temple. Or the devil will try and encourage or place in our minds a course of action that will please us, makes things easier for us, bring us profit or glorify us. This was the nature of the last temptation of Jesus. But all of scripture exhorts us to deny ourselves, resist the devil and to submit to God and put our trust in Him. This is what Jesus did, who was in all points tempted as we are ( Heb.4:15 ), and this is what we are to do. This is how we grow spiritually and this is how we enter into the inheritance that God has prepared for us in Christ.

[These modern preachers and leaders have not discovered a new strategy for binding the power of territorial spirits, but rather they have fallen victim to an old strategy of the devil. They have listened to the devil’s subtle suggestions, “ Where is your God? Where is His power and influence? Where is church growth? Why aren’t you having an impact on your local community?” So far, these may be the legitimate questions of a world we are to do this particularly in the midst of trials, difficulties and suffering, by an active faith in God and His Goodness. And in this New Covenant we are now empowered to resist and overcome the evil one by the Spirit and Life of Christ within us.

To return to our theme. The true nature of spiritual warfare - as it was for Adam and Eve; as it was for Israel in the desert; as it was for Jesus in the wilderness and as it is for you and me, is to resist and reject all such lying suggestions so that they don’t gain a foothold in our hearts. And we are to do this particularly in the midst of trials, difficulties and suffering, by an active faith in God and His Goodness. And in this New Covenant we are now empowered to resist and overcome the evil one by the Spirit and Life of Christ within us.

I have been in churches where we would pray against the devil and bind evil spirits. Sometimes someone would pray, binding Satan and casting him into the sea or the pit! I must confess I did wonder when and how Satan got out of there again after we had “bound” him in our prayer meeting! I wondered whether what we were doing was scriptural at all and whether it had any real effect apart from making us “feel good”. And it did make us feel good out of there again after we had “bo

I used to be involved in this kind of praying, and I haven’t changed my belief about God or the devil, but I have had to face up to what the scriptures actually show and teach concerning praying and spiritual warfare. I also
had to face up to the fact that apart from making us feel good, we never really knew or had any evidence that our binding of Satan had any effect at all. My concern in all this is that we are being tempted by the devil himself into presumption. One of the strategies of the devil, when he couldn’t get Jesus to please Himself and turn stones into bread, was to encourage Jesus too far the other way. Since Jesus was living by the word of God, the devil would use that in order to lead Jesus into presumption. The devil placed Jesus on top of the temple, quoted a scripture from the Psalms about the angels looking after Jesus so that He wouldn’t be hurt, and then said if He is God’s Son then let Him show it by jumping off the top of the temple! Jesus didn’t do it, quoting the scripture, “You shall not tempt the Lord your God”, Deut.6:16. In this temptation we see that the devil quotes scripture but only in order to get Jesus to act independently of God. Jesus doesn’t need to do a special trick for the devil to prove that He is God’s Son. Jesus only lives to glorify and please His Father!

But this is what the devil will try and do with us – to fill our minds with certain positive scriptures, but only to make us go beyond what God has ordained in order to try to cause harm or loss to us in some way. So, people can think, “Well, we are sons of God and He has given us power to overcome the devil! So let’s pray against him and bind his power!” But this kind of logic is not scriptural. It is presumption. It goes beyond what God has ordained for us. Rather than defeating the devil, it focuses our attention on the devil and so tends to glorify him and ascribes to him more importance and power than he actually has or deserves! This actually robs God of His glory and power among us! Jesus said that where two or three are gathered together in His name, HE would be in the midst of them. He didn’t say that where two or three are gathered together in His name, the devil would be there and so the church would have to pray and bind and rebuke evil spirits from their meetings! But if we do this sort of thing out of some kind of tradition that we might have, we are only manifesting unbelief in God and His word and we are glorifying the devil by what is simply a superstitious practice, which we call spiritual warfare! I know of a church in the city where I live, where the pastor got them to pray in every part of the church building to expel evil spirits that he said were opposing God’s work! This is the kind of unbelief and superstition we can fall into through these modern teachings.

Spiritual warfare involves us in standing armed with faith in God and His word against all the lies, accusations and temptations of the devil. This is what Ephesians 6 is about; it’s not about putting on some kind of spiritual armour so that we can directly wrestle with some kind of evil spirits, shouting and rebuking them in prayer.

With regard to shouting and getting angry with the devil, which is popular with some people, there are some scriptures which are very instructive. We have already seen how Jesus handled the devil in the wilderness. He didn’t get all hot and personally angry with the devil, shouting at him as if he shouldn’t be there. Perhaps we find it amazing how God spoke to Satan in chapters one and two of the book of Job. God lets Satan have his say and allows his arguments and his activity – but only according to His own purposes. God is secure and sure in His eternal righteousness. He rules in righteousness and everyone will be judged by God’s righteousness in the end. He is also sovereign in the affairs of men and it is He who allows the devil to test His saints - they shall be utterly safe and blessed as long as they trust in Him and abide in Him. God is not panicking about the devil – his final judgement is also sure. He shall be cast into the lake of fire. Until then, the devil does go about like a roaring lion and only seeks to rob, kill and destroy. He still deceives people and opposes God’s work. For those who believe Christ, the devil’s power is broken and he has no power over them, though as we have seen, God allows the devil some space but only in order to test His people so that their faith may come forth as gold! But in the above examples, neither Christ on earth nor God in heaven hotly railed against the devil. He is allowed space and opportunity according to God’s own wisdom and sovereignty, but his work is also rebuked and broken when he interferes with God’s work of saving souls – as we have seen in the Acts of the Apostles.

Now, it is Jude writing in the NT who gives us a word of warning concerning this matter, Jude vs.8-10. Here he tells us that even the archangel Michael did not bring railing accusation against the devil. I am not saying that the devil has some special place and power of which we should be afraid. No! Not at all! Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world! But I want us to see what the scriptures reveal about this matter and what they teach. My concern in saying these things, is that we don’t give the devil greater space and power in our thinking and praying by imputing to him an importance that he does not have, or by going beyond scripture in trying to fight with him and rail against him or against territorial spirits, so-called! Jude talks here about people who speak evil about things that they don’t understand or know. This is exactly what these modern writers and teachers are doing. Obviously, evil spirits are evil, but these modern writers are speaking things about them without understanding what they are really saying! They want us to focus on the devil and evil spirits, giving them a power and authority over cities, that according to scripture they do not possess! Then they want us to get involved in a personal “spiritual” fight with these spirits and to rail against them in prayer! All this goes beyond scripture and it goes beyond what God has ordained for us.

I do not want to give you a formula about how to pray or not to pray in particular circumstances that you may face – apart from pin-pointing certain scriptural and spiritual truths which should guide us in our praying.
We can be assured that Christ destroyed the devil's work on the cross and spoiled principalities and powers there. This will encourage us when praying to God about situations where we believe the devil is opposing the Lord's work, but without having to engage in these unbiblical exercises which are advocated by these modern writers!

I have heard people say over the years, "I hate the devil!", particularly when someone has sinned badly or suffered badly. Well, it won't help you to hate the devil – this is simply not enough and it is not the issue. The issue is whether a person will deny themselves and love and obey God! What will help us greatly in our spiritual life, is if we hate sin and love righteousness ( Heb.1:9 ), if we believe and obey God. We are to resist the devil whole-heartedly and to have nothing to do with his lying suggestions or his tempting offers. This is the way to joy, peace and righteousness. From scripture I would say it's best not to involve yourself with any feelings towards the devil. Jesus in the wilderness didn't thrust forward His face in angry contempt and start railing at the devil, with His fists flying through the air! Should we? We see that the devil had no power over Him and Jesus came out of the desert in the power of the Spirit – after having resisted and rejected the devil's temptations! If you want to hate anything on this earth, then hate sin, and in such a way that you won't want anything to do with it. And if we see others sin, then let us pray to God who is rich in mercy and grace, 1 John 5:16. It seems that some people find it much easier to “roll up their sleeves” - figuratively speaking - and engage the devil and evil spirits in some kind of prayer battle in prayer meetings, rather than consistently and continually bear people and situations on their hearts before God in prayer. More is accomplished in the latter exercise than in the former, according to all the scriptural examples and references that we have! Indeed, we have no scriptural example of the former at all! Let us follow Jesus, who loved righteousness and hated iniquity ( Heb. 1:9 ); who resisted and rejected the devil's temptations without raling at him; and who, as the High Priest continually bears our names on His breast before God in prayer! Exodus 28:12,29; Heb.7:25. And we are to follow in His footsteps - Eph.6:18.

Let us now look at the other passages of scripture that are used in support of this new teaching.

**Daniel 10**

This is a unique passage which makes reference to what seem to be angelic beings that are associated with a country or empire. However, there is nothing here that teaches us or would lead us to believe that God's people should be involved in praying against these powers.

The Jews had been taken captive to Babylon and Daniel was grieved and in mourning and seeking God on behalf of His people. The Jews hadn't been taken captive because of the superior power of the devil nor was it the devil's power that was keeping them captive. Israel had sinned repeatedly against God, and this captivity was God's own judgement on them, which He had forewarned them. Daniel recognised all this. Particularly in chapter 9 we find Daniel praying to God, acknowledging that this captivity was God's judgement for Israel's sin. Daniel confesses the sin of his people, which had brought about this judgement, and seeks God's mercy for His people. In chapter 10 we find Daniel in mourning again for three weeks, after which an angel appears to him. ( Indeed, this might not be an angel but the Lord Himself, according to the description in verses 5 and 6.) He tells Daniel of conflicts that seem to be between angelic or spiritual beings, verses 13, 20. He had been sent in response to Daniel's prayer, but he was hindered by the “prince of Persia”, but then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help him. Later he would return to fight with the prince of Persia and then the prince of Greece would come. This may not be the easiest passage to explain but what becomes clear here is that this is a conflict between angelic or spiritual beings. Daniel wasn't wrestling or praying against the prince of Persia! He wasn't even aware of this angelic conflict when he was praying and neither was it part of his strategy to bind any territorial spirits! In none of his praying does he set out to bind evil spirits as though they are responsible for Israel's captivity, or as though the devil had a legal right over Israel because of their sin! It just wasn't relevant or true! Israel had sinned – against God. Their captivity was the result of their sin and this was God's judgement on them. The answer was to pray to God for His mercy. It was He alone that would return His people after seventy years to their homeland, even as He had promised, Daniel 9:2, and nothing any principality or power could do would prevent this!

These passages simply show us what I have been pointing out in the first article as well as this one, namely, that God's people direct their prayers to God on behalf of His people and on behalf of His work among men and women. Daniel's prayers focus on God alone – on His righteousness, on His goodness, on His mercy and on His longsuffering. His prayers acknowledge that God is sovereign in the affairs of men! Daniel is involved in praying for God's people! These passages teach us nothing about praying against territorial spirits, for it simply doesn't take place - nor does it have any place in Daniel's prayers or in any other prayers in the OT. What this passage gives us a unique glimpse of, is that there was conflict between angelic or heavenly forces themselves, but it does not show us Daniel praying against such angelic beings. Again, let us remember that all this was before Christ had risen from the dead and spoiled principalities and powers!
We get another little but significant glimpse into the spiritual realm when Elisha prays for his young servant, when he sees the enemy army surrounding them. Elisha tells him that there are more on their side than for the enemy, and then prays that God may open his servant’s eyes that he should see, 2 Kings 6:16, 17. The young man then sees the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire! And this was the OT! And when we consider the passage in Daniel, are we to believe that Calvary has made no difference in the spiritual realm when we read such passages as Eph.1:17-23; 2:6; Col.2:15?! But even in the OT, the saints of God didn’t engage in binding territorial spirits, because there was no need for them to do so! They knew that God was sovereign and their prayers were directed to Him in times of trial and conflict. They were involved in praying for God’s people. Their trust, love and obedience towards God was what glorified Him and what secured their safety, blessing and protection!

The Book of Revelation

These writers make the same mistake when they refer to Revelation 12 in order to prove their ideas of strategic-level spiritual warfare. There is conflict in heaven between Michael and his angels and the devil and his angels, and the devil is cast out, verses 7 and 8. But here again, what we have clearly portrayed is a conflict between angelic beings, and it is in the very unique symbolic context of a son who was caught up to heaven, and the casting out of heaven of the devil. Whatever our interpretation of the chapter as a whole, there is nothing here, by way of example or teaching, to support the idea that the saints need to be engaged in binding territorial spirits. It was not the prayers of prayer warriors that cast the devil out of heaven! In fact these modern writers like to refer to the book of the Revelation generally, because evil power is represented in symbolic or pictorial form. They say these representations refer to principalities and powers and therefore confirm the existence of territorial spirits. Whether this is so or not, is not the issue. We believe in the existence of principalities and powers, but nowhere are the saints engaged in identifying and binding these evil forces – not even in the book of the Revelation. On the contrary, when addressing the churches at Smyrna and Pergamos, (Rev.2:8-17), the Lord speaks about the those who are of the synagogue of Satan, and of the place where Satan dwells, but the Lord doesn’t exhort His people to pray against some territorial spirit as though it had some superior power hindering what God was wanting to do. On the contrary, we see here as in other places in scripture, that the Lord uses or allows the enemy to test and try His people, even unto death. He glorifies His name through His people by showing men, the demons and angels that His life in His people is victorious in all things, and that His people love their God more than anything - even more than life itself. But He assures them of a crown of life and that they need not fear anything that the devil throws at them. God is sovereign. He can save people from the power of darkness and the devil, as He did at Ephesus, and He can allow the devil to try his worst against His people outwardly, in order to glorify His name and bring forth His people as gold. In none of the letters to the seven churches do we get any indication that the devil is somehow getting the better of God’s work in those cities. No, the Lord’s only concern was the sin, spiritual condition and false teachings among His own people, for which He held them responsible and for which He exhorted them to repentance.

Jeremiah 1:9, 10

This is another passage that they like to refer to as an example of “strategic-level spiritual warfare”. They tell us that these verses show us that Jeremiah was empowered by God to bind territorial spirits. Of course these verses do no such thing. In Amos 3:7, we are told that, “the Lord God will do nothing, except He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets”, and in verse 5 of Jeremiah chapter one, we are told that God has appointed Jeremiah as a prophet. In other words, God would speak through Jeremiah those judgements that He Himself was going to bring to pass. Before God acted, He would declare His councils and decrees by the mouth of Jeremiah. And we have an immediate example in the following verses where Jeremiah sees a vision which foretells the judgement that God is going to bring upon Jerusalem from the north. This is the meaning of verse ten – this verse does not refer to any binding of territorial spirits by Jeremiah or some kind of spiritual warfare! A territorial spirit was not initiating an attack on Jerusalem and thereby opposing God’s work! This was God’s judgement on His own people. Nowhere does Jeremiah seek to bind territorial spirits that are supposed to be opposing God’s plans, nor does he teach such a thing. The book of Jeremiah simply shows what I have been saying all along, that God is grieved over the heart-condition and sin of His people and this is the only real problem that is recognised. Apart from forewarning of God’s judgements, Jeremiah’s spiritual ministry engages him in exhorting God’s people to repentance and in intercessions on their behalf – Jer.4:1-6 and 14:7-9, refer to two of many such similar texts in Jeremiah!

Ezekiel 4:1-3

In this passage, God tells Ezekiel to take a slate and draw a map of Jerusalem on it. Then he is to build a
fort and lay siege against it. This passage shows us God declaring His own judgements against Jerusalem through the words and symbolic actions of the prophet Ezekiel. However, this is the passage these modern writers refer to as a text that supports their teaching concerning “spiritual mapping”. Namely, they tell us that these verses show us that we should investigate and discover which major sins, injustices and social or communal evils are taking place or have taken place in a city, going back even hundreds of years, and in which areas of the city. In other words, we are to draw up a type of spiritual “map” of our town or city. This will help us identify the various ruling territorial spirits who have a “legal right and authority” over the city because of those past sins. Then we can intelligently and effectively pray against, and bind those spirits! This is supposed to represent spiritually “laying siege” to a city! This may also involve “prayer marches” around certain areas of a city. All this is supposed to liberate the city from these territorial spirits and then we will be able to preach the Gospel there with success! Is there not a deceiving, blinding spirit behind such a teaching that can so misuse scripture?! Ezekiel was never involved in any such practice of identifying and besieging territorial spirits to “liberate” Jerusalem! Ezekiel didn’t have to find out anything about territorial spirits, and one of the main reasons was that territorial spirits were not the problem. The problem didn’t need any investigation! It was as clear as day! Israel had sinned and rebelled against God repeatedly, and they needed to repent from the depths of their hearts! It is God who is causing a siege to be laid against His own people as a judgement on them because of their hardness of heart! God declares this plainly to His people through the symbolic actions of the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel wasn’t binding territorial spirits so that unbelievers in Jerusalem could turn to God! He was declaring God’s judgement on His own people, from which there would be no escape if His people didn’t turn to Him with all their hearts! This whole teaching on “spiritual mapping” is erroneous and constitutes an attack on the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and one of its main originators is George Otis whose teaching we looked at earlier.

What we find here we will find in all the passages that these modern writers refer to. Namely, as they are unable to give us even one example of their teaching from the Bible, they will use any text that in any way refers to one aspect of their teaching and immediately take it for granted that this text supports the whole of their teaching on “spiritual warfare”. So, if there is a verse that refers to “principalities and powers”, or a verse that refers to “binding”, or a verse that talks about “pulling down”, then they take this verse to support their whole system of teaching concerning “spiritual warfare”! In doing so, they corrupt the meaning of the verses they handle. But when we look at the verses they refer to, then these very verses only highlight the truth that I have been trying to illustrate in these articles. Namely, that God’s concern is with the sin and heart-state of people, and that it is through the intercessions of His saints to God and through the declaration of God’s word to people, that the work of God in saving people is to be accomplished! The books of Daniel, Revelation and Jeremiah all show this – as well as the rest of the Bible.

The High Places

God told Israel to destroy all the high places of idolatry of other nations when they came in to possess the land, Deut.12:2. These modern teachers say that these high places probably represent territorial spirits, and they give examples of how heathen nations and tribes believed that their different gods ruled over specific areas. Firstly, we can say that it makes no difference whether high places refer to territorial spirits or not, because nowhere does God exhort His people in Deuteronomy to engage in “spiritual warfare” with such spirits, nor have we one single example of Israel doing so. The meaning here is very clear. To worship the idols of high places represents sin against God of a very fundamental nature. God forbade it in His first commandment and of course He required them to destroy all such idolatrous places. The fundamental problem was not a territorial spirit, but that the existence and worship of these high places represented Israel’s sin and rebellion against God. The real problem is in people’s hearts, not in the sky! The remedy was God’s word coming to Israel to lead them to repentance, which of course would involve the destruction of these idolatrous high places and returning to God with all their heart. As I have said elsewhere, not to repent would of course give the devil ground and opportunity to pervert their hearts even more. But the solution is not the binding of the devil, but the real repentance of God’s people which robs the devil of any opportunity to work in people’s lives! (One author says that many in Israel believed that “God’s territory” was the land of Canaan, and that this gives support to the idea of spirits rule over geographical areas! If you know the Bible and such verses as, “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof”, Psalm 24:1, then I leave it to you to draw your own conclusions about such an argument!)

Now because of 1 Corinthians 10:20, I believe that people involved in idolatry are serving demons and that demonic forces are behind such things. The Roman world of Paul’s time was full of such things, but nowhere does Paul exhort the saints to identify and bind “territorial spirits”. But in their great desire to establish the existence of these territorial spirits, these modern writers refer frequently to the beliefs of pagan nations and tribes in the OT and among tribes today. They say that pagan people then and today believe that evil spirits rule over specific areas and that therefore we should take these things seriously and that there might be some truth in it. It is a pity that they try to get their main support for the idea of territorial spirits, not from the Bible, but from
the superstitious beliefs of people involved in witchcraft.

Now, the scriptures speak clearly about the existence of principalities and powers, but in the NT there is no mention of territorial spirits. However, whether there are beings that you can call territorial spirits or not, is not really a concern of mine in this article. What is a great concern, is that someone should exhort and oblige God’s people to try and identify the name and nature of such evil spirits and then try to engage in direct contact and battle with such spirits – this is unbiblical and therefore a danger to those who would err in this way! And to teach that such a strategy is essential for the spread of the Gospel is a deception and strikes at the heart of the Gospel!

These represent the main texts and arguments that they use from the OT, so we shall now look at how they interpret verses in the NT.

Matthew 12:22-30

Now although there is no teaching in this passage concerning the binding of territorial spirits so that the work of God may prosper in a geographical area, yet these modern teachers like to refer to this passage because it speaks of “binding the strong man”, verse 29. It is clear from this passage that what the Lord is talking about is the casting out of demons from individuals. This is what happened in verse 22 and the Pharisees then accused Him of casting out demons by the power of the devil, also here known as Beelzebub, but Jesus confirms that it is by the finger of God that He casts out demons. It is in this context that He speaks of binding the strong man before you can spoil his goods.

But as we read down this passage, the Lord underlines the truth that it is not even demons that are the main problem, but the unrepentant and hard hearts of people themselves. Jesus has no trouble expelling demons out of people at all. But He does not force people to repent! This unbelief and hard-heartedness is what causes Him to be amazed and to weep, Luke 19:41. And in Luke 13:34,35, Jesus tells them of His desire to gather them to some place, verse 41. In neither of these cases was the problem a territorial spirit, but each case had a different outcome because of the different heart-states of the people! But then the Lord proceeds to explain that after an unclean spirit is cast out of a person and returns and finds the house “empty, swept and put in order”, then he occupies the house bringing other spirits with him so that the person is worse off than at the beginning. Then the Lord says, “Even so shall it be with this wicked generation.” As we saw in the previous chapter of Matthew, Jesus upbraids the cities where He had done mighty works – which would have included casting demons out of people – because they hadn’t repented. Jesus had expelled the unclean spirits from people but these people hadn’t re-occupied and filled their inner lives with fruits worthy of repentance. This would have prepared their hearts ( houses ) for the Lord! But instead their unrepentant hearts left their inner lives “empty” and prepared to receive even more demons!

What is instructive about this passage is that people can be very willing to receive the “blessings” that God freely gives, but without being willing to really change their lives! This passage shows us the power of the Lord to cast demons out of people, but that even this is of no value if people do not truly repent! But nothing in this passage represents teaching concerning the binding of spirits that are supposed to rule over cities.

Matthew 16:15-20

Again, this passage is quoted because it indicates the authority that the church has “to bind”. Bind what? Well of course these modern teachers say this includes authority to bind territorial spirits. But there is nothing in this passage that tells us this. However, if we look at chapter 18 verses 15-20, this gives us a context in which to understand this statement of Jesus, and the context here is church discipline. Other commentators link these passages with John 20:23, where Jesus gives the apostles authority retain or remit someone’s sins. Added to this, many acknowledge that a more accurate translation of the Greek in Mt.16:19 is, “ whatever you bind on earth, will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth, will have been loosed in heaven.” This of course would also make good sense, insofar as it indicates that the church’s authority is based on its spiritual recognition or intuition of what is consistent with the outworking of God’s will and righteousness on earth, rather than the church wielding power and authority as it sees fit. So in Acts 5, the judgement on Ananias and Sapphira was not a matter of Peter venting his own anger, but what he said and did was a reflection of God’s own mind at this time, when He was so abundantly and freely working in and through His church – to whom much is given much shall be required.
So, in Matt. 18:15-20, Jesus puts binding and loosing in the specific context of church discipline. Had Jesus wanted to teach us the importance of binding and loosing spiritual powers for the sake of the spread of the Gospel, He could have done so in these passages – but He didn’t!

**Mark 5:1-19**

They refer to this passage in an attempt to show that there are spirits that belong to a geographical region. They point out that in verse 10 the demons beg Jesus not to be expelled them out of the country. This is supposed to show that these spirits are “territorial”. But if we look at the same account in Luke 8:31, we see that the reason the demons asked this, is not because they feared Jesus was going to send them to another country, but because they were afraid that He was going to send them into the abyss! (Refer also to Rom. 10:7 and Rev. 20:3). Nevertheless, one major writer goes on to say that after the pigs were led to their death, these spirits left them and went to influence the people in that region against Jesus so that they asked Him to leave, verse 37. But again in Luke’s account we read that when Jesus returned to that region, these people “gladly received Him!” – Luke 8:40. Well, had the “territorial spirits” gone on a journey or had they gone to sleep, that these people should now want to hear Jesus?! Or had the healed demoniac bound those spirits while Jesus was away? No! This healed man had preached Jesus to them! It was the preaching of Christ that had prepared and opened their hearts! So again we see that the very passages they quote from not only don’t prove their teaching but actually underlines what has been said in these articles!

One leading proponent of this teaching admits that there are very few passages in the NT which give us an example of “territorial spirits”. In fact, the passage above is the only one he identifies as perhaps being a “clear” example! But as we have now seen, this is no clear example at all of his teaching. More importantly, even if they could give us NT examples of “territorial spirits”, they still have not begun to show that the scriptures teach or exhort us to pray against and bind such spirits in order for the work of God to prosper! And it is this point that is at the very heart of their teaching! And it is this point that we regard as unbiblical and unhealthy. But finding no example of this in the Bible they spend much of their time in trying to prove that territorial spirits even exist!

Perhaps we can just mention here that these modern writers also use this passage to suggest that we ought to find out the name of territorial spirits that we should “bind”. Although in this one and only example we find Jesus asking the name of the demon, it does not appear that He needed to know it in order to expel them. In all the other NT cases, evil spirits are cast out without Jesus or the apostles asking the names of the demons, and of course there is not the remotest suggestion in the Bible that we should, or need to discover the name of “territorial spirits” in order to “bind them”!

**Acts 19**

This is another passage that it is believed ‘could perhaps’ indicate that territorial spirits exist and oppose the work of the Gospel, although it is admitted that this passage cannot prove this! We are told by these modern writers that the territorial spirits behind the goddess Diana of Ephesus created opposition to the work of God through the riot that Demetrius the silversmith started. But none of this makes sense. Through the preaching and ministry of Paul many miracles had already been done and a multitude of people had already turned to the Lord. But this modern teaching says that territorial spirits prevent this from happening! You have to bind them before people can really turn to the Lord in any great numbers! All we can say here is that these territorial spirits were rather late in doing their job, and what they did, didn’t amount to anything with regard to hindering the Gospel – one night of tumult for which only Demetrius and his followers got told off! Truly in this they are right, when they say that this passage cannot prove anything concerning the existence and work of territorial spirits!

I suppose in desperation to find something scriptural to support their teachings they come up with all sorts of ideas and inventions. For example, in Acts 19:20 it says that the word of God grew mightily and prevailed. And one writer points out that for the word of God to prevail, it has to prevail over something. So “something” is returned to that region, these people “gladly received Him!” – Luke 8:40. Well, had the “territorial spirits” gone on a journey or had they gone to sleep, that these people should now want to hear Jesus?! Or had the healed demoniac bound those spirits while Jesus was away? No! This healed man had preached Jesus to them! It was the preaching of Christ that had prepared and opened their hearts! So again we see that the very passages they quote from not only don’t prove their teaching but actually underlines what has been said in these articles!

Likewise, one major proponent refers us to Luke 11:22, where Jesus mentions overcoming the strong man. In a parallel passage in Mark 3:27, it is pointed out that instead of the word “overcome”, Jesus talks about binding the strong man, that is, demonic power. This author then proceeds to tell us that the words “overcome” and “bind” (by which he means binding evil spirits) are interchangeable. So that when you find the word “overcome” in the NT, this can refer to binding evil or territorial spirits! We are then told that when Jesus is addressing the seven churches in Asia and exhorting them to “overcome”, He is referring to the saints successfully
binding territorial spirits! But if we look at what Jesus says to the churches, there is absolutely nothing to support such an idea. Such reasoning only corrupts the word of truth, since Jesus is here talking about the saints standing and persevering in faith, love and obedience in the face of different kinds of trials and temptations. "Overcome" refers to our spiritual walk and growth before God, not fighting in prayer against territorial spirits! Again and again this modern teaching only succeeds in robbing us of the truth.

In the same way, they quote James 4:7, where we are told to submit to God and resist the devil. They interpret resisting the devil as including attacking and binding territorial spirits, whereas James makes no mention of such a thing! James is here talking about our spiritual walk before God.

We are exhorted by Paul, not to corrupt the word of God, nor to handle it deceitfully but to rightly divide the word of truth, 2Cor.2:17; 4:2; 2Tim.2:15. The above examples fail to do this at all!

**Acts 13:4-12**

In this passage the sorcerer Elymas tries to prevent the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, from believing. The apostle Paul rebukes Elymas and brings blindness on him. Here we have an example of the apostle using the authority given to him by the Lord to deal with this manifest and direct demonic opposition to the work of the Gospel. (There is a similar example in Acts 16:16-18.) Now, after Paul had dealt with Elymas, the deputy of the country believed, and this is supposed to show us that perhaps it is territorial spirits that keep people from believing. However, the writer who makes this point confesses that this passage does not really give us any evidence or proof that territorial spirits were responsible for these difficulties. So at least he is honest about it. But these writers do not explain why they call these incidents examples of “strategic-spiritual warfare”, (that is, against territorial spirits), when according to their own teachings, these incidents belong to ground-level or occult-level spiritual warfare – that is, dealing with individuals and their occult powers. In any case, neither does this passage show or teach us anything concerning identifying and binding territorial spirits.

**Conclusion**

These modern teachers and writers spend much of their time trying to show that there even are such things as territorial spirits, and apart from the one exceptional reference in the OT in Daniel, they cannot demonstrate it any further or with any certainty at all – certainly not from the NT. Even the reference in Daniel is no clear or conclusive proof of everything they teach about territorial spirits. This is why they make so much reference to pagan occult beliefs in order to find some evidence for their theories. But, as I have said, even to show that territorial spirits exist, doesn’t begin to validate their approach. They completely fail to give even one example from scripture of the saints praying against territorial spirits. They completely fail to refer us to even one scripture that teaches that somehow the work of God is blocked in a town, city or country by ruling territorial spirits and that the saints need to pray against them, or undo their work in some way, before people can believe and the work of the Gospel prosper.

Dear reader, do follow all that the scriptures teach, but do not be bewitched by these modern teachings to go beyond what the Bible teaches and thereby not only adding to the Gospel of Christ but actually opposing it.

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