

CONFLICT OF THE AGES

Warfare, Glory & Harvest



by Dale Rumble

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KNOWING OUR ENEMY

Successful warfare requires good intelligence. First of all, we must understand our adversary. To engage in a battle without first knowing our enemy's resources or the condition of the battlefield can be an invitation to disaster. This is particularly true for the final great harvest that is described by the following two truths taken from Matthew's gospel, chapter 13:

. . . the field is the world (v. 38)

. . . the harvest is the end of the age (v. 39)

The battle which the church faces as this age draws to a close is profiled for us in the following scripture:

*Finally, **be strong in the Lord** and in the strength of His might. **Put on the full armor of God** that you will be able to stand against the **schemes** of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**¹, against the **authorities**, against the **world forces of this darkness**, against the spiritual forces **of wickedness in the heavenly places**. Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you will **be able to resist in the evil day** and having done everything to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:10-13)*

Our warfare is *not* against evil people; it is against spiritual forces of wickedness and we must be equipped accordingly. We can wage warfare from a position of great strength if we stand with Christ in His great and complete victory over Satan on the cross. Although there has always been evil days, there will be a specific time of evil at the end of the age; a time when prayer will be most essential. Once we have put on the six pieces of armor that God has provided for us, the next verse defines the nature of our warfare (Ephesians 6:14-17).

1 Re: "rulers": an alternative word is "principalities."

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. (Ephesians 6:18)

Spiritual warfare takes place in two realms. First, it is against the earthly or world forces of evil which is seen in the demonic control of unregenerate men engaged in personal, business, criminal, political, religious, national or other activities. Secondly, our struggle is against wicked spiritual rulers and authorities in the heavens who Satan has placed over the world forces of evil to give them direction. They seek to produce specific emphases and manifestations of evil in different geographic locations.

What should our strategy of warfare be against these two realms of evil?

The nature of warfare against the *world forces of darkness* is simple and straightforward. We are to proclaim and manifest the love of God as we preach the gospel of the kingdom with signs and wonders. When demons are encountered, they are to be “cast out.” They are not to be feared nor are they to be reasoned with; they must be cast out of all people who seek to be free of them.

Because the principalities and authorities are important to Satan’s strategy of evil, it is vital for us to learn what the word of God has to say about them so that we may know how to war against this realm of evil.

The following are some observations of these spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places:

1. These beings are not demons, which are earthbound spirits; they are fallen angels who were originally created by God for His purposes, but who followed Satan in his rebellion.

*For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or **rulers or authorities** . . . all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:16-17)*

2. In his rebellion against God, Satan placed certain of these fallen angels as his representative over nations, regions and localities (Daniel 10: 13, 20). Scripture refers to these

fallen angelic majesties as principalities (rulers) and authorities.

3. Through His death on the cross and His resurrection Jesus triumphed over Satan. In doing so, He *disarmed* (stripped) all rulers and authorities. However, He did not remove them from their place in the heavens.

When He (Jesus) had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them (Colossians 2:15)

These rulers and authorities are now powerless to touch believers *except* through their control of demonic forces of wickedness in the earth. This is precisely the arena of our warfare against them!

The issue is government; either the government of God's kingdom or the lawlessness of Satan. Divine strategy is to displace and replace Satan's spiritual covering of evil over an area with the government of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thereby to bring in a great harvest of souls.

Whenever believers fail to walk in righteousness, they are extending a legal right for demonic forces of wickedness to harass them. If there is disunity, backbiting or secret sins in the church, such as pornography, adultery, witchcraft, etc., the church will be crippled and powerless against the demonic forces who feed on sins. The principalities of evil in the heavens will seek to amplify and establish specific emphases of evil in localities, including even whole nations. Islamic terrorism is an example; the influence of witchcraft in our society by the spirit of Jezebel is another example.

When we address warfare in the light of these two realms of evil, the way of victory for the church is threefold:

1. Be concerned first for our own life, our church and our locality. Repent for *all* sin and walk in righteousness before God. In essence, starve out all demonic activity. Preach the gospel, heal the sick and cast out demons.
2. Discern the identity and nature of Satan's spiritual forces over the area (these are sometimes referred to as territorial spirits). History of the region should be studied to

identify significant events of evil such as acts of war, murders, massacres, racism, slavery, occult activities, etc. These may have given rise to specific demonic activities. Such an examination could lead to a conviction of the need to repent, to seek forgiveness or group reconciliation so that revival can come.

3. The churches of the area are to unite in proclaiming the gospel, in standing together against false ministries and in praying against the spiritual authority of evil over the area. By presenting a united, godly, spiritual covering for the locality, the church can, in time, displace and replace the authority that Satan had put over the area. *Only Jesus can bring this to pass!* It will not happen apart from a sincere commitment by God's people to stand united in prayer and intercession. This is the essence of our struggle against rulers and authorities. It is foolish for believers to verbally "call or cast down" these spiritual authorities in the heavens. Only the Lord can remove them, and He does so as we allow Him to rule over our personal and corporate lives in the church. He must be allowed to have His rightful place as head over the church. This is the key to His glory rising upon His people to bring in the great end-time harvest (Isaiah 60:1-3).

THE BATTLEGROUND

Just as we understand the nature and resources of our adversary, so also must we understand the battleground where warfare is waged.

It is very easy to believe that this battleground is simply the souls of lost men. However, it is more personal than that. Consider the following scripture:

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the **destruction of fortresses**. We are destroying **speculations** (reasonings) and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God,*

and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

The battleground that we must primarily be concerned with is our mind and will! It comes down to how we see ourselves and others, and how this conditions what we do. When our mind-set is contrary to the will of God, it becomes a fortress that must be destroyed if we are to successfully wage spiritual warfare. Some very common fortresses are the following: pride, unforgiveness, fantasies, bigotry, racism, anti-Semitism, lust, pornography and witchcraft (the manipulation and control of others).

Only when we are submitted to the will of God can we deliver others from the forces of evil. We need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind; a renewal that enables us to see ourselves as God sees us. It is a renewal that will lead to humility (Romans 12:1-3).

It is essential that we put on and take up the whole armor that God has provided for us to wage warfare; we must *never* trust in our strength or wisdom. God can only use broken men.

The greatest obstacle to victory is not Satan; it is our own ego or self-centered will. This is why the Lord constantly brings our human weaknesses before us so that we will not trust in ourselves, but in Him! Paul's personal testimony bears witness of this truth.

*And He (God) said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, **for (My) power is perfected in weakness.**" Most gladly therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for **when I am weak then I am strong.** (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)*

The secret of successful spiritual warfare is more a question of humility, purity of heart and becoming broken before God, than it is of how much knowledge or experience one may have in spiritual things.

How do the truths on warfare fit together in the Lord's strategy for the final harvest of souls that ends the age?

THE LORD'S STRATEGY

In the beginning God gave Adam stewardship of the earth. By his fall into sin, Adam lost this position of authority to Satan, who became the god of this world.

At Calvary, Jesus began the work of restoring redeemed mankind to the glory and oversight that was lost. All of creation eagerly awaits this restoration and revelation of God's sons.

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God . . . that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. (Romans 8: 19, 21, 22)

This is a task that will be completed by the Lord Jesus Christ working through His body. Until the lordship of Christ is fully established over His people in the church, it will not be established in the earth. This is the heart of God's eternal purpose which He is carrying out in the Lord Jesus. The essence of His strategy is the displacing of rulers and authorities over geographic areas of the earth until finally, there arises unique warfare that involves Michael, the archangel, that will displace Satan from his place in the heavens (Revelation 12: 7-12). Jesus will then return to establish His kingdom on earth.

In His wisdom, God has determined to reveal His will and government to the rulers and authorities through those in the church who will lay down their personal wills and humble themselves to His lordship. Through wholehearted submission and obedience to Christ, they will demonstrate to rulers and authorities the Lord's reign over their geographic locality. As they preach the gospel in power, and stand united in prayer against the ruler and authority over their locality, a wonderful change will take place! New godly oversight will begin to replace the evil influence over the region; because of the new manifest presence of God, there will be a great harvest of souls.

*. . . to bring to light what is the administration (stewardship) of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; so that the **manifold wisdom***

of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the **eternal purpose** which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:9-11)

These overcoming believers will be among those who reign as joint-heirs with Christ on earth (2 Timothy 2: 11-12; Revelation 2: 26-27; 5: 10).

This transition to righteousness will involve great shakings in the heavens and warfare against the darkness of evil in regions and nations. There will be deep darkness in the world, but the glory of God will rise upon His people to bring in a final ingathering of souls.

*Arise, shine; for your light has come, and **the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.*** (Isaiah 60: 1-3)

All will be under the control of the Lord Jesus! He has promised to shake the heavens and all nations as His glory is manifest (Matthew 24: 29; Hebrews 12: 26-27).

*For thus says the Lord of hosts, "Once more in a little while, I am going **to shake the heavens** and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. **I will shake all the nations;** . . . and I will fill this house with glory" (Haggai 2: 6-7)*

The powers of the heavens will indeed be shaken as the final great harvest of souls is gathered in!

THE CONFLICT BEFORE US

Our first concern today should be the significance of God's glory rising upon the church. What does this mean, and what is required of us?

God very clearly defined His glory to Moses who had asked God to show it to him (Exodus 33: 18-19; 34: 6-7). God identified the following seven attributes of His nature as comprising His

glory: compassion, grace, slow to anger, mercy, truth, one who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin, and who is a just God.

When we consider the terrible moral and spiritual conditions of the lost multitudes in the world today, such as the homeless, refugees, AIDS infected, poverty stricken, illiterate, orphans, drug addicts, homosexuals, those deceived by false religions, etc., it becomes very clear that the only answer to such needs is the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 4: 3-4). The church must *demonstrate* the glory of Christ by preaching the gospel with compassion, mercy and in truth. God will confirm such righteousness with great signs and wonders for the gospel of the kingdom is the power of God for salvation.

The Lord will use trials and persecutions from the forces of deepening darkness in the world to develop character and bring forth His glory in the church. Martyrdom will increase!

*. . . fellow heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to (in) us. (Romans 8: 17-18)*

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (James 1: 2-3)

After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. (1 Peter 5:10)

For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory . . . (2 Corinthians 4:17)

I believe the shaking that occurred in the heavens on September 11, 2001 is significant in the end-time purposes of God. It is important for two reasons.

1. For a short time on this date, as the Twin Towers were destroyed, the Lord lifted His hand of protection from our nation. This was done to reveal to us, and particularly to the church, our great need for Him. As a nation we had taken Him out of our social conscience by removing His

commandments from our schools and courts. Our acceptance of homosexual lifestyles, and the legal right to abort unborn babies, both violate the laws of God. He removed His hand of protection on September 11 to call us as a nation to repentance (2 Chronicles 7: 13-14). There has been a shift in the heavens over America, and it is most important that the church respond accordingly.

2. The attack on the Twin Towers immediately led to a shaking of the heavens over Afghanistan. God has begun to shake powers in the heavens that have resisted any preaching of the gospel in Islamic nations. The present war against terrorism, national alliances, political decisions, national strategies, and many other events in the world will be orchestrated by God in order to bring down, in the years ahead, the spirit of Allah over Islamic regions.

The prophet Isaiah has foretold how God would visit Arabic lands bringing salvation to them, in the days when His glory rises upon the church. This promise of God should become the basis for our faith toward Islamic peoples.

*The wealth of the nations will come to you. A multitude of camels will cover you, the young camels of **Midian** and **Ephah**; all those from **Sheba** will come; they will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of **Kedar** will be gathered together to you, the rams of **Nabaioth** will minister to you; they will go up with acceptance on My altar, and I will glorify My glorious house. (Isaiah 60:5-7)*

Each of the five Arabic locations mentioned in the above prophecy have significance. Muslims recognize Abraham as their “spiritual father” in their faith. Midian was the son of Abraham and his wife Keturah, whom Abraham married after Sarah’s death. Ephah was the son of Midian, and Sheba was a son of Ephah. Nabaioth was the first born son of Ishmael, and Kedar was his second son. Thus, each of the five names refer to Abraham’s seed who were born of women other than Sarah.

I believe that the Lord will also move sovereignly through visions, dreams, ministry of angels and visitations to chosen individuals in these nations to raise up witnesses to Himself.

An essential truth that must be both demonstrated and proclaimed to Moslems is that God loves them; He has compassion on them and seeks to be their Savior and Friend. Such concepts of God are totally foreign to Islam. Therefore, the message of salvation must be accompanied with a ministry to the poor of basic commodities such as food, clothing and shelter. This will demonstrate the love and glory of God.

The church in America must not remain the same. September 11 was a historical landmark in the purposes of God; it is one of many shakings God has promised in His word that He would send on the earth. How well prepared the church of each locality will be depends upon how united the believers are in the strategy of God. First for their own locality, then for our nation. Finally, to be united in prayer for the gospel to have free access to all nations, and in particular to the multitude of Islamic people of the world.

The conflict of the ages is upon us!

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