

Series: Battlefield:  
fighting the flesh, the world, the devil  
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Edgar King  
Genesis 3:1-7  
Spiritual warfare

***"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.***

***I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me***

***I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.***

***Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.***

The good news is, Jesus is praying for you. The bad news is, you are going to need it. This is Jesus' prayer over his disciples and the church right before his death.

It is so heavy with language depicting a struggle with the world if you look at it. The world will hate us because of him but then he leaves us in the world.

My dear friends, we are behind enemy lines. Jesus has compassion for us for this, he has faith in the father and so in us that we can do this. And he keeps praying for us.

This is our series on Spiritual warfare and today we will start talking about the world. Our country, our county, our city. Where we find ourselves behind enemy lines.

Let's pray.

So far I have been making the point that we are at war and we have an enemy who is the devil. And he is at war against God. And he and his minions can afflict both, directly and indirectly, human beings and nature.

And this is so important because if we lack this in our worldview the problem of evil becomes something of us vs them. We start fighting other people because it is much easier to do this.

Here is an exhortation from Pastor Paul to the church in Ephesus.

***Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

Ephesians 6

### **1. Our Struggle is not against flesh and blood.**

The foreground of this struggle can often look like the people we see in front of us. It is those people from that people group. They don't want peace, they want violence. They do not want fair elections.

It is easy to make it about your neighbour who is a staunch liberal or your mom who is a conservative. It is easy to make it about your boss because they support Raila or your brother because of his addictions. It is easy to make it about Russia or China or the US as antagonistic countries.

But this is just the foreground, what we see. These issues we see are just symptoms of what is going on in the Spiritual realm.

### **2. Instead it is against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm.**

So Paul says we fight against the rulers, against the authorities and powers of this dark world. Does this mean against the rulers like Uhuru? Or Ruto? Okay, so maybe not the rulers themselves but maybe against the government of this city? Or is it against the UN and its liberalist agenda for new world order? Or is it against NATO?

No, instead it is against the Spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm. And they are what is behind the institutions we see in the foreground. This is who the war is against.

I want us to think about it this way. There is God in the background. We know that God is in control. We know that God is supreme and is King overall. Then there is a

foreground. This is what we see with our eyes and perceive through our senses. Human beings, government, religion, traditions, institutions.

But there is also a middle-ground, the spirit world, that is equally just as populated. And there is an intense war here. This is what Paul calls the Spiritual realm.

So, here is the interaction of the Bible. One thing we get clear from the narrative of Genesis is that God the creator made what I will call, the natural realm. And then he made Human beings, both men and women, to be priests and Royalty to rule over the natural realm.

That piece many of us get. Although God is King, his desire has always been that his will in the created order will be accomplished in part through human beings; we are in his image. We are made to rule, reign and care for creation just like God. So we build governments and culture, religion, institutions etc as our way of ruling the earth.

What we often miss is that there is a middle ground called the heavenly realm or Spiritual realm. This is realm is just as populated as the physical realm.

For example, in the bible, you may find this phrase, “the counsel of God”. For example in Job, before his suffering begins there seems to be a council before God and God is even conferring with them and takes their advice too. Even the satan, the accuser, is there. What is going on?

***God presides in the great assembly;  
he renders judgment among the “gods”: Psalm 82:1***

God among the gods? What is going on? How many are there?

How about the gods of Egypt? The fertility goddess of the Canaanites? And a whole lot others? And these gods seem to have some sort of power? Isn't there just one god? Are we worshipping a god out of a pantheon of gods? So why YAHWEH?

This understanding is key in fighting the world because there is often a lot more happening and that is what I want us to explore a bit.

***And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to***

***govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.***

Genesis 1:14-18

I told you there is a lot more happening here than just talking snakes. So we already have day and night even before the creation of the 2 great lights. Is it just a lack of scientific understanding? The interaction of the earth's rotations and the sun cause day and night. How could there be day and night before the sun and moon? What if there is a totally different story being told?

Take note of the words to govern. The great lights are made to govern, or to rule. Is this not the same command human beings are given over the earth? God also creates other creatures to rule over the night and day just like he created humans to rule and reign over nature.

But what are they to do? Just like with the creation of human beings. It was out of love. Their job was to provide light. Not in a physical sense. Separate truth from confusion and lies also called darkness.

This is the understanding there is when you read stories of people worshipping the moon and the stars or read horoscopes. It is not empty. It is the understanding that these are symbols or idols representing real Spiritual beings.

This is why the ancient world is comfortable with the idea of other gods. They are gods in charge of the spiritual realm just as we are to the natural realm. And the two interreact as the middle ground was meant to shine light on the natural world.

So what is happening in the drama of the Bible? God is King and he rules and reign. He creates out of love and pleasure and delight. And he does not want to enjoy this alone. So he creates not only mankind in his image to rule. But also Spiritual beings whose job is almost like guides. They are put in charge of the heavenly realm to provide light to the natural realm; to give direction, to lead the natural realm. Like a heavenly bureaucracy.

Both are given free will because without free will, there cannot be true love or worship or delight. Free will has the potential for great disaster because one can choose to go either way. But only free will has the potential for genuine and great love.

So the example I would give is that we have our national government led by our president. And then 47 counties each led by a governor. These governors are pretty much like presidents in their counties. One country, one supreme president, 47 little presidents. Hopefully for the good of the country.

Now let's go to the next scene of the drama.

***And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels,***

Rev 12:7

In the heavenly realm, there is a rebellion. In the heavenly realm, middle-ground a rebellion led by the satan breaks out.

So even the story of Eve we read last weekend is a continuation of this drama. Not the beginning of it. The satan has recruited a host of heavenly beings and now he is recruiting human beings.

That is why the devil tells Even if you disobey the command, you will be like the gods. You too can join the heavenly council of gods. It changes how you read genesis. Essentially, the enemy is saying join us in our rebellion against God.

This is the warfare we are caught up in. That is why Paul teaches that our war is not against flesh and blood. Not against people. It is not against them even when they go to a different church or worship in a different way. Our war is not against people who do not vote the same way we do. Heck, our war is not even against the county government of Nakuru.

Have you noticed that you can change the whole parliament and the new MPs end up behaving the same way the last ones did? You can transfer police officers and the new ones on the road will be as corrupt as the ones there last? You can change churches, and religion's toxicity will be the same in the next one you go to.

The trouble of the oppression of women was not the domain of just the Luo culture it was in the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin and the Maasai cultures too.

That is because there is a spiritual power behind them. So you can change the faces of the leaders and people involved but things remain the same.

God created this middle ground, these elemental forces to help rule over the spiritual realm and give direction to earth. Sadly, they have overstepped their boundary and are trying to act as if they are God. Trying to sit on his throne on earth and in the

hearts of human beings. And sometimes people give themselves to these things as if they were God.

People defend capitalism as if it is god himself. And in equal measure, others worshipping socialism. Both sides then try to recruit Jesus to be on their team but not worship him as King.

The way people worship their churches or church leaders or even political parties.

Political ideologies in the west and political personalities have become the new idols and many are sacrificing their family, their faith and everything at the alters of their worship.

Ideas on sexual freedom have become the new gods to be worshipped in our generation as if sexuality is a god.

And Christianity is just co-opted. It is possible to be culturally Christian and not follow Jesus at all.

We laugh at the ancients for worshipping the sun and moon but we do the same thing. The sun and moon were symbols of these elemental forces put in charge of the spiritual realm. But they had rebelled against God and were trying to act as God, overstepping their boundary.

In the same way, governments, political and economic ideology, science, religion, the law, etc are just symbols of things God put in place to help guide human beings. But the spiritual forces behind them have rebelled against God and trying to push Him out of society.

And the propaganda that they keep selling is now we know better. We do not need God. All we need is sexual freedom, democracy, tame religion, capitalism, media freedom etc. And many are worshipping at their alters.

And so to the church, Paul warns us to be careful to not again be enslaved by these gods. We may be in the world but we are not of the world.

We have to be careful how we engage with the world. How we engage with politics and economics and sexual ethics and religion and governance. Let us be aware that elemental forces behind them are in rebellion against God. No matter what name the political party comes with. And we are not to get enslaved to worship them and be part of their rebellion.

And you may ask, why would God have put these things even in place? Let's read from Paul

***What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, To redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.***

Galatians 4

We, His Children, God's image-bearers at some point needed the intermediates. God put these forces in place then to guide. They were charged for our good. These beings were created to guide us before our maturity. Yes, limited and not perfect. But in their rebellion, they started working against our good.

It is like a very rich parent dying and leaving property to his son who needs his uncle or aunty to watch over them and manage the affairs while he still matures up. How many times in this country does this happen and then the uncle begins to sell off some of these properties and act in bad interest to the kid?

Then when the time was right, Jesus is revealed. Jesus then comes and wins the battle. He, as our King, leads the charge against the elemental forces and their prince.

This is the first Sunday of Lent as we walk towards Easter, at the cross Jesus had total Victory. As Jesus did ministry on Earth, he said all authority on earth had been given to him. After the resurrection, he said all authority on heaven and on earth. He won the battle.

***And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.***

Colossians 3:15

Here is the good news. The elemental forces and evil's spiritual powers in the heavenly realm have been defeated. The middle ground has been disarmed and shamed. All the Kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our God.

Although we are behind enemy lines, we stand in Jesus as sons and daughters. And because Jesus has won the victory, we too have victory over elemental forces. So then how do we fight while being behind enemy lines?

***For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ***

2 Cor 10:3-5

As we engage in the world, as we engage with politics, government, traditions and our cultures and ideologies we must through God's Spirit look at every idea through the lens of Jesus Christ. If any of those ideas from our world; your political party or your preferred sexual ethic pretends to set itself up above the Knowledge of God we must take it captive and make it obedient to Christ.

The world can say anything it wants. But our job is to look at all this through the lens of Jesus Christ. Some of these ideas are things you may want because they are pleasing to the flesh and seem wise. The real question is do they pretend to set themselves up against the knowledge of God?

Sometimes, the ideas are false about your identity. When voices you believed about whether you are accepted and loveable come up. Take that thought captive like Prisoner of war and ask Jesus what he thinks about them.

While we are in the world, we are not of the world. And how we fight behind enemy lines is by the Spirit of God and truth.