

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Introductory notes for Christians on Spiritual Warfare

Maranatha is a movement of Christians in all the churches,
committed to Christian healing, Christian unity and Christian renewal.

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Introductory notes for Christians

1. Background - Conflict And Choice

- 1.1 Throughout the Bible God speaks to us of **conflict**.
- 1.2 This conflict is between **light, darkness**, love and hatred, good and evil, life and death.
- 1.3 We are given the **choice** of the position we will take in this battle. '**Choose** you this day whom you will serve' (Josh. 24.15).
- 1.4 'I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now **choose life** so that you and your children may live'. (Deut 30.19)
- 1.5 In the face of this choice we doubt and prevaricate. This is nothing new... On Mount Carmel Elijah went before the people and said '**how long will you waiver between two opinions?** If the Lord is God follow him, but if Baal is God follow him'. (1 Kings 18.21).
- 1.6 We are called to be **decisive** 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth'. (Rev.3.15-16).

2. Jesus - The Centre Of Conflict And The Victor

- 2.1 Jesus makes the clear statement '**He who is not with me is against me**' (Matt 12.30).
- 2.2 The mob were given the clear **choice** by the governor who asked the question (Matt 27.21) 'which of the two do you want me to release to you?' The cry went up - 'Barabbas!' Presented with Christ they shouted 'crucify him'.
- 2.3 **Jesus gave ample warning of the conflict into which His followers would be drawn** - they would be thrown out of the synagogues (John 16.2).
- 2.4 **Jesus knew His followers would be persecuted**, just as the Prophets of old paid the price for their message. He says 'blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven for in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you'. (Matt 5.11,12).
- 2.5 **Jesus warned** - '**false** Christs and **false** Prophets will appear' (Matt. 24.24).
- 2.6 **The Christian is destined for conflict** - only one of Christ's disciples died a natural death. The early Christians were urged - 'fight the good fight of faith' (1 Tim. 6.12).
- 2.7 **Paul** urges us to 'put on the full armour of God' and declares that **we are at war** 'against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places'. (Eph.6.12)
- 2.8 **The warning of confrontation** is given in 1 John 2 'you have heard that the **anti-christ** is coming, even now **many anti-christs** have come'. (1 John 2.18)
- 2.9 In view of all this it is understandable that we declare our belief in the Church **Militant** and the Church **Triumphant**.

- 2.10 Paul explains '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)
- 2.11 For the Christian, spiritual warfare is a **reality** which he experiences. He knows that 'the triumphing of the wicked is short' (Job 20.5). Because He knows that nothing can separate Christians from the love of Christ, trouble, hardship, persecution, nakedness, danger, sword - '**in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us**' (Romans 8.37).
- 2.12 The proclamation of the Church in all the centuries has been 'thanks be to God! He gives us the **victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 15.57)
- 2.13 As Christians we hold fast to the words of Christ 'in this world you will have trouble. But take heart! **I have overcome the world**'. (John 16.33).
- 2.14 Christians are Easter people - declaring that Christ is **risen** and **alive** and that on His cross He has **overcome** all the powers of darkness.

3. The Issue Of Authority

- 3.1 Jesus Christ comes to announce the **Kingdom** of God. The Kingdom is where God's will is perfectly done. The evidence for and signs of the Kingdom are to be seen in the work of Jesus in healing the sick and casting out demons.
- 3.2 Healing and spiritual warfare are fundamentally linked together and are **signs** of the Kingdom.
- 3.3 'When Jesus had called the **Twelve** together, he gave them power and authority to **drive out all demons and to cure diseases** and he sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick' (Luke 9.1-2).
- 3.4 Similarly, He sent the **72** out - "heal the sick who are there and tell them the 'Kingdom of God is near you'" (Luke 10.9).
- 3.5 They were elated with the response and returned with **joy** and said 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name'. (Luke 10.17). After confirming that He had given them authority He warned - 'However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven'. (Luke 10.20)
- 3.6 **The deliverance ministry was a joyful one** and we read that when the 72 returned Jesus was 'full of joy through the Holy Spirit'. Those who are instruments of God's deliverance are as those who unlock the prison door and lead the prisoner from the darkness of captivity to the light of freedom. This is reminiscent of Isaiah 49.9 "say to the captives, '**come out**', and to those in darkness '**be free**'!".
- 3.7 Jesus made it clear that His followers were to do **more** - not less - than He did - "**I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father**". (John 14.12).
- 3.8 Christ made a specific promise, - "these signs will accompany those who believe: **In my name** they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick persons, and they will get well". (Mark 16. 17-18).

- 3.9 Jesus 'taught them as one who had **authority**' (Mark 1.22). He spoke to them saying 'all **authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me' (Matt 28.18).

4. The Evil One

- 4.1 The Hebrew word satan means **adversary** - for example King Hadad of Damascus is called the satan of Solomon (1 Kings 11.14).
- 4.2 In the prologue to the book of Job the satan appears as both the **accuser and tormentor** of Job (Job 1 & 2).
- 4.3 The Hebrew word is rendered Diabolos in Greek, meaning **accuser, denouncer, slanderer, one who obstructs**.
- 4.4 Biblically the devil is sometimes known as the **dragon** or 'that old serpent' (Revs. 12.9). In Isaiah He is named Leviathan, the monster of the sea who 'The Lord will punish and slay with his sword, his fierce, great & powerful sword'. (Isaiah 27.1). The identification of the serpent in Genesis 3 with satan, with temptation, lies and throwing humanity into death, leads to later analogies (Rev. 20.2).
- 4.5 Sometimes Satan is identified with Beelzeboul - '**Lord of the Dunghill**' This is a corruption of Beelzebub, the name of a Philistine God - 2 Kings 1.1-3 - considered by the Jews to be very evil.
- 4.6 Jesus refers to the devil as **the ruler of the world** in John 12.31, 14.30 and 16.11. In 1 John 5.19 we read 'the whole world lies in the arms of the wicked one'. Paul calls him 'the **God of this world**' (2 Cor. 4.4). From his conversion Paul heard the words of Jesus '**I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to God...**' (Acts 26.18). The most likely translation of the Lord's Prayer is 'deliver us from the **Evil One**'.
- 4.7 The Kingdom of satan is specifically referred to as a house or a city (Mark 3.22-25 & Matthew 10.25). **The liberating activity of Jesus is a power struggle with satan**. His healing role has been presented as a kind of 'burglary' of the house of satan. (Mark 3.27).
- 4.8 Christ leads the attack upon satan's Kingdom. He presents God's Kingdom which will **replace** satan and rule over all mankind. Then evil will be eliminated as people are filled with the Spirit of God.
- 4.9 Jesus calls satan 'a **murderer** from the beginning' (John 8.44).
- 4.10 He is seen as a **commander of an evil army** endeavouring to hinder the purposes of God. (Matt 25.41 & Rev. 12.7,9).
- 4.11 His characteristics are that he is the **father of lies** (John 8.44) - the devil can **disguise** himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11.14). He is the **lord of death** (Hebrews 2.14). He is **deceitful and violent** (Eph. 6.11, 1 Peter 5.8). He is the **tempter** (Matt. 4.3 & 1 Thess. 3.5) - who offers rewards for disobeying God. He sows the weeds to damage the good seed (Matt. 13.39)
- 4.12 Peter says 'the adversary, the devil, **prowls** around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour' (1 Peter 5.8).
- 4.13 John says '**the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil**' (1 John 3.8)

5. The Temptation Of Christ

- 5.1 There appears to be a tendency for Christians to be more aware of satan following an experience of the power of the Holy Spirit. Enquirers are still more vulnerable. After healing and conversion there is an immediate need for intercessory prayer. Explaining the parable of the sower Jesus points to satan's **immediate** initiative - 'when anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path'. (Matt. 13.19). Similarly, Christian leaders are vulnerable to attack.
- 5.2 It is significant that shortly after his baptism Jesus **'full of the Holy Spirit** was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days He was tempted by the devil' (Luke 4.1,2).
- 5.3 The temptation emphasises the **humanity** of Jesus - he was tempted as we are tempted (see Hebrews 2.18).
- 5.4 **Firstly**, Jesus was tempted in his hunger. Jesus was undoubtedly in need of food and the devil recognising this weakness goaded 'if you are the son of God command that these stones be made bread' (Matt. 4.3). **The devil comes to us when we are weak and hungry.**
- 5.5 **Secondly**, Jesus was tempted in His authority. The devil endeavoured to get him to test God by taking him to the highest point of the temple and challenging him to throw himself down. **The devil mocks us when we consider the mighty power of God.**
- 5.6 **Thirdly**, Jesus was tempted by possession of the material kingdoms of the world, the easy way. He was being offered a crown without a cross. **The devil continually entices us with the prospect of possessions and power.**
- 5.7 It is significant that satan quotes **scripture**. It is still more significant that Jesus **answers** each of the three temptations with the words of scripture. (Deut. 8.3, 6.16, 6.13)

6. Deliverance

- 6.1 **Jesus set free demonised people.** (Matt. 4.24, 8.16, Mark 1.32, 39, Mark 3.11, Luke 4.41, Luke 6.18, Luke 7.21).
- 6.2 Christ cast out demons in his own power. **He gave full authority to His followers to cast out demons** (Matt. 10.1).
- 6.3 Demons (daimonion - often mistranslated devil) are spiritual agents which are active in all **idolatry**. They **seduce** believers (1 Tim. 4.1) and they **deceive** people through mediums (Levs. 20.6,27).
- 6.4 Demons have **intelligence and personalities** and recognised Jesus to be the Son of God. (Mark 3.11 and James 2.19).
- 6.5 Demons **tempt** with unclean thoughts.
- 6.6 Demons can **injure** and **attempt murder** (Mark 9.26).
- 6.7 **The aim of a demon is to lead people away from the faith** (1 Tim. 4.1).
- 6.8 In the early Church Christians were urged to **test** for deceiving spirits (1 John 4.1).

- 6.9 Evil spirits or demons can **mislead** us in our emotions, **harm** us physically and mentally and **influence** us or even **control** us spiritually. There are degrees of attack ranging from an exceptional situation of control to oppression.
- 6.10 Evil spirits can influence our lives because we have **invited or enabled** their entry (eg. through drugs, involvement in the occult, immorality etc.) or by our **exposure** to evil influences (eg. through violence or family influences).
- 6.11 We are given the ability to discern the nature of demonic attack by the Holy Spirit. **It is very important that we do not wrongfully attribute all ills to immediate oppression by demons.** In the power of the Spirit we are given the ability under the authority of Christ to remove the oppression of the offending spirit and to bring total release and protection. It is important to declare in word and thought that 'Jesus Christ is Lord' and also to seek the cleansing and protection of Christ for all involved.

7. The Christian Response

- 7.1 **Jesus saw his ministry as one of deliverance to those in spiritual bondage.** His principal mission is to destroy the work of the evil one (1 John 3.8 & John 12.31,32).
- 7.2 In scripture there is primarily a deliverance for **people**, but also for **nations** and **places**. The Gospel of Christ transforms individual people and society - it is indivisible.
- 7.3 The Christian ministry of deliverance is **fundamental** to the life of the Church.
- 7.4 The word '**possessed**' does not appear in the Greek New Testament, which refers to 'demonisation' meaning affliction by demons in some manner.
- 7.5 The manifestation of demonic **attack** may be seen in many instances including witchcraft, spiritism and a wide range of occult activities, which are prevalent today and **these are strongly condemned in the Bible.**
- 7.6 **Involvement with any aspect of the occult is totally incompatible with Christian faith.** Our spiritual warfare will lead us into contact with those in bondage to the occult. They may or may not be aware of the bondage. Similarly, they may or may not be aware of their vulnerability to destructive demonic influences.

8. Standing Against The Occult

- 8.1 Christians believe that there is only **one** God and that He has **total authority** and that we must not kneel before any other altar but His. 'You shall have no other Gods before me' (Exodus 20.3).
- 8.2 We believe that we are in His hands and through Christ we trust Him for all things. He knew us in our mother's womb. He calls us by our name and **we have no help but Him.**
- 8.3 The moment we acknowledge any other authority than our Father God, (which is what happens when people become involved in New Age, astrology, T.M., spiritism, witchcraft, ouija boards, tarot cards etc.) **we are deliberately turning away from Him and from His offer of love, strength, healing and forgiveness.**
- 8.4 **Biblical teaching could not be clearer**, as the following bears out:
- 8.5 '**Do not** turn to mediums or wizards. **Do not** seek them out, to be defiled by them' (Lev. 19.31).

- 8.6 "When they say to you 'consult the mediums and wizards who chirp and mutter' should not a people consult their **God**?" (Is. 8.19)
- 8.7 "There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practises divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer or a charmer, or a medium or a wizard or a necromancer. For **whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord**, and because of these abominable practices the Lord is driving them out before you". (Deut. 18.10-12)
- 8.8 "As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, **I will also set My face against that person** and will cut him off from among his people". (Lev. 20.6)
- 8.9 This is what the sovereign Lord says .." **I am against your magic charms** with which you ensnare people like birds and I will tear them from your arms. I will set free the people that you ensnare like birds. I will tear off your veils and save my people from your hands, and they will no longer fall prey to your power. Then you will know that I am the Lord." (Ezek. 13.20,21)
- 8.10 God is presented in the Old Testament as loathing witchcraft and the occult. Jehu said to Joram '**how can there be peace**, as long as all the idolatry and witchcraft of your mother Jezebel abound' (2 Kings 9.22).
- 8.11 'Let your astrologers come forward, those star-gazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you. **Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up**'. (Is. 47.13,14)
- 8.12 '**I will destroy your witchcraft** and you will no longer cast spells. I will destroy your carved images and your sacred stones from among you; you will no longer bow down to the work of your hands'. (Micah 5.12,13).
- 8.13 In the New Testament the warning against the occult is just as clear - 'The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God and I do not want you to be participants with demons. **You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too.**' (1 Cor. 10.20,21)
- 8.14 In Ephesus former magicians who had become Christians **burnt their books publicly** confessing and divulging their practices. 'In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power' (Acts 19.20).
- 8.15 The Spirit of God **confronts** all evil spirits and in the presence of Christ they fear and fly. 'Submit yourselves, then, to God. **Resist** the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you'. (James 4.7,8).
- 8.16 Christ comes to set us free from all idolatry, fear, superstition, sorrow and sin. '**It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then and do not let yourselves be burdened by a yoke of slavery**'. (Gal. 5.1).

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (Romans 8:15-16).

Dennis Wrigley 1991

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The Maranatha Community is a growing Christian Community committed to Renewal, Unity and Healing. Its members include Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Salvationists, Pentecostals and members of the United Reformed and Evangelical Churches. We are all one in Christ and our aim is to be more effective as Christians in the places where we live, worship and work. Maranatha has spread throughout England. It has deep involvement in Northern Ireland and is now beginning to reach out into Wales and Scotland.