

The Great Irruption – The Work of Christ Triumph over the Powers: *Christus Victor*

The statements:

*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having **disarmed the powers and authorities**, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Col 2.13-15)*

*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that **by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil**— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Heb 2.14f)*

*The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that **He might destroy the works of the devil**. (1 John 3.8)*

*For he has **rescued us from the dominion of darkness** and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col 1.13f)*

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to **rescue us from the present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father (Gal 1.3ff)*

*for the **accuser of our brethren has been thrown down**, who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony (Rev 12.10)*

*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; **I have overcome the world**. (John 16.33)*

Introduction

We are not alone in this universe, but we should have guessed that from our Maker being invisible.

Humanity has always believed this, with the vast array of gods, spirits, demons, angels, ghosts, and jinn ample witness to its pervasiveness. Even the sometimes arrogant Western world—with its “superior” knowledge that angels and ghosts cannot exist, stubbornly believes that the human soul survives death somehow. That somehow, consciousness or personality can ‘transcend’ earthly existence, and exist in some non-material or other-dimensional “form”.

The non-Western world and the “pre-Scientific” West, of course, have always known of this invisible realm of non-embodied personalities, and have always lived in fear of most of these spirits. These gods and goddesses, angels and demons, ancestors and jinn are powerful, often unpredictable, and demand obedience. Some appear benevolent, yet most are not so graciously disposed toward us. The Greco-Roman world was filled with ‘work-arounds’ to deal with this realm (and with those who sought to exploit the agents in that realm through magic and ‘deals’), and first-century Judaism—though they were militantly monotheistic—knew that a large contingent of these other-worldly angels and spirits were very much allied and aligned against Israel (as well as against the Gentiles).

In the New Testament descriptions of the awesome work of our Lord on the Cross, one strand of truth is that *some* groups in the spiritual realm were apparently hostile to us humans, and that part of the “battle” of the Cross and of the victory of that Death was to free us from their power over us.

The Old Testament/Tanach doesn’t talk much about the subject of angels, spirits, demons, and false gods, but by the time we get to the New Testament, our predicament becomes more obvious. We ourselves are not the only enemy that must be overcome in our coming to new life in Christ—there are spiritual agents that hold us back as well.

The Central Passage: Colossians 2

*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having **disarmed the powers and authorities**, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Col 2.13-15)*

Who are these “powers and authorities”?

Angels who have assigned areas of responsibility and influence in human affairs:

“Here four classes of angelic powers are listed: “thrones” (*thronoi*) and “dominions” (*kuriotates*, cf. 1 Cor 8:5), which were occasionally mentioned in Judaism among heavenly hosts of angels (2 Enoch 20:1; Test Levi 3:8), as well as “principalities” (*arche*) and “powers” (*exousia*)—often named as supermundane beings and powers. They probably represent **the highest orders of the angelic realm**. [WBC, Col 1.17]

“*Exousia* “authorities”, and *dunamis* “powers”, are simply **other terms for supernatural beings analogous to angels and with a similar status in the universe**. Such terms are ordinarily grouped in the NT: e.g., “every ruler [*arche*] and every authority and power” (1 Cor 15:24); “every ruler and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named” (Eph 1:21); “every ruler and authority” (Col 2:10); “to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10); “against rulers, against authorities, against the dark forces of the world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12); “whether thrones or dominions, whether rulers or authorities” (Col 1:16); “the rulers and the authorities” (Col 2:15); “nor angels nor rulers ... nor powers” (Rom 8:38). [WBC, at 1 Peter 3.22]

“Paul uses standard terms of his day for **the demonic and angelic powers at work behind the political structures of the world** powers that were thought to direct the earthly rulers and peoples (v. 21). Most people in Paul’s day believed that **the world was run by Fate, which was usually expressed by the stars (which were viewed as heavenly beings)**, and most of these people did not believe one had any hope of escape from Fate. Some of the mystery cults, however, like the cult of Isis, gained popularity by claiming power to free initiates from Fate...**Jewish people commonly believed that the heavenly powers ruled all the nations except Israel...Jewish people especially viewed these heavenly powers as “angels of the nations,” spiritual beings who stood behind earthly rulers and guided their rule** (cf. Dan 4:35; 10:13). (Although the details are developed more in later Jewish texts, the roots of the idea are as early as Daniel and the LXX of Deuteronomy.) [BBC, at Eph 1.21ff]

“...not simply free spirits roaming the cosmos wreaking havoc. They have **a fixed attachment** to the elements and structures of the world and to human personalities as social and political beings.” [ALPD:25]

Many of these terms were shared by Jew and non-Jew:

“Although Paul used many terms for the angelic powers known to Judaism, this does not mean that what he had to say about the powers of darkness would have been incomprehensible to the non-Jew. While "principalities" (*archai*) and "authorities" (*exousiai*) seem to be uniquely Jewish expressions for the unseen realm, many of the other words he used were also used by Gentiles to refer to the world of spirits and invisible powers. Words like "powers" (*dynameis*), "dominions" (*kyriotetes*), "thrones" (*thronoi*), "angels" (*angeloi*), "world rulers" (*kosmokratores*), "demons" (*daimonia*), "elemental spirits" (*stoicheia*) and "rulers" (*archontes*) were known and used by pagans, as evidenced in their magical and astrological texts.

“It is very important to remember that a very thin line separated Jewish and gentile religious belief in many quarters during the first century. On the one hand, many Jews practiced magic, believed in astrology and borrowed religious concepts from the cults of their pagan neighbors. On the other hand, the Gentiles took many religious ideas and cultic terminology from Judaism. This is seen most clearly in the Greek magical papyri, where in a magical recipe Yahweh, Solomon and Jewish angelic names are invoked together with Hekate, Helios, Serapis and a host of other Greek and Oriental deities. It is thus very difficult to separate what is "Jewish" and what is "Hellenistic" when the topic of good and evil spirits is approached. In some ways it becomes an unnecessary question because of the spirit of the times (*Zeitgeist*). All believed in the existence of good and evil spirits and shared a basically stock vocabulary for referring to it. [TH:PDPP:91]

Huh?! How in the world did these spirits get involved in this deal? I thought this was between us and God?

It IS between us and God—it’s just that this particular group of spiritual agents don’t want the deal to go through. They oppose our “getting” to God, for some reason.

It’s a long story, so let’s try to get the history leading up to the appearing of Christ:

One. Back in eternity past, the absolutely unique Son of God (the pre-incarnate Christ, second Person in the Godhead, Divine Word) created a group of spirits that were called ‘*bene elohim*’ or ‘sons of God’. The Unique and Uncreated Son created these creaturely spirits, who witnessed the *further* creation (single-handedly) of the universe:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God**. He was with God in the beginning. **Through him all things were made**; without him nothing was made that has been made.* (John 1.1f)

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the **One and Only** (monogenous), who came from the Father, full of grace and truth...No one has ever seen God, but **God the One and Only** (monogenas theos), who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.* (John 1.14ff)

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.*** (Col 1.15)

*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, **5 Who set its measurements, since you know? Or who stretched the line on it? 6 “On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7 When the morning stars sang together, And **all the sons of God shouted for joy?***** (Job 38.4ff)

Elohim was a 'title' and 'role' name, and it was used **always** of those in authority or power.

1. It is used of the Biblical God, as “intensification or absolutization or exclusivity (say, God of gods)” with **singular verbs**.
2. It is used of foreign gods (Ex 20.3)
3. It is used of Jewish ruling elders (Ps 82; Ex 21.6)
4. It is used of 'mighty men' (Gen 23.6)
5. It is used of the class of angels (Ps 8.5...”a little lower than the *elohim*/angels”)

In the case of human judges as *elohim* (Ps 82):

“The psalmist envisioned God presiding over an assembly of judges. The word gods (*elohim*) is used here for authorities in Israel (cf. 45:6; Ex. 21:6; 22:8-9). Some have thought this refers to angels (e.g., the Syriac trans.) in God’s heavenly court. However, the remainder of the psalm clarifies that these are God’s representatives who are in authority on earth.

“Using God’s words, the psalmist warned these magistrates to do their jobs right. **82:2-5**. The indictment (v. 2), given in the form of a rhetorical question, is that His people were unjust and partial... Instead they should judge fairly and champion the cause of the oppressed (including the weak . . . fatherless . . . poor, and needy). This is the essence of righteous judging. However, the human judges under God’s indictment roam the earth without spiritual or intellectual understanding and in moral darkness so that the foundations of the earth are shaken, that is, law and order are undermined (cf. 11:3). **82:6-7**. God warned the wicked judges that they will perish. He had appointed them as “gods” (cf. v. 1) and as **sons of the Most High, His representatives on earth**. But despite their exalted position, they were held accountable by God. Jesus appealed to verse 6 when He was accused of blasphemy (John 10:34). Since Israel’s judges were, in a sense, “sons” of God, Jesus said He was not blaspheming to call Himself the Son of God. [Edwin Blum, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*]

Thus, Ruling-Sonship (*bene-elohim* ship) normally carried five core concepts:

1. being a potential heir and successor (although there were often multiple ‘contenders’)
2. being a faithful advocate and worker for the parent’s will/interests (especially as messenger)
3. having some authority/responsibility over the administration of the estate (e.g., Kings’ sons were stationed in various regions of a kingdom)
4. “looking like the original” (e.g., family **resemblance** to the parent).
5. Being a co-ruler, yet subordinate, with the Original/Father, sometimes (e.g., Jehoash/Jeroboam II in Israel; Ahaz/Hezekiah in Judah).

This concept/term of *bene-elohim* shows up in a number of cases in Scripture:

1. The angels are called this (cf. Job 1,2)
2. Adam was called a ‘son of God’ by Luke (in the genealogy of Jesus).
3. Jesus was always called ‘THE Son of God’.
4. Believers in the NT are called ‘sons of God’.
5. The Israelite monarch was called God’s Son (e.g., David, Solomon), since they were supposed to rule under/for God
6. Pagan pre-flood kings, claiming to be divine (and perhaps energized by evil angel/spirits), were called this in Genesis 6.
7. The nation Israel is called “my son” in Hosea (“out of Egypt I called my son”)

We can illustrate some of these elements by comparing various *bene elohim*:

	<i>Angels</i>	<i>Adam</i>	<i>David</i>	<i>Jesus</i>
Potential Heir	?	“kingdom prepared from the foundation...”	The nations?	Yes
Worker/Messenger	Messengers Ministers	The Garden	Shepherd	All
Authority	World	Over the earth	Jewish Nation	All
Resemblance	nature	Rulership	Rulership	Everyway
Co-ruler/Vice-ruler	?	?	Yes	Yes

Two. Adam and Eve were created in a position of authority over the earth (‘rule over it’), with a specific short-term task of managing the Garden of Eden (which included animals). We do not know what the relationship between the angel’s sphere of authority and humanity’s was at this point. Our rulership was a co-regency, since we were an ‘image’ of God—like the assumed situations of ANE kings:

“It is a common concept throughout the Near East that the god, or high god, was the king of the state or polity. This was an important element of royal ideologies since the king ruled as the earthly representative of his god. In general terms it can be said that the earthly king’s rule, or at least the ideal aspects of kingship, was **merely a reflection of the heavenly king’s rule**. [*Anchor Bible Dict*, s.v. “Kingship”]

Three. The serpent (identified as Satan in Revelation), although supposedly under our jurisdiction, influenced the first Pair to violate the only imperative given by our God, demonstrating **to all** that **WE were not fit to reign**:

- Our disobedience was anti-community, since we acted treacherously against another Community Member (God)
- Our disobedience was self-destructive, since we had been told that we would ‘die’ in the act.
- Our disobedience was an inversion of values, since we valued our OWN pleasure/wisdom over the good of the community (God, our relationship, even the animals)
- Our disobedience was insubordination, showing the we could *not be depended on to leverage the greater wisdom*, resources, and expertise of the main Leader, in fulfilling our Mandate.

Four. At this point, we are more-or-less ousted from exercising our ‘office’ (at least temporarily) and “cast out” (like Satan would be in the future), and moral government then reverts solely to the angels. They are used as Military Police to keep us away from the Tree of Life, and out of the Garden altogether:

After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen 3.24)

Five. But the angels are probably already corrupt by this time (since Satan was an evil operative in the Garden), but if not, then they are certainly so by Genesis Six. The “sons of god” and “daughters of men” episode—in most interpretations—contains elements of angelic evil (either the ‘cross-breeding’ or the divine-king abuse of power). Between the influence of the violence in our hearts (*a la* Cain and Lamech) and the abuse of power/violence in the ‘powers and principalities’ at that time (*a la* Genesis 4 and 6), all government/authority on earth is bad. And God sends the flood, to at least “reset” the “programmable ones” (i.e. humans) back to ‘start’.

Six. But at the Tower of Babel, something different happens. The division of the race into nations and languages is accompanying by a change in administration, described in Deut 32.18:

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel. [Deut 32.8; Actually, “sons of god” (DSS) or “angels” (LXX)]

“This passage is best explained as teaching that ‘all the nations of the earth are given over into the control of angelic powers.’” [TH:PDPP:63]

“God rules Israel directly through the Mosaic covenant and the nations indirectly through the members of the divine council (‘sons of God’).” [TH:ALPD:126]

Ancient Jewish tradition understood this as God appointing the angels over all nations except Israel, over which He Himself was king or ruler:

“He appointed a ruler for every nation, but Israel is the Lord’s own portion” (Sirach 17.17)

And understood the “us” in the “let us go down” to refer to angels in their capacity as judgment-executors (Jubilees, Philo, Augustine, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, 4Q243).

Angels up to this point have been only Military Police, guarding the Garden, or corrupt rulers taking advantage of their authority (Gen 6), but here they appear as Moral Judges/Executors, perhaps with the power to visit **appropriate** punishment upon the builders. But, apart from Israel—with God as their ‘ruler’—the nations/gentiles are entrusted/consigned to the angel administration.

“In conclusion...there is a consistent teaching that God’s reign in the Old Testament is mediated through spiritual beings and entities.” [TH:ALPD:131]

Seven. At this point in the biblical record, we lose detailed visibility into what the angels are doing in the non-Jewish nations, except that we get obvious glimpses of hostility between the angels of the nations and angels that apparently involved with Israel:

Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. 13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. 14 Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.” [Dan 10.12]

So he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; 21 but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince. 1 And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.) [Dan 10.20ff]...At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then [Dan 12.1]

The comment about “Michael, the great prince who protects your people” suggests that even Israel was assigned an angel-ruler (parallel to the supreme angels over Persia and Greece), even though the Deut 32 passage doesn’t seem to indicate that.

Plus, we get statements and indications that they **take advantage of their authority/power** and lead the nations into worshipping themselves (as idols and demons)

“The idea that the gods of the nations have become demons is found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, for example, in Psalm 96:5 (LXX Ps 95:5): ‘For all the gods of the peoples are idols [LXX *daimonia*]; but the LORD made the heavens.’” [TH:ALPD:128]

“The council of the ‘sons of God’ and ‘host of heaven’ represents God’s initial pattern of rule over the nations after the Fall. He granted each nation indirect access to his heavenly kingdom, authorizing their particular government, culture, and spirituality. Due to sin in heaven and on earth, the nation angels corrupted themselves. **The peoples worshipped them as idols rather than as icons of God’s kingship and glory**, and their manner of life became corrupt and unjust, meriting death.” [TH:ALPD:148]

Eight. These idols/angels/rulers are already corrupt in the OT, and God will judge them somehow in the future:

Thus you shall say to them, “The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.” (Jer 10.11)

So it will happen in that day, That the LORD will punish the host of heaven, on high, And the kings of the earth, on earth. 22 And they will be gathered together Like prisoners in the dungeon, And will be confined in prison; And after many days they will be punished. (Is 24.21ff)

Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;’ (Mt 25.41)

Nine. Oddly enough, the governing angels’ power to deceive is a legitimate function of authority, and therefore technically an ‘authorized use’ of deception, death, destruction, and division!

These angels had been given authority and responsibility for moral government in human history, and Romans 13 points out that **all governing authority** is from God, existing to inflict judgment on evildoers and praise/encourage good-doers:

*Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is **no authority except from God**, and those which exist are established by God. 2 Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; 4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for **it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.***

[Note: “divine right” of kings is not necessarily as obvious—cf. David and Saul—and when and how this authority is transferred/given to some seems to be very variable: assassination, overthrow, conquest, secession, popular mandate, succession, co-regency, abdication-via-alliance, etc.]

They were *supposed to do* this by (a) punishing the guilty [e.g. ‘destroying Angel’]; and by (b) “praising” the good—quite a non-symmetrical mandate!

These angels (as opposed to the ‘ministering angels’ that God seems to dispatch from heaven on rare occasions in biblical history) did NOT have a ministry of ‘mercy-after-sin’, though. They were judgment-bearers, and sin would invariably and quickly pit them against you.

In the case of Israel, they were involved in the giving and enforcement of the Mosaic Law. *Outside of Israel*, it was the internal moral code (Rom 1-2) and the Noahic moral code (cf. James in Acts 15.19: “The few requirements James suggests they impose are representative of the handful of laws Jewish tradition declared that God gave Noah. According to the more lenient Jewish position, any righteous Gentiles who kept those basic laws would have a share in the world to come.”[BBC]).

The problem arose because there was such a wide latitude in the types of penalties that could be inflicted for sin:

- The disasters of Deut 28.1ff5, including death-in-all-forms...
- Or abandonment/cursing by God (dissolution of the covenant or membership in the covenant community)...
- You might get what you asked for—asking for a spirit to ‘get involved’ in your life!
- Or *lex talionis* (receive back what you did or intended to do to others)...indeed, Proverbs taught this too:
 - The deceiver would get paid back deception
 - The will-overpowerer would get paid back with having the will overpowered
 - The enslaver would get paid back with enslavement
 - The false teacher would get paid back with delusion
 - The adulterer would get paid back with adultery
 - The violent would get paid back with violence
 - You would fall into the pit you had dug for others...

Indeed, God himself used angels/spirits for these types of judgments in Israel—**with perfect legitimacy**:

- **The use of deception as punishment:** The story of the lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab’s prophets, to lead Ahab to his death (I Kings 22.19ff:

And Micaiah said, “Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left. 20 “And the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said this while another said that. 21 “Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, ‘I will entice him.’ 22 “And the LORD said to him, ‘How?’ And he said, ‘I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ Then He said, ‘You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so.’ 23 “Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you.”

And this will repeat in 2 Thess 2.11: *“For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”*

- The use of **division/disharmony** in Judges 9.22ff:

After Abimelech had governed Israel three years, 23 God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem, who acted treacherously against Abimelech. 24 God did this in order that the crime against Jerub-Baal's seventy sons, the shedding of their blood, might be avenged on their brother Abimelech and on the citizens of Shechem, who had helped him murder his brothers. 25 In opposition to him these citizens of Shechem set men on the hilltops to ambush and rob everyone who passed by, and this was reported to Abimelech. [Remember the judgment at Babel, too—it was a division]

- The use of **death and death-as-accursed** is VERY common (esp. by 'destroying angels'):

"in most cases when holy angels are associated with justice, it is in the role of executioners." [TH:ALPD:163]

"The Old Testament angel of death is noted especially for administering judgment" [TH:ALPD:175]

- The use of **retributive violence**, in *lex talionis* fashion, in Ps 35.5:

May those who seek my life be disgraced and put to shame; may those who plot my ruin be turned back in dismay. 5 May they be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them away; 6 may their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them. 7 Since they hid their net for me without cause and without cause dug a pit for me, 8 may ruin overtake them by surprise— may the net they hid entangle them, may they fall into the pit, to their ruin.

- For those that 'dabble' in spiritual matters without authorization, and who do 'divination-class' iniquity, **spiritual oppression might be a judgment**—cf. the 'evil spirit' sent on Saul after his rejection by God (1 Sam. 16:14; 18:10; 19:9)

When God uses these means, it is **always very late**—His patience and warnings and "alerts" are well known. He would allow time for one to change his mind, or come to her senses, or abandon their bad course of action. It was always a last ditch effort.

Ten. So, these judgments can be legitimate responses to sin, but the evil angels, and even the 'judgment' angels involved in Israel, were not so lenient, not so gracious as God, and were instead very 'quick on the trigger.'

Indeed, ancient Israel remembered even the holy angels as being **opposed to God for allowing repentance(!)**:

The case of the repentance of Manasseh and God's digging a tunnel to let his prayer get past the angels!

"The objection of the angels to the admittance of repentance is not confined to such extraordinary cases as the one of Manasseh. As it would seem, **they oppose repentance in general**. 'When a man commits a transgression, the angels come and denounce him, and say, 'Master of the Universe, bow down thy heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains and they shall smoke,' etc. (that is, they demand immediate satisfaction). But the Holy One, blessed be he, says, 'Man may be hard for the time, but if he will do repentance, I will receive him.'"" [ART:322]

In other words, the situation of Ezek 18.27 **could never actually occur** if the angels were in full power (in other words, if Israel had told God to ‘go away’...): “*Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he has committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life. 28 “Because he considered and turned away from all his transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.”* –because death or deception would have occurred BEFORE the ‘turning away’ situation came about!

Eleven. So, given a hostile angelic force—in charge of moral judgment—**sinful humanity would not stand a chance.** The governing angels could accuse us before God of our sins, and have complete authority to keep us permanently deceived-until-death-as-accursed and/or so distracted by division and misery we could never even question what was going on...And so the powers and principalities—with Satan as their chief—became known as ‘accusers’ (to get a warrant to inflict punishment) and then as ‘deceivers’ (since they seemed to prefer this type of punishment):

“The angels are not impassive spectators or disinterested messengers in the drama of life and history. The angel champions of the nations contend for their cause against the champion of the Jews; an adversary (Satan) among the angels appears as accuser of the high priest Joshua, and argues the nullity of the institutes of atonement with he administers; the angelic adversary in Job has a cynical skepticism about disinterested goodness and unmistakable jealousy of Job’s reputation with God. Judaism followed the Bible, therefore, in imagining the angelic princes of the heathen nations appearing before God as accusers, charging the Israelites with the same sins and vices as the heathen; Satan accuses them every day of the year except on the Day of Atonement. The destroying angels, or angels of punishment, execute God’s sentence; but it is a work to which they are nothing loth....Thus there are different dispositions, partialities and antipathies, among angels as in human society; there is no monotony of universal benevolence on high, nor is even justice dispassionate. And though there are no enmity, strife, hatred, or foes, in this place, still it is necessary for God to ‘make peace in his high places’ (Job 25,2).” [HI:JFCCE:407]

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world (Rev 12.9)

[Remember, God used the evil Assyrians to punish Israel, and then punished the Assyrians for doing it with excessive cruelty and ‘enthusiasm’]

Twelve. Since they “do not bear the sword in vain”, they can also wield the ‘fear of death’ over their charges. They can terrorize their constituency with this, into all kinds of religious slavery:

*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that **by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—** 15 and free those who all their lives were **held in slavery by their fear of death.*** (Heb 2.14f)

And this actually included the Jewish nation and their bondage to the ‘elemental spirits’ of the Law:

“Paul also spoke of the Galatians ‘observing special days and months and seasons and years’ (Gal 4:10). While Paul had no problem with Christians having personal convictions on such matters (Rom 14:5), he objected to these observances (including circumcision) being viewed as religious obligations, as part of the necessary response to the gospel message. In Paul’s mind, **to turn to circumcision and legal observances was tantamount to returning to slavery--a slavery to the principalities and powers** (*stoicheia*; Gal 4:9)!

“For Paul both **Jews and Gentiles were in bondage to the powers of darkness** prior to conversion. He explained that unredeemed **Jews are slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe** (Gal 4:3). These **hostile forces apparently exploit the law and use it as a tool to hold unbelieving Judaism in captivity**. God’s redemption through Christ brings freedom—freedom from the law and freedom from servitude to the powers (Gal 4:3-5).” [TH:PDPP:131]

Thirteen. Inside Old Testament Israel, this deception-spiral was at work from the beginning, unfortunately:

*They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. 17 **They sacrificed to demons, which are not God— gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear.** (Deut 32.16f)*

*And they shall **no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot.** (Lev 17.7)*

And as Israel sought the false gods of the nations, *their openness to deception increased...*and they called on YHWH less and less, and so His involvement was less and less, and from a distance more and more...and God gave them over to ‘serve those foreign gods—in that foreign country’ (Jer 5.19)!

Fourteen. The prohibition against sorcery, witchcraft, divination, idolatry, and necromancy was exceptionally important to Israel’s health (as it would be for anyone!). To deliberately begin interaction with invisible spirits placed you in a situation **in which you could NOT defend yourself** against its power, argument, influence, presence.

- There is a vast amount of data—historical, anthropological, and psychological—confirming the existence of demonic “possession”, and even Western descriptive sciences are admitting the failure of its ‘science’ to explain it ‘away’...In almost all non-Western and ancient cultures, possession was institutionalized in the religious and shamanistic areas.
- Many modern ‘possession’ cases begin with dabbling in the occult, Ouija boards, and magic:

“Some voluntary invited possession is not a deliberate liaison with the forces of evil in the way of black magicians, but an opening of doors in ignorance of the spiritual ‘gate-crashers’. This has already been made clear in considering the dangers of occult involvement, whether it is psychic development, superstitious dependence, or the range of ‘spirit’ activities from ouija to séances. Ouija is alleged not to work without first an invitation to the ‘Spirit of the Glass’, and ‘Are you there?’ is the key question of séances as well...The most specific invitation for spirit-possession is by mediums who use trances during which they invite ‘possession’ by an alien intelligence...” [X:TH:BDUFE:130]

“The overwhelming factor in accidental or ‘involuntary’ possession is, as has been made clear above, involvement with the occult, for it is basically the worship of what is created. Viewed positively, those who are immune from such suffering are those whose doors are ‘shut’ to psychic, occult, magical or demonic forces and pressures, who love God (and hence live without fear) and whose lives not only have a spiritual foundation in this way, but a psychological one as well—in that their love for God will show itself in an ordered way of life and service to others.” [X:TH:BDUFE:132]

- The malevolent spirits are more ‘subtle’ than us (cf. Gen 3), and **human truth-discernment may not be an adequate defense against superior deception abilities.**

“The information which the spirits give [in New Age channeling] is a supernaturally sophisticated mixture of truth and error which their followers are incapable of evaluating” [WR:NAMBW:207]

- External spirits could ‘interface’ directly with our minds in a number of ways:

- * They could energize certain psychological processes, so they become dominant:

“Psychological processes require energy and this energy may be supplied, not only by the psyche and the Holy Spirit, but conceivably also by demonic forces. Such an agency could enter the ego especially, and perhaps only, if the conative [decision-making] functions were volitionally given over and begin to act in a completely ego-dystonic [anti-ego] manner.” [“Reflections on the Demonic: A Psychiatric Perspective” by Basil Jackson, in X:TH:DPMHAT:262]

- * Dream-states have always been frequent meeting places for human/spirit communication, including angel visitations (cf. NT Joseph)

- * Altered States of Consciousness open us to vast possibilities of influence/input:

Trance states are akin to ‘dreaming’ and are part of most institutional possession. They are known as the gateway to ASC (Altered States of Consciousness). ASC’s are considered the meeting place with the spirits in most cultures.

Meditative states are similar to trance states in brain chemistry and behavior (and gateway), and can be induced by repetition and ritual. Obsessive reflection on an “anti-value” (ambition, power) can induce this state! [Joshua 1.8: “*Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*”]

Visionary artists and powerful opinion-makers can almost *live in* a constant ASC for periods, allowing our culture to be influenced by their “muses”...

- * We process tons and tons of unconscious data every day, and we know this stuff is retained and affects our attitudes and behavior.

- * We know electromagnetic fields can produce a wide range of ‘religious’ and ‘euphoric’ experiences, and there is no reason why a spirit couldn’t produce one of these out of the thin air...

- * Same thing goes for when our brains are “pharmacologically challenged” via psychoactive drugs...

- * And probably many other ways of which we cannot fathom with our current knowledge of neurobiology (cf. Satan in Job 1-2)

- * But the most common is undoubtedly a word from a respected role-model...

Fifteen. A sample “control programme”:

First, initiate a program of *leadership usurpation*:

1. Influence the leadership to use personal pleasure as a measure of national policy (e.g. elitism)
2. Exalt these “values” to the de-prioritization of mercy/goodness.
3. Judge this sin by giving them more blindness and enslavement to these lusts for power etc.
4. Increase the deception level by punishing lower-levels with higher levels of delusion.
5. Use the delusion to smuggle in new ‘values’ to guide public policy (e.g., ‘invade Assyria’), especially divisive ones like ‘war’ and ‘conquest’ and ‘economic power’.

And next on to *social transformation* toward failure:

1. Grow leadership according to the above
2. Use success/volume to ‘get a hearing’ for the bad-values before the malleable
3. Perpetuate ‘traditions’ and ‘group pressures’ to discourage ‘deviance from badness’
4. Use God-given *good* feedback mechanisms of groups/communities to strengthen *bad* behavior
5. Anybody that tries to ‘escape’ the cycle, exile or kill—since death is a alternative punishment

To the extent the angels had control of external events (e.g., weather, crops, disasters—cf. Job), do the ‘providence’ thing and support public statements in this way.

Develop soul-less religion:

1. Use the fear of death to create religious rituals that open up the follower to more and more ‘outside influence’.
2. Use trances, mediums, possession, paid-prophets, prayer to get the follower to ‘invoke’ your activity in non-government areas of life (e.g., family, temperament).
3. Keep the fear of death high, by creating a host of impossible conditions and a steady stream of unexpected outcomes (unpredictable god) to keep them ‘in contact’ with you.
4. Make sure the religious rules focus them on ‘manipulation’ and perhaps ‘social benefits’ so the heart never gets involved, except in pride, bigotry, or elitism.

Use those ‘more influenced’ to stay in front of those ‘less influenced’...

Sixteen. These angelic authorities have so **influenced human leadership and groups over time**, that even the existing human institutions can/do reflect—in differing degrees—their angelic agenda. The ‘world’ which lies in the ‘hands of the evil one’ (1 John 5.19)—who is also known as the “ruler of this world” (John 12.31)—would continue along a anti-God path even without angelic empowerment, direction, and innovation. It could be steered in positive directions by good influences and agents of course (e.g., a new precedent could be set by servant-leadership or teamwork), but there would still be ‘corporate culture’ resistance to the intended improvements. Lovers of God face three enemies: the sinful aspect of our selves, the ‘world’, and the devil. Any one of these is sufficient to derail our best “self-funded” attempts at righteousness in this life.

Individuals have the power to turn internal will-decisions into actions, then into habits, then into character. When these individuals are part of a group, their actions, habits, and characters can become **group** influences, models, and values. Organizations have a ‘life’ of their own, analogous to individual choice-consequences:

Individuals	Groups
Input from senses, imagination, models	Input from environment, planning, models
Thoughts	Pool of ideas and values
Decisions/Choices	Dominant 'voices', 'consensus', Mgt. Will
Words	Policy, statements of direction, mission statements
Actions	Operations and initiatives
Habits	Policy, Procedures, SOP's, precedents
Character/Values	"Implicit values", priorities, exception processing

Remember the metaphor of 'group learning':

Start with a cage containing five apes. In the cage, hang a banana on a string and put stairs under it. Before long, an ape will go to the stairs and start to climb towards the Banana. When he gets halfway up the stairs, spray ALL of the apes with freezing cold water. After a while, another ape makes an attempt with the same result--all the apes are sprayed with cold water. Do this for five repetitions.

Turn off the cold water.

If, later, another ape tries to climb the stairs, the other apes will try to prevent it even though no water sprays them.

Now, remove one ape from the cage and replace it with a new one. The New ape sees the banana and wants to climb the stairs. To his horror, all of the other apes attack him. After another attempt and attack, he knows that if he tries to climb the stairs, he will be assaulted.

Next, remove another of the original five apes and replace it with a New one.

The newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous Newcomer takes part in the punishment with enthusiasm.

Again, replace a third original ape with a new one. The new one makes it to the stairs and is attacked as well.

Two of the four apes that beat him have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs, or why they are participating in the beating of the newest ape.

After replacing the fourth and fifth original apes, all the apes which have been sprayed with cold water have been replaced. Nevertheless, no ape ever again approaches the stairs. Why not?

"Because that's the way it's always been around here."

Social and cultural organizations--*in their design and logic*—do not seem to be evil *per se*, but the instances and 'implementations' of those in a fallen world **seem to reflect the fallenness** of that world...

"The structures of our existence, to a large extent, **represent the composite result of human ideas, affections and activity**. Both people and their ideas can have an evil bent." [TH:PDPP:203]

"Working through people, the powers can pollute a society's traditions and values. They can influence authors, television producers, political thinkers and analysts, pastors, university professors, composers, artists, screenplay writers, economic policy makers, architects of defense strategies, and journalists. **Through a unified networking influence**, it is not difficult to imagine how the powers can influence the direction of an entire culture. In one decade something may be considered morally outrageous and in the next morally acceptable through a changed public opinion...**The powers themselves, however, are not the structures**. Although the powers do their best to influence the structures, **evil still resides in the structures only insofar as the people involved are evil. Just as a glove has no ability on its own to carry out a task, ideologies, economic systems and the like have no power apart from the people who subscribe to them and enforce them**. A tradition ceases to be a tradition when people no longer pass it on." [TH:PDPP:204]

“God demands that Christians engage in social action based on their love for humanity, their call to be salt and light, and their responsibility to be careful stewards of creation.” [TH:PDPP:205]

“The personal darkness of evil in the depths of the human soul is not confined to the individual. It is attracted to its **collective expressions in society. It can erupt into a frenzy of violence in the permissive context of a riot, revolution, or war.**” [WR:NAMBW:589]

A life-bearer may not be able to completely change the embedded evil in large organizations, but they may be able to humanize, witness to, and “warm” significant individuals or sub-groups within them (cf. Daniel, Mordecai, Nehemiah, Ezra in Babylon/Persia, Joseph in Egypt, the Israelite servant girl in Namaan’s household)

Seventeen. Not all angels are so negatively aligned against us. There are good angels—the Jews called these the “Ministering Angels”—that seek to defend the abused, but these seem to be mostly ‘spot interventions’. In other words, they are dispatched by God for *specific* communications and interventions, as opposed to having constant administration over us. The case of Gabriel, with a message for Daniel, is a good example of this—his dispatched journey is resisted by a Ruling Angel (Persia). And the premier angel in the Old Testament is the Angel of Yahweh—the pre-incarnate Christ—and this is the **only angel seen interceding for a human** (Zech 1.12: *Then the angel of the LORD said, “LORD Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which you have been angry with these seventy years?” 13 So the LORD spoke kind and comforting words to the angel who talked with me.* “)

In the NT, some angels in heaven are ecstatic upon repentance, as opposed to the ruling angels:

“In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” (Luke 15.10)

Eighteen. Relatively speaking, the Bible doesn’t really talk a whole lot about spirits actually. For agencies used by God in human history, they are strangely ‘invisible’ in the Biblical record. No doubt, some of this is due to our tendency to ‘create idols of’ everything that is NOT God (!), and so there are so many unanswered questions concerning them. The number of stories of angels and demons are very few indeed, and this might be an indication of what we should expect in our everyday lives:

“...our world may be charged with the grandeur of God, **but it is not brimming with angels.** Angels, as they are characterized in the Bible, have their own life of praise and service and only appear to us on assignment. This should be **a warning against** the kind of experiential spirituality that expects to find **evidence of frequent** angelic and demonic activity.” [TH:ALPD:67]

and our struggle will be with more subtle—and less visible—influences of their evil:

“those with a demonic presences are to be pitied more than feared...**the real danger is found in people who coolly and rationally reject Christ and his rule in their lives,** lead others astray (Eph 4:14; 5:6; 2 Thess 2:3), and build human societies and cultures that oppress people and keep them from coming to Christ. **Idolatry and self-absorption, not spirit-possession, is still at the heart of human rebellion.**” [WR:ARMI:214]

“As Jesus moves toward the cross, conflicts with the authorities increase. Satan is a work in these conflicts but no longer through demonic possession (Lk 22:3,53). **Ordinary sins like envy, greed and cowardice motivate** the chief priests, Judas and Pilate to betray, convict and execute Jesus on a false charge.” [TH:ALPD134]

“Okay...so, going into the New Testament, what is the basic problem of the Powers and Principalities to be solved here?”

The basis of the problem is our own sinfulness, of course, but in the context of anti-human, anti-good, anti-god angelic moral government, this creates a set of overwhelming problems:

1. They have the power to separate us from a relationship with God by simply accusing us of any sinful act of ours (James 2.10: *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*”), and then **using their authority to have us declared a ‘curse’** and then executing us (or other punishments).
2. They have the power to **perpetually drive us away from God’s** way, life, and blessing, by inflicting us with ‘judicial deception’. They can **consistently deceive us** as to God’s heart, intentions, character, and “requirements” and **can hide His love** from everyone.
3. Since we are always being (correctly) accused before God as to our faults, there is **no way to ever get “back to the Garden” and try to reclaim/re-qualify for our originally intended ruler-role**. No human had *ever* demonstrated the other-centered action, pure-hearted love, community-commitment, ethical wisdom, and interpersonal loyalty required of such a ruler-role. **We were forever ‘doomed’ to being under the harsh administration of the misanthropic angels.**
4. Because they **consistently try to keep us in ‘violence’ and ‘hatred’ mode** (judicially, of course), **we lived lives of anti-quiet** (Titus 3.3b: *“We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.”*). As gentiles, we hated the Jews. As Jews, we hated the gentiles. And the same for every social and ethnic distinction we could ‘invent’—we distanced from ‘them’ and pronounced ‘them’ unclean/unworthy and fit only to be ‘superior over’...
5. And, **as long as we**, as descendents of Adam, **were alive in this world**, we were under this regime of discord, despair, and destruction. **There was no escape** from the malice and capriciousness of these forces, influences, systems, and agents—except in death.

But then the Son of God came to earth, as a Son of Adam...

As should be obvious from our studies so far on Sacrifice, Redemption, and Reconciliation, the number and depth of the problems we faced (and created!) are staggering and discouraging. And **this area**—*so far out of our ability to control, remediate, and even avoid*—shows once again how great our need was, and how only the great love of a great God and Savior could rescue us from our situation, our condition, our selves, and our enemies.

The earthly life of Jesus is specifically said to be directed at “destroying the works of the devil”:

*The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that **He might destroy the works of the devil.*** (1 John 3.8)

And this was a constant task in His on-going work:

“Not only in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, but also throughout the New Testament, **Christ is portrayed in terms of a struggle with the powers of darkness**. Jesus confronted the demonic in his earthly ministry, dealt a decisive blow to the kingdom of evil on the cross, continues to wage war against the hosts of Satan through the church, and will finally vanquish Satan and his forces once and for all after his Second Coming.” [TH:PDPP:16]

Jesus' interaction with spirits--both good and bad--illustrate how *some* aspects of the problems above were going to be solved:

- His interactions with demons. He spoke with absolute authority and his exorcisms were not the typical elaborate rituals of the day:

“In stark **contrast to** the elaborate methods of the exorcists of his time, Jesus merely uttered a simple command: ‘Be quiet and come out of him.’ Typically, Jewish and Hellenistic exorcistic formulas consisted of invoking numerous deities, using magical names (unintelligible combinations of letters), the use of some kind of magical material (such as a gem or a piece of lead) and often the performance of some rite. Jesus, however, is able to cast out the spirits by his own authority, much to the surprise of the leaders of the Capernaum synagogue and the crowds.” [TH:PDPP:78]

And, even though he would ultimately judge these beings, he did not do so prematurely, but acknowledged their requests: *The demons begged Jesus, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.” He said to them, “Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs* (Matt 8.31).

Messianic expectations at the time did include a Messiah that had power over the arch-Enemy:

“Some segments of Judaism longed for the **Messiah** to bring redemption from the devil’s kingdom. For instance, a second-century B.C. Jewish document states: ‘He will liberate [or ‘redeem’] every captive of the sons of men **from Beliar**, and **every spirit of error will be trampled down.**’ “ (*Testament of Zebulun* 9:8).” [TH:PDPP:111]

- His interactions with Satan. Satan has always been ‘subtle’ and one defining characteristic of subtlety is **concealment**. But Jesus unmasked the evil one, and consistently exposed his true character and his treachery in history:

He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8.44)

He is aware of Satan’s accusations and efforts against His loved ones, but exercises His intercessory role to protect and provide for them:

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you [pl] as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you [sg.], Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” (Luke 22.13f)

But it is in the Temptation in the Wilderness that the true Future becomes obvious. In the Wilderness, Satan tempts Jesus immediately after the public proclamation by God that “This is my Son”. It is quite clear that **Satan’s kingdom is perhaps threatened by this God-man**, and he makes a concerted effort to derail Jesus from the life of righteousness.

But the temptations in the Wilderness seem strangely like the temptations of Israel (the son of God) in the desert, and a little like the temptations of Adam (the son of God) in the garden. Satan is trying to disqualify *this* son of God from having a chance at the Throne.

“The three texts from Deuteronomy (6:13, 16; 8:3) cited here (4:4, 8, 12) were commands given to Israel when Israel was tested in the wilderness. Unlike Adam, another “son” of God, who sinned (3:38), Jesus overcomes the tests (cf. Gen 3). [BBC, at Luke 4]

“The things offered to Jesus—bread, safety, and the kingdoms of this world—are rightfully his by virtue of his sonship and messianic identity. Yet, as we see in the words spoken from heaven after the baptism, Jesus is called to be obedient not only as Son but also as Servant. He thereby is called to exemplify obedience to the will of the Father under the pressure of severe testing and at the cost of self-denial. He will, in particular, express his messianic identity only in accord with the will of the Father...In this pericope we encounter a theme that is vital in the theology of the Gospels. **The goal of obedience to the Father is accomplished, not by triumphant self-assertion, not by the exercise of power and authority, but paradoxically by the way of humility, service, and suffering.** Therein lies true greatness (cf. 20:26–28). [WBC, Matt 4]

“At his baptism (3:21–22) Jesus is identified as Son by the voice from heaven and anointed by the Spirit to empower his coming ministry (4:18). Now—before his ministry begins—**his filial obedience is tested** in the wilderness, separated from all human provision and support. Strengthened by the Spirit he faces the Satanic seductions. **Echoes of the testing of God’s son Adam (3:38) in the garden and of God’s son Israel in the wilderness permeate the account.** But it is with a greater Son that we here deal. Luke reports three temptations at the climax of the forty-day encounter with the Devil. [WBC, Luke 4]

And, if this Son of God—who is also Son of Man—should remain blameless and faithful and responsible throughout His life, then God just might reinstate the original design of “humanity as rulers” and de-authorize the angelic administration of the present...

“As I see it, the vision of the coming son of man represents **God’s determination to give his kingdom to the human saints of the Most High. God’s plan from the beginning, that humans in his image—not angels—should be his heirs, is to be accomplished**” [ALPD:66]

And indeed, this is the theme we will see in Hebrews—that “all things were placed under his feet”.

The then-current angelic administration is corrupt (but still operating under some legitimacy), but so far, with humanity corrupt ALSO, there is no one that could assume authority and responsibility in their place. But if Someone appeared on the scene—a fully loyal and fully representative Son, a Second Adam—then maybe, just maybe, there could be an “Under New Management” sign put out in front of the Universe...

- His interactions with Angels. There almost aren’t any! Apart from the Temptation, where they come AFTER its over, He doesn’t encounter any angels (with the disputed exception of Luke 22:43). He doesn’t call on their help or involvement:

“When Satan tempts him with the words of the psalm, ‘He will give his angels charge of you,’ **Jesus refuses supernatural help**(Mt 4). In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus again refuses military help (the sword), reminding his disciples that he could appeal to his Father for twelve legions of angels (Mt 26:53). The **absence of angels** is necessary to fulfill the Scripture that the Lamb led to slaughter would not open his mouth and cry for help (Is 53:7).” [TH:ALPD:168]

He proves his ability to serve and rule *as God originally intended humanity*—in **direct** relationship with God.

The Surprise Victory: Death on the Cross?!

*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having **disarmed the powers and authorities**, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Col 2.13-15)*

*Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was **kept hidden in God**, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, **through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms**, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. (Eph 3.8ff)*

*None of the rulers of this age understood it, for **if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory**. (1 Cor 2.8)*

*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that **all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death**? 4 We were therefore **buried with him through baptism into death** in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 **If we have been united with him like this in his death**, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that **our old self was crucified with him** so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because **anyone who has died has been freed from sin**. (Romans 6)*

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by **becoming a curse for us**, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." (Gal 3.13)*

One. His death—once it became ours *via our union* with Him—gets us off the hook! The Powers have no more authority over us...they can never raise the judgment issue again...They cannot intervene between us and God...They have no more 'stick' to beat us with, no grounds for judicial deception or hardening or curse or death...

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, **neither angels nor demons**, neither the present nor the future, **nor any powers**, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, **will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord**. (Rom 8.38ff)*

*"Satan has not changed, but the charge against God's people has been canceled..."
[TH:ALPD:108]*

Two: This union with Christ was **NOT known** in the OT—it was revealed to the NT believers first. The prophets of old *knew* God would save us (cf. Isaiah 53) and that the Messiah would be killed, but some of the details of the operation were not revealed:

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, **searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things**. (1 Peter 1.10f)*

*I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— 26 the **mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.** 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.** (Col 1.25ff)*

“First, their (Powers & Principalities) knowledge of God’s plan is limited—they were not aware of precisely how God would inaugurate his method of redemption through Christ...**The intricacies of the plan of salvation were kept hidden, not only from humanity, but also from the angelic realm** The satanic oppositions thus naively believed putting Jesus to death was the way to do away with the Son of God who had come to fulfill his Father’s will and inaugurate his kingdom.” [TH:PDPP:101]

The angelic administration had no idea that Christ’s death would somehow become shared by His followers and later believers! They would have known of the sacrifice of Isaiah 53 and other salvific prophecies, but **not that we would slip through their fingers this way!** Their attempt to kill Jesus—to shorten His earthly impact before He rose/ascended to heaven (foreseen in the OT)—backfired royally.

Three. Additionally, **this union was facilitated by the giving of the Holy Spirit to Jesus’ followers.** The indwelling Holy Spirit of God was our ‘link’ to the Risen Jesus. This Spirit—also known as the Spirit of God and Spirit of Jesus—was the method of union. And the bad news—for the Powers—was that this was also the Spirit of Truth, and this had a specific ‘after effect’ of **being a lie-detector facility in believers!**:

*As for you, **the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you.** But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him. (1 John 2.27, cf. John 16.13: “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, **he will guide you into all truth.**”)*

This means that not only was deception no longer ‘automatic’, but this Spirit would also be aggressively taking back lost ground. This indwelling Spirit—even closer to these humans than the angelic authorities were—would be teaching and growing *increasing levels of discernment* in believers. And perhaps, some of these new truth-knowers might begin to expose the deceiving spirits’ lies and tactics to the watching world-at-large...Not a good sign for the current regime...

Four. This union with Jesus’ death to the world also had a strange consequence of destroying the ethnic, religious, and social divisions that the angelic powers had worked so hard to build up and institutionalize. In Christ, there was neither “Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free”...All these worldly and physical distinctions ‘died’, and what remained was the pure ‘children of the resurrection’ lives. Someday, Babel would be reversed...

Five. On the other side of death, there was no ‘law’ or ‘judgment’ *per se*. There was only celebration and freedom and life. No slavery to religious rites, no fear of death to manipulate with, no constant decay processes due to ‘judgment’. This freedom from judgment and deception and oppression only applies to those “in Christ”:

“It is doubtful Paul conceived of some lessening of Satan’s ability or power by virtue of Christ’s work on the cross. With an army of mighty spirits, Satan continues to be a powerful foe. The **disarming of the powers occurred with respect to Christ and those who are incorporated into Christ.**” [TH:PDPP:105]

Six. And to top it all—the Powers had overstepped their jurisdiction by killing an innocent man:

*Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man **accredited by God** to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because **it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*** (Act 2.22f)

*But you disowned **the Holy and Righteous One**, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.* (Acts 3.14)

“In biblical cosmology the king must first seek reconciliation and demonstrate that the stewards are unrepentant or he can be accused of being selfish and arbitrary. He sends servants, who are mistreated. He sends his son, who is tried by the vassals' court, found guilty, and punished by death. The case is appealed to the supreme court in heaven. **There the judgment of the lower court is found to be unjust, so the verdict is overturned. Moreover, the court itself is found to be evil, so it is removed from power and sentenced to punishment.** The central issue, then, is not one of power, but of legitimacy...Given this imagery it is clear why the cross, not the resurrection, is the supreme victory, for there Satan and his supporters are shown to be evil. In the resurrection God overturns the judgment of the Jewish and Roman courts and frees the innocent victim. When the case was overturned, Satan had no more legitimate authority in heaven or on earth. He was therefore cast out.” [WR:ARMI:212]

Seven. And in fact, the resurrection proved that the leadership had passed to Jesus. He was **publicly** proclaimed the Son of God by the resurrection:

*regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was **declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*** (Rom 1.3ff)

He is now the only legitimate occupant of the throne, and the uniform testimony of the scriptures is that he has re-earned (for us) the right of redeemed humanity to enjoy the original design of God—of loving stewardship of the universe.

	<i>Hebrews</i>	<i>Philippians</i>	<i>Colossians</i>
Christ as God	1.3	2.6	1.15,19; 2.9
Agent of Creation	1.2		1.16
Now, reigning Son of God!	1.5-14	2.9-11	1.18; 2.10

We shall yet ‘rule and reign with Christ’, as ‘co-heirs’.

The stranglehold was broken...and the future looked brighter...

“By his death on the cross he casts Satan out of heaven as accuser and nullifies the legal bond against God's elect. By his ascension to God's right hand he disarms the claims of the corrupted world order to define and divide the life of the nations. By his prophetic revelation through the Spirit he opens to his people a vision of a purified heavenly regime that will endure forever.” [TH:ALPD:148]

“Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven cause a massive shift in the cosmic balance of power. Paul uses a striking metaphor [Eph 1.20-23] to describe this shift: the principalities are like captive kings, ridiculed in a Roman victory parade.” [TH:ALPD:140]

Some Implications of this Victory over the Powers:

One. The Son of God/Son of Man put the original Edenic plan back on track...we need to recognize we are ‘in training’...

Two. We will be the New Management someday (we will judge angels), and we need to model/emulate our Lord’s leadership style:

“The church’s life as one body in one Spirit of love models an organic alternative to the principalities’ rule of law and force” [TH:ALPD:41]

“Luther pointed out that the difference between Christians and pagan miracle workers is not the kinds of miracles they do, but in **the transformations that take place in their lives**. The power of God transforms us into the likeness of Christ; the powers of self and the world do not.” [WR:ARMI:241]

Three: Power is about *changing*, not *beating someone*...

“This power was demonstrated in the life of Christ and in the early church through signs and wonders. But, as Paul, Peter, John, and the other writers of the New Testament point out in their theological reflections, such demonstrations are **secondary** to the power of the Holy Spirit within humans as the Spirit leads them to salvation and to a victorious life in Christ.” [TH:PDPP:231]

Four: The relationship between the Powers and the believers has changed dramatically.

- They can only ‘*sell*’, not ‘*tell*’ any more—we don’t have any excuses anymore...
- They can still ‘enslave’ but only voluntarily, progressively, and without finality. (Romans 6)
- They will appeal more and more to our sinful tendencies.

“It is likely that **any sinful activity that the believer does not deal with** by the power of the Spirit can be exploited by the devil and turned into a means of control over a believer’s life’ [TH:PDPP:129]

“The New Testament identifies a number of spiritual evils as being inspired by Satan: mental and physical illness, **hypocrisy, syncretism, and heresy.**” [TH:ALPD:116]

- Spiritual warfare is primarily about resisting temptation and sharing the Gospel:

“The nature of spiritual warfare, as Paul portrayed it here (Eph 6), is **primarily concerned with Christian conduct and spreading the gospel**—not with exorcism or eradicating structural evil. The heart of spiritual warfare could best be summarized as **resistance and proclamation**...Spiritual warfare is therefore resistance. It is **a defensive posture**. It involves recognizing the supernatural nature of temptation and being prepared to face it.” [TH:PDPP:154]

“Although the Satanic and demonic emphasis is central in the New Testament, after Christ won the victory over Satan through the cross and resurrection, there is less in the New Testament about exorcism (driving demons out) and more about the Great Commission with its emphasis on preaching, teaching, and baptizing.” [WR:NAMBT:583]

- Although we are no longer in the kingdom of darkness, the rest of the world still needs light and freedom...

Five . Don't play with fire! Avoid the occult, avoid obsessions, meditate on the Word and His values!

Six. Be "faithful in little"—avoid every moral breakage...don't give the Devil a toe-hold:

"What Russell suggests that is different from which most psychologists believe is that underneath these individual destructive proclivities (ambition, avarice, lying) is **a focus of malice and destructiveness that unites and energizes the variety of destructive, hateful forces within us**. This focus of destruction creates **its own hidden agenda**, its own policy, which is destruction for its own sake....Take avarice as an example. At some point, the focus of evil within us seizes that greed, energizes it, and utilizes it for its own purpose of destruction far beyond the scope of the original avarice. This focus of evil, which has an agenda, a purpose, and a will of its own, is what we know as the personal devil." [WR:NAMBT:586]

Seven. Celebrate the victory but do not underestimate your own heart...

"In the views of Eurasian and American healers, shamanism cures because shamans are tapping into spiritual and supranormal dimensions of the universe that are real. One Sakha (Yakut, Siberia) shaman explained in 1992: "My helper spirits are not so hard to control. It is the people and their immorality that I worry about." " ("Sorcery and Witchcraft", by Phillip Stevens, Jr. In *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, p.1185)

Such victory!

Augustine: "And where the devil could do something, there he met with defeat on every side. While from the cross he received the power to slay the Lord's body outwardly, it was also from the cross that the inward power, by which he held us fast, was put to death. For it came to pass that the chains of many sins in many deaths were broken by the one death of the One who himself had no previous sin that would merit death. And, therefore, for our sake the Lord paid the tribute to death which was not his due, in order that the death which was due might not injure us. For he was not stripped of the flesh by any obligation to any power whatsoever, but he willed his own death, for he who could not die unless he willed doubtless died because he willed; and therefore he openly exposed the principalities and the powers, confidently triumphing over them in himself". ON THE TRINITY 4-13-17-57

Pelagius: "He triumphed not by killing but by dying, not by bringing force to bear on people but by providing them with sustaining power, so that, for us, all pride having been broken, he might give an example of true conquest". PELAGIUS'S COMMENTARY ON THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS.

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

*"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.
HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,
TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN,
TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."*

And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." [Luke 4.16ff]

[Book Abbreviations can be found at www.Christian-thinktank.com/bookabs.html]