

***DEFEATING THE
POWERS OF
DARKNESS***



A Study Manual

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DEFEATING STRONGHOLDS OF THE POWERS OF DARKNESS

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is a book about spirits, both good and evil. From Genesis to Revelation there are more than one thousand verses related to the existence and work of evil spirits. This is especially significant when we consider that there are approximately 320 references to the Second Coming. If we base the importance of a doctrine on the number of times it occurs in the Bible, then the doctrine of evil spirits far exceeds many others.

The Bible calls attention to evil spirits many times, assuming its readers will understand. But do we really? We live on a continent dominated by the spirit world. Many will do whatever it takes to appease the spirits even paying for someone's services. But think for a moment, in the past few years how often have you heard a sermon preached on the subject of evil spirits. Surely the Bible speaks to this very important need in the African context.

The writer of Proverbs states, "A wise man scales the city of the mighty, and brings down the stronghold in which they trust" (Proverbs 21:22). It is the purpose of this manual to equip believers to scale their culture and bring down the strongholds of evil spirits in which their people trust.

COURSE DESIGN

Upon completion of this course you will have learned how the powers of darkness are building strongholds in cultures to keep men in darkness. This manual will help equip you to discern and to break down these spiritual strongholds of the powers of darkness. To achieve this goal you will be:

1. Completing the activities for each lesson.
2. Taking a test each week on the subject matter of the lesson.
3. Participating in the discussions during the seminars.

MEMORY VERSES

There are memory verses assigned to each lesson. You are highly encouraged to memorize all the verses. Memorizing them will provide you with the most lethal weapon that can be used against the enemy--the sword of the spirit or the Word of God. They will also enable you to remember each lesson by associating it with the memory verses.

SEMINAR QUESTIONS

The primary purpose of the seminar questions is to stimulate discussion during each weekly seminar with a moderator. Their secondary purpose is to create interest in each lesson. However each lesson will not provide all the answers to the seminar questions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In order to complete this course you will need ---

1. A pen or pencil to complete the activities in each lesson.
2. A good translation of the Bible for looking up references.

COURSE LESSONS

1. The Powers of Darkness (part 1)
2. The Powers of Darkness (part 2)
3. Strongholds of the Powers of Darkness
4. The Stronghold of Ancestors
5. The Stronghold of Divination
6. The Cross – Defeat of the Powers of Darkness
7. Breaking Down Strongholds with Truth
8. Breaking Down Strongholds with Power Encounters
9. Breaking Down Strongholds with Prayer
10. A Balanced Perspective

YOU ARE NOW READY TO BEGIN!

TURN TO LESSON ONE.

**AFTER READING THE GOAL AND INDICATORS,
CAREFULLY PROCEED TO DO THE LESSON.**

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Powers of Darkness

(Part 1)

Lesson One

Lesson Goal: Upon completion of this lesson, you will have learned about the reality and origin of the powers of darkness in scripture.

Goal Indicators: To demonstrate your achievement of this goal you will do the following---

1. Identify true and false statements regarding the existence and origin of the powers of darkness.
2. Complete phrases that explain Satan's role as the ruler of all evil powers.
2. Match scriptures with phrases that describe the nature of the powers of darkness.

MEMORY VERSE

Then He will 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 (Matthew 25:41)

Differing Beliefs - One Authority

Africa is filled with beliefs about the spirit world. But of the approximately 800 different ethnic groups in Africa, there exists nearly the same number of differing beliefs about the spirit world. Generally, Africans have envisioned a creator who is powerful and good, but who is unable to control the activities of the spirits¹. Most people believe that spirits make occasional appearances; possess people, animals, or objects; and cause physical as well as social problems. Many believe that these spirits are ancestral spirits of the deceased.

During one of the many droughts in Botswana Mr. Mopedi was plagued by the same dream over and over. Believing that the ancestors were speaking to him, he began to pray and offer the appropriate sacrifices that they requested. Soon the rains began to fall?

Do ancestors speak through dreams? Is this a correct belief? We must determine which beliefs are true and which are false. An authority is needed that can help sort out all the differing beliefs pertaining to the spirit world.

That authority exists for the Christian! It is the Bible. The Bible is not one of many authorities, but the sole authority by which we can examine each belief. The Bible's authority rests in the fact that it has been inspired by God.

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

The term *inspired* literally means, *God-breathed*. In other words, God breathed out his word as men wrote it down. Now we must search the scriptures to determine what God says about this area where we lack wisdom. It is against this backdrop that we begin our study of the powers of darkness. These first two lessons will primarily focus on what scripture says about the powers of darkness.

The Existence of the Powers of Darkness

We are using the phrase *Powers of Darkness* to refer to all evil spirits. Since the Bible uses a wide variety of terms when speaking of evil spirits, we have chosen this one term to be all inclusive of the various names that are used.

The powers of darkness are real personal spiritual beings that oppose man. The reality of the powers of darkness is assumed in the Bible. The Bible makes no attempt to prove their existence. Both Old and New Testaments are filled with references to the powers of darkness.

Throughout the Old Testament, the children of Israel were continually disobedient to God. Over and over they forsake Jehovah God for other gods.

Now this came about, because the sons of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they feared other gods (2 Kings 17:7).

These gods spoken of in the Old Testament were not really gods at all, they were demons.

They sacrificed to demons who were not God, To gods whom they have not known, to gods who came lately, whom your Fathers did not dread (Deuteronomy 32:17).

Demons did not evolve from gods; they have simply disguised themselves at different times.² Sometimes the Old Testament does refer to them as evil spirits (Judges 9:23).

The New Testament mentions the powers of darkness in every book. But as in the Old Testament, they are referred to with a variety of names. They are called: spirits, Luke 9:39; demons, Luke 10:17; wicked or evil spirits, Mark 9:25; angels of Satan, Matthew 25:4; and rulers or principalities, or powers, Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 2:15. Each term helps to expose their true nature, just as the various names of God reveal his different attributes.

Review

Identify true (T) and false (F) statements regarding the existence and origin of evil spirits.

- _____ 1. The best source of information on the powers of darkness is your tradition.
- _____ 2. The powers of darkness are mentioned in every book of the Bible.
- _____ 3. The gods of the Old Testament were actually demonic spirits.

- _____ 4. The Bible refers to the powers of darkness using only two different terms.
- _____ 5. God created all powers of darkness.

The Origin of Evil Spirits

The Bible is not clear on the origin of the powers of darkness. Since the Bible is silent about their origin, no one can speak authoritatively concerning it. We do know, however, that God created all things and He created them good.

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

Since God created all things good, we may rightly assume that the powers of darkness were originally created with a nature pleasing to God. It was sometime later when they rebelled against Him.

Throughout history, several different explanations have been given as to the origin of these powers. The explanation with the greatest support from scripture defines them as fallen angels. The support for this belief comes from four different scriptures. First, Jesus referred to Satan and *his angels* concerning the judgement day (Matthew 25:41). Secondly, the apostle Peter makes mention of *angels who sinned against God*, but who are now imprisoned (2 Peter 2:4). This reference

supports the fact that some angels have sinned. At the moment though, they are being held captive. Thirdly, the apostle John in his great vision of heavenly warfare saw the tail of the dragon sweep one third of the stars out of heaven, flinging them to earth (Revelation 12:4). The dragon refers to Satan, and a star, in scripture, generally refers to angels. Therefore, one third of the angels of God began to follow Satan. The last reference in this same context refers to *The dragon and his angels* as opposed to the Lord and His angels (Revelation 12:7).

Review

Match the scripture verses with the correct phrase describing the origin of the powers of darkness.

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------|--|
| A. 2 Peter 2:4 | _____ | 1. The devil and his angels. |
| B. Revelation 12:7 | _____ | 2. Angels who sinned against God. |
| C. Revelation 12:4 | _____ | 3. The dragon swept one third of the angels from heaven. |
| D. Revelation 25:41 | _____ | 4. The dragon and his angels. |

The Head of Evil Spirits

Satan is the recognized head of the powers of darkness. Though there are a variety of evil spirits, they all have a unified head.³ The scriptures just referred to also give evidence to this

fact (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:7). The apostle Paul also describes him as the prince or ruler of the kingdom of the air.

In which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2).

The powers of darkness should be distinguished from Satan even though their work is the same. On one occasion Jesus was accused of casting out evil spirits by Beelzebub, the prince of demons (Matthew 12:24). When the Lord Jesus pointed out the folly of this accusation, He included in his reply this statement and question: *And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall his kingdom stand? (Matthew 12:26).* He therefore revealed that Satan is the ruler of all demons and that he (Satan) should be distinguished from them even though there is no difference in his or their work.

This relationship between Satan and the powers of darkness is also clearly revealed in the story of the woman who was crippled for eighteen years (Luke 13:10-17). She is first described as being crippled by a spirit (Luke 13:11). Later in the story, however, after being healed by Jesus, Jesus remarked that Satan had kept her bound for this long period of time (Luke 13:16). The evil spirit was thus carrying out the work of its ruler (or head) who is Satan.

The relationship is further revealed after the seventy disciples return from their mission. The disciples were rejoicing that the demons were subject to them in Jesus' name (Luke 10:17). Jesus remarked that He was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

And He said to them, I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you (Luke 10:18-19).

This remark about Satan falling from heaven had nothing to do with Satan's original fall or rebellion with God. Jesus was referring to the fact that, as the powers of darkness were being cast out, Satan was losing his grip and influence over people - his kingdom was collapsing.⁴

We can therefore safely assume that anytime scripture refers to the work of Satan, that this work may also be attributed to evil spirits. Or the reverse, whenever scripture attributes an activity to evil spirits, it can also be called a work of Satan.

Review

Explain Satan's role as head of all evil spirits by completing the following phrases.

1. Matthew 25:41 describes _____ as
belonging to the devil.
2. Ephesians 2:2 describes Satan as the _____ of
the power of the air.
3. In Matthew 12:26, Jesus referred to Satan as the
_____ of the demons.

4. The story of the crippled woman in Luke 13 reveals evil spirits carry out the work of _____, who is their head.
5. Jesus was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning because, as demons were being cast out, Satan was _____ his influence over people.

The Nature of the Powers of Darkness

Evil spirits are corrupt spirit beings. They are often referred to as unclean spirits (Matthew 10:1; Acts 8:7). They do not have bodies but desire to inhabit them (Matthew 12:43). Through inhabiting a body, they are able to express their corrupt evil nature.

On one occasion, the wicked spirits inhabiting a human body begged our Lord, before being cast out, to be sent into the bodies of some pigs. When Jesus granted their request, they entered the pigs. The demons caused them to rush into the sea so that the pigs were destroyed. The destruction of the pigs only reveals what their intent is for the human bodies they inhabit. Jesus said of their head (Satan) that *the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10)*. Remember that there is no difference in their nature or Satan's, though we distinguish the ruler from those being ruled.

As spirit beings, they have distinct personalities. The fact that they are personalities is attested to by the many personal characteristics attributed to them. They have names. Jesus spoke with a man known as the Gerasene demoniac. The first thing he did was to demand the evil spirit's name (Mark 5:9). This encounter by Jesus with these evil spirits also shows that evil spirits have great strength. No one was able to subdue the man inhabited by these evil ones (Mark 5:4).

A single spirit may inhabit a body (Mark 1:26), or a group of spirits may dwell together in a body such as in the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:9). They are able to speak through the medium of the human they inhabit (Mark 3:11).

Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes, and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first (Matthew 12:42-45).

Jesus, in this passage, describes evil spirits as exerting a definite will. The evil spirit says, *I will return to my house*. In this same incident, Jesus described them as having various degrees of wickedness. This context also shows that they are able to communicate with one another. When the one spirit found that his house was open for occupancy, he contacted seven other spirits.

Evil spirits are able to recognize people. They often cried out when Jesus entered a public place, recognizing who he was (Mark 1:23-24). But on a completely different occasion, when

being commanded to depart, they acknowledged recognition of both Jesus and Paul (Acts 19:15).

They have emotions, especially when confronted with their pending doom (Luke 8:28; James 2:19). They are even able to predict the future through the human medium whom they inhabit.

And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune telling (Acts 16:16).

All of these characteristics enable them to have great influence upon those who would yield themselves to these crafty, malicious spirits of darkness.

Review

Match the following scriptures with the phrases provided that best describes the nature of the powers of darkness.

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| A. John 10:10 | _____ 1. They desire to inhabit people. |
| B. Matt. 12:43 | _____ 2. They seek to kill, steal, and destroy. |
| C. Mark 5:9 | _____ 3. They have emotions. |
| D. James 2:19 | _____ 4. They have names. |

E. Matthew 12:44

____ 5. They can recognize
Humans.

F. Mark 3:11

____ 6. They can speak through
Humans.

G. Acts 19:15

____ 7. They have a definite
will.

H. Matt. 12:45

____ 8. They can communicate
with one another.

Summary

From this lesson you should have learned---

- There are many different beliefs about the powers of darkness. In spite of all the different beliefs, there is only one authoritative word concerning these powers - the Bible. God has given all men insight; even into the existence of these wicked spirits.
- The Bible refers to the powers of darkness by using a variety of different terms. These terms help us to understand their exact nature.
- Scripture does not reveal the exact origin of evil spirits. However, the most plausible explanation is that they are fallen angels, especially since Jesus refers to the eternal fire as having been prepared for the devil and his angels.
- Satan leads all powers of darkness. He is their leader. Any work that can be attributed to these wicked spirits can also be attributed to Satan.
- The powers of darkness have a very wicked and corrupt nature. They also have distinct personalities, which they attempt to exhibit by inhabiting people.

Lesson One Test

1. List all the terms that the New Testament uses to describe the powers of darkness.

2. Give the most probable explanation for the origin of these powers, along with one scripture reference.

3. How is the nature of Satan different from that of the powers of darkness.

4. Read the incident of the Gerasene demoniac carefully (Mark 5:1-20). From only this passage, describe the basic nature of evil spirits.

5. Write one traditional belief about evil spirits which exists in culture. Then explain how this belief agrees or differs from scripture.

SEMINAR QUESTIONS:

1. What is the origin of evil powers?
2. What is the traditional view of the origin of evil in your culture?
3. Since the Bible uses many different names to describe the powers of darkness, is there any difference between them?
4. Do the powers of darkness carry out their own will?
5. Why does the Bible use many different terms to describe the powers of darkness?
6. Should the work of the powers of darkness be distinguished from the work of Satan?
7. Is there a relationship between the "gods" of the Old Testament, and the "demons" of the New Testament?

NOTES:

The Powers of Darkness

(Part 2)

Lesson Two

Lesson Goal: Upon completion of this lesson, you will have learned about the activities, goals, and limitations concerning the powers of darkness.

Goal Indicators: To demonstrate your achievement of this goal you will do the following---

1. Match the activity of the powers of darkness with the proper category.
2. Select the correct statements which best define the goal of the powers of darkness.
3. Underline the word or phrase which best describes the limitations of the powers of darkness.

MEMORY VERSE

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

Activity of the Powers of Darkness

The Bible records numerous activities of evil spirits. The most prominent activity is their desire to demonize people. The word *demonize* is a more appropriate term than the word *possession*. The word *possession* implies the fact of ownership, which is absent from the New Testament. To be demonized is to have one or more area of your life under the influence of one or more demons.¹ The man known as the Gerasene demoniac was demonized by many demons. But after Christ freed him, those who observed him said that he was in his right mind. Being demonized can result in periodic changes in a person's behavior, not necessarily continuous or always bizarre behavior. This may well explain the actions of many people that are unexplainable at times.

Besides seeking to inhabit and thereby control the behavior of people, demons can cause disease and physical problems. Scripture mentions a few ailments with demonic origin: blindness (Matthew 12:22); deformity (Luke 13:11-17); convulsive fits (Matthew 17:15-18); and dumbness (Matthew 9:32-33). This does not mean that evil spirits cause every illness. But at times this can be true such as in the biblical cases mentioned. Sometimes they drove men to self-inflicted injury (Mark 5:5; 9:22). When physical ailments are demonic in origin, medical and psychiatric treatments are useless. Only by dealing with the spiritual cause of the ailment will the disease or affliction be cured.²

Other activities of evil spirits include propagating false doctrine (1 Timothy 4:1); along with denying the deity of Christ (1 John 4:1-2). In the parable of the soils, Jesus made known

that demons seek to take away the word of God that is being sown among unbelievers.

And these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them (Mark 4:15).

The powers of darkness desire to keep men in darkness, keeping their eyes blinded to the truth of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Review

Match the activity of the powers of darkness with the proper category.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| ___ Demonize | A. Remove the word of God |
| ___ Cause physical problems | B. Propagate false doctrine |
| ___ Blind men to the truth | C. Cause periodic changes in a person's behavior |
| ___ Confuse Christians | D. Blindness and dumbness |

Goal of the Powers

The powers of darkness are following their head. Therefore it is Satan who sets their agenda. His agenda is the

expansion of his kingdom, where he receives glory that is due to God alone. In his temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, he proudly said that he would surrender all the kingdoms of this world if Jesus would fall down and worship him (Matthew 4:8-9). Jesus never attempted to correct his statement.

What was Jesus looking at? Was it a vision of all the nations and individual cities of the earth? Or was he really looking at the nucleus of spiritual power under Satan's control, the most powerful of the demons---those next to Satan himself? Was Jesus seeking the core of Satan's rulers....authorities...powers...of this dark world and...spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). (The term heavenly realms refers to the spiritual realm that Satan commands here on earth). Was Jesus seeing the very real kingdom of spirit beings who operate behind the scenes, most often undetected by natural man? Isn't it possible that Satan was telling Jesus that if he would fall down and worship him, hordes of demonic powers would come under his control and he would become second in command?³

Other New Testament writers attest to the fact that Satan is the god of this world. Two specific verses show the position that Satan has in relationship to this world.

In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4).

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

To be a god similar to the one true God is the highest aspiration of Satan and all powers of darkness. Open Satan worship has become common in this last century. Churches have sprung up calling themselves churches of Satan. One such church is *The First Church of Satan of San Francisco* in the United States. Even a Bible exists called *The Satanic Bible*. Individuals now openly confess to satanic worship and sacrifices. This is open, outward, and direct worship of Satan. There is another way that powers receive worship that is more indirect. We will discuss it in the next lesson.

The powers of darkness seek to embezzle, steal, or divert as much glory (attention, praise, worship, adoration, etc.) as possible away from God.⁴ This is only an aspiration because they cannot deprive God of glory in heaven, but they can keep people on earth from ascribing to God the glory He deserves.⁵ Therefore, their schemes are numerous in order to keep men in bondage to themselves.

Review

Select the correct statements that define the goal of the powers of darkness.

- 1. The ultimate goal of all powers of darkness is the total control of all men.
- 2. Satan desires the glory that is due to God alone.

- ___ 3. No one openly worships Satan.
- ___ 4. The powers of darkness seek to embezzle the glory of God.
- ___ 5. They cannot keep God from having his rightful glory ascribed to him by the masses on earth.

Limitations of the Powers of Darkness

No matter how powerful the powers of darkness seem to be, they are still limited by the sovereignty of God. All things were created by Him and for him; therefore nothing is able to prevail over him.

As with all of God's creation, he is able to use them to carry out his purposes. The Lord can use them as his instruments to punish the ungodly (Psalm 78:49). He can use them to cause the believer to trust more fully in Him (2 Corinthians 12:7).

One instance in the Old Testament reveals that God sent an evil spirit to accomplish a task for Him (Judges 9:22). When men disobey God, he often brings judgement upon them through the powers of darkness. They can be used to serve the purposes of God, even in their rebellious state.

The classic example of the limitations of the powers of darkness is found in the book of Job. When Satan himself enters into the presence of God, the Lord questions him concerning Job. The Lord gives Satan permission to do all that he desires,

except that he is not allowed to take Job's life (Job 2:6). The sovereign hand of God limits the powers of darkness. They can go only as far as God permits, and no farther.

They may for a season blind and even deceive believers, but they can never ultimately separate the believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39). God's final sovereignty over demons will be clearly manifested when He throws Satan and his angels into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

Review

Underline the words which best describe the limitations of the powers of darkness.

1. The powers of darkness are limited by the (**sovereignty / kindness**) of God.
2. God can use the powers of darkness to (**judge / rule**) men.
3. They can (**never / sometimes**) separate the believer from the love of God.
4. In the story of Job, Satan was (**limited / unlimited**) in what he could do to Job.
5. All the powers of darkness are ultimately (**instruments / unruly**) in the hands of God.

Summary

From this lesson you should have learned---

- The powers of darkness employ a wide variety of activities to keep men in bondage to themselves. Their activities include demonization, bringing about physical illnesses, confusing Christians with false doctrine, and removing the word of God from those who hear it. Their activities are directed to both believers and unbelievers.
- The highest aspiration of the powers of darkness is to be worshipped. They divert the glory that is due to God from his people, by holding his people in bondage, thus hampering people from glorifying God through their lives.
- The powers of darkness are not unlimited. The sovereign hand of God limits them. God sometimes uses them to carry out his purposes such as in bringing judgement upon his people.

Lesson Two Test

1. List three activities of the powers of darkness. Include scripture references.

2. How do the powers of darkness carry out their goal of diverting glory from God?

3. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate responses.

The powers of darkness are limited by the _____ of God.

God is able to _____ them to carry out his purposes.

They can never ultimately _____ the believer from the love of God.

Seminar Questions

1. What kinds of activities of the powers of darkness are directed toward believers?
2. What activities in your culture are normally attributed to the work of evil spirits?
3. Are the powers of darkness motivated toward any particular purpose?
4. Can the powers of darkness cause illness?
5. Do the powers of darkness have an influence upon all people or only some?
6. Does God use them as his instruments?
7. How will God finally defeat them?

NOTES:

Strongholds of the Powers of Darkness

Lesson Three

Lesson Goal: Upon completion of this lesson you will have learned how the powers of darkness are creating strongholds within cultures to keep men in darkness.

Goal Indicators: To demonstrate your achievement of this goal, you will do the following---

1. Define strongholds by identifying the true statements.
2. Complete the sentences that describe Old Testament high places.
3. Complete the sentences that describe New Testament strongholds.
4. Underline the correct words or phrases which correctly describe the development of strongholds.

MEMORY VERSE

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Creating Strongholds

In our last lesson we learned that the powers of darkness aspire to be worshipped. They accomplish this by diverting the glory that should come from man and directing it to themselves.

These powers of darkness are very clever. They know that most people will not openly worship them as some do. Nevertheless, they still desire the worship and devotion that belongs to God alone. Their plan, therefore, is to create strongholds within cultures, and within individuals' lives. They will create ways in which they will receive worship, but without the knowledge of the person involved. An evil spirit creates ideas, idols, and false gods that people will become very devoted to. When he accomplishes this, people will still be held captive to him. We are always slaves of the one whom we worship and obey (Romans 6:16).

The word *stronghold* is actually only used one time in scripture. This occurrence is in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Take a look at our memory verse for this lesson (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Though the word *stronghold* does not frequent the pages of scripture, we should not minimize the concept revealed by it. The concept is portrayed throughout scripture, but by using different terminology. The word-translated *stronghold* is the Greek word ***ochuroma***, which means a fortified place. It was a military term that describes the scene of a military operation in enemy territory that is seeking to root out areas where the enemy is entrenched. In spiritual terms, it is exactly the same. The powers of darkness seek to propagate teachings and ideas that we will become devoted to. Then they become entrenched in

our cultures, or in our minds. As 2 Corinthians states, they are ideas that are contrary to the knowledge of God. They become obstacles that prevent us from being free, thus keeping us in bondage to Satan.

These powers of darkness disseminate into cultures. They invade human beliefs, institutions, cultural ideas, all the while obscuring their origin. As a result, people are prevented from understanding the truth because of obscure "doctrines of demons" that become formalized into human belief systems or strongholds (1 Timothy 4:1).¹ Through a unified networking influence, it is not difficult to imagine how the powers can influence the direction of an entire culture.²

Review

Define strongholds by placing an (X) before the true statements.

- 1. Strongholds are ways in which the powers of darkness receive indirect worship.
- 2. A stronghold can be a belief, an idea, an idol, or a god that people begin to trust in.
- 3. Strongholds are contrary to the knowledge of God.
- 4. Strongholds are only false beliefs or ideas found within cultures, not individuals.
- 5. The word "stronghold" was originally a term used to describe the work of temple makers.

Old Testament Strongholds - High Places

The Old Testament is full of illustrations of how the children of Israel as an entire nation allowed the powers of darkness to become entrenched in their society as a whole. We will look first at how strongholds were present in the nation of Israel during the Old Testament era.

Strongholds were prominent in the Old Testament in a very literal sense. When God commanded the children of Israel to enter the Promised Land, they had to first remove the Canaanites who dwelled there. The Canaanites were involved in the worship of many false gods and idols. In their worship they had established what were called "high places." The typical high place was just that, a designated place of worship located on top of a high hill (1 Kings 14:23; 2 Chronicles 21:11). This allowed the worshipper to be far above his environment. He would be closer to the gods whom he worshipped.

The *high places* usually consisted of an altar and some sort of monument representing a deity. Frequently animal sacrifices would be offered on these altars. Their worship also involved the sacrifice of children, divination, and sorcery. Even their king was involved in these detestable practices (2 Kings 21:6).

And they forsook all the commandments of the Lord their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshipped all the host of heaven and served Baal. Then they made their sons and daughters pass through the fire, and practiced deviation and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him (2 Kings 17:16-17).

And he (King Manasseh) made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spirits. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger (2 Kings 21:6).

The Lord commanded the Israelites to demolish these high places (Numbers 33:52). In spite of his direct command to abolish not only the practices but the places, the Israelites refused (1 Kings 22:43). The practices had become a way of life for the people. The powers of darkness had developed a stronghold within their culture. Even after giving up the high places, they found themselves secretly reinstating the practices and rebuilding the high places (2 Kings 17:9).

The high places had become a stronghold within the nation of Israel as a whole. The high places were the domain of evil powers, a place where they were holding people captive. In military terms, these evil powers were entrenched in these high places. What the Israelites did not know, was that they were giving worship to the powers of darkness. The Psalmist reveals that they were in fact sacrificing to demons.

They did not destroy the peoples, As the Lord commanded them, but they mingled with the nations, and learned their practices, and served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and daughters to the demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with the blood (Psalm 106:34-39).

The powers of darkness had snared the people. The practices of the high places had become a definite stronghold that was difficult for them to forsake.

Review

Complete the partially written statements which best describe high places.

1. A high place was a place of _____ on top of a high hill.
2. It usually consisted of an _____ and some monument representing a _____.
3. The worship at the high places involved _____, _____, and _____.
4. These practices had become a _____ of _____ for the people.
5. The Israelites did not know that at the high places they were giving worship to _____.

New Testament Strongholds

The New Testament records various examples of strongholds that affected entire cultures. One such stronghold took place in the city of Ephesus where Paul ministered for over two years. Understanding this stronghold will provide one

example of the multiplicity of ways that the powers exercised their hostile influence on people as opponents of Christianity.³

The city of Ephesus was filled with idol worship, but none surpassed that of Artemis. She was the adored mother goddess of earth. She was worshipped in many different places by various names. The name Artemis is the Greek name for Diana. The name means *prompt* or *safe* indicating the faith the people had in this goddess.

She was worshipped by all Asia (Acts 19:27). Her image, according to tradition, had fallen from heaven (Acts 19:35). The upper part of her body was covered with rows of breasts, symbolizing fertility. She also represented the reproductive powers of man, animals, and nature. She therefore, was responsible for crop production and animal reproduction.⁴

The silversmiths made crude images of her (Acts 19:24) to be carried by the pilgrims throughout the world, and to be buried with the dead so no one would ever be away from her presence. The sale of these images brought great wealth to the temple. The wealth of the temple and the temple priests was at the expense of the people who purchased them for protection and worship. Some sacrifices would be made in order to become fertile, or for various other reasons.

The worship of Artemis led to the worship of the powers of reproduction. This in turn evolved into disgusting practices. All of this led to excessive sexual practices such as incest and prostitution.⁵

Worship directed to anyone besides God is idolatry. But scripture teaches us that there is more to idols than meets the eye. In other words, people who are worshipping idols are

actually involved in the unseen world - the world of the powers of darkness.

The Bible informs us that idols are nothing (1 Corinthians 8:4). That is, they are simply made of earthly materials such as wood or stone. In the case of Artemis, there was an elaborate temple, but it still consisted only of earthly materials. However, the Bible is clear to also instruct us that when idols are made as representing gods, they have real spiritual powers operating behind them, namely demons. It is these demonic spirits that inspire and motivate people to devotion.

What do I mean? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons (1 Corinthians 10:20).

The work of evil spirits is deceptive. They inspire idol worship to draw away worship from the true God. They hide themselves in the most unsuspecting ways. If only those who practice idol worship understood who they really were worshipping.

Artemis had become a stronghold because people trusted in this idol. They believed that their safety, protection, and prosperity came from Artemis. Many strongholds of the enemy, however, may not directly involve idols. They may simply be beliefs or different kinds of practices within a culture. When Paul wrote that demons receive worship when sacrifices are offered to idols, did he exclusively mean idols only? No, he did not! For an idol may be anything that takes the place of God or draws worship away from Him. It maybe sorcery, divination, magic, or a host of other practices condemned by God (2 Kings

23:24; Nahum 3:4; Micah 5:12), because they are practices that are replacing God. The Psalmist writes,

For all the gods of the people are idols, but Jehovah made the heavens (Psalm 96:5).

The apostle Paul himself affirmed that there are many gods and many lords (1 Corinthians 8:5). He believed in the existence of other gods and lords, but in a different way than those who worshipped them. Those who worshipped them believed them to be real and genuine. But Paul realized that they only represent images of the powers of darkness.⁶

The cult of Artemis is merely one example of a first-century stronghold that Satan used to deceive people. The real opponents are what stand behind the Artemis cult and all structures, traditions, and values that keep people from responding to the good news of Jesus Christ. The real opponents are the powers of darkness.⁷

Any philosophy, belief, or practice that replaces God is a god, and therefore an idol. And behind idols or idolatrous ideas are the activity of the powers of darkness, who have created a stronghold to keep people trusting in them and thereby diverting glory that should be directed to God.

Review

Complete the sentences which describe New Testament strongholds.

1. One stronghold mentioned in the New Testament was an idol named _____.
2. Sacrifices were made to Artemis because she was responsible for _____ and _____.
3. Idols represent gods who have _____ operating behind them.
4. Artemis was a stronghold because people _____ this idol to protect, and prosper them.
5. Many strongholds of the powers of darkness may simply be _____ or _____ within a culture.

Development of Strongholds and High Places

Strongholds within cultures are not built overnight. The enemy's perverted wisdom is carried out slowly, so that his "high places" or strongholds become firmly embedded within our cultures.

Strongholds are in direct opposition to the true knowledge of God. Paul described his spiritual weaponry as "powerful for the destruction of strongholds and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Paul must have been picturing the image of "high places" when he penned those words, knowing that high places and strongholds are areas of our personal life or nation where Satan has entrenched himself. Whenever he accomplishes a stronghold in a culture or society, he is Lord in that given area. He is being worshipped and obeyed.

How do we discern when evil spirits are at work in a people group, city, or nation?⁸ We must look for obsessions with particular sins, or an unusual drive toward a certain practice. Evil spirits especially attack in areas that will keep men in darkness concerning the knowledge of God.

All strongholds begin with lies or doctrines of the powers of darkness (1 Timothy 4:1). When people begin to believe the lies, the stronghold begins to form. Lies turn to beliefs - beliefs become actions, and actions translate into strongholds.

The high places, which the Israelites built, began when they followed the ways of the Canaanites (1 Kings 14:24). In

fact, they were establishing altars on high places to sacrifice to Jehovah, their God. But God had already told them to destroy all the high places and practices. He had said that he alone would provide them with one place where they could sacrifice to Him (Deuteronomy 12:11-14).

The high places were actually established with good intentions on the part of the people. They were seeking places where they could fellowship with their God, but were using the altars of foreign gods, which He had fiercely condemned (Deuteronomy 12:13).

What was happening was similar to Eve's encounter with the serpent. "If you do this, the serpent said, you will actually become like God, knowing good and evil." Eve's intention was good. Perhaps God had failed to give her the whole truth when He commanded them not to eat of the tree in the middle of the garden. She was deceived about God's intention (2 Corinthians 11:3).

Throughout history, the enemy is at work through his deceptive and cunning ways, especially among unbelievers (Ephesians 2:2) with all the deception of wickedness (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). The chief weapon, which the powers of darkness use to build strongholds, is lies and deception. No one is immune to their deception. Satan, as ruler of the darkness, continues to build his kingdom by imitating God's. As strongholds develop within cultures, they become a part of this elaborated kingdom where the whole world is being deceived by the evil one (Revelation 12:9). Oswald Sanders provides us with a picture of this deceptive kingdom.

Satan has his own **trinity**—the devil, the beast and the False prophet (Revelation 16:13). He has his own

church, a “synagogue of Satan” (Revelation 2:9). He has his own **ministers**, “ministers of Satan” (2 Corinthians 11:4-5). He has formulated his own **system of theology**, “Doctrines of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1). He has established his own **Sacrificial system**, “the Gentiles.... Sacrifice to demons” (1 Corinthians 10:20). He has his own **communion service**, “the cup of demons...and the table of demons” (1 Corinthians 10:21). His own ministers proclaim **his own gospel** (s), a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you” (Galatians 1:7-8). He has his own **throne** (Revelation 13:2) and his own **worshippers** (Revelation 13:4).⁹

Review

Underline the correct word or phrase which best describes the development of strongholds.

1. All strongholds begin with (**lies / truth**) from the enemy.
2. Lies from the evil ones become beliefs, beliefs turn into actions, and actions translate into (**strongholds / power**).
3. The chief weapon which the powers of darkness use to build strongholds are (**lies & deception / truth & doctrines**).
4. We can discern where strongholds are (**present / absent**) whenever there is an unusual obsession with a particular sin or drive toward a certain practice.

5. Strongholds are especially present where men are being kept in darkness concerning the (**knowledge of God / knowledge of evil**).

Summary

In this lesson you should have learned-----

- The powers of darkness are creating strongholds to keep men in darkness concerning the knowledge of God. Strongholds are idols, beliefs, ideas, and even false gods that help to divert glory from God and direct it to Satan's kingdom. Strongholds can occur in both the lives of individuals as well as in entire cultures through cultural practices.
- There are many different types of strongholds in the Old Testament, but one prominent one was known as the high place. The high places were actual places where sorcery and divination were practiced along with the worship of idols.
- The New Testament also records different types of strongholds. The book of Acts records the example of Artemis, a Greek temple and goddess who received much worship and sacrifices. Artemis was a definite stronghold because people believed that their prosperity depended upon her. The New Testament clearly states that any idol worship involves fellowship with the powers of darkness.
- The development of strongholds begins with the lies or doctrines of demons. As people believe these lies, they evolve into strongholds (beliefs/ideas) where the powers of darkness become entrenched because of the trust which people place in them.

Lesson Three Test

1. What is the relationship between doctrines of demons and strongholds?

2. How did the high places evolve into strongholds?

6. Give another example from the New Testament that might be classified as a stronghold.

5. Try to identify practices within your nation that may be strongholds. Write down one example, state why you think it is a stronghold, and how you think it developed.

Seminar Questions

1. In what way do strongholds of the powers of darkness keep people from the knowledge of God?
2. In what ways do your people (nation) seek protection from evil spirits?
3. Are the powers of darkness able to influence cultures?
4. How can we discern the presence of strongholds?
5. What gods, (or divinities) exist within your culture?
6. Which practices among your people would you consider to be strongholds of the powers of darkness?
6. How are strongholds of the Old Testament different from strongholds of the New Testament?

NOTES:

The Stronghold of Ancestors

Lesson Four

Lesson Goal: Upon completion of this lesson you will have learned how the practice of ancestor worship is a stronghold of the powers of darkness.

Goal Indicators: To demonstrate your achievement of this goal you will do the following---

1. Distinguish between the correct and incorrect attitudes toward the ancestral stronghold.
2. Match the phrases which best describe the Biblical perspective of ancestors.
3. Fill in the blanks of partially written sentences which best describe the powers of darkness poised as ancestors.

MEMORY VERSE

And when they say to you, consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter, should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? (Isaiah 8:19)

The Ancestral Stronghold

In lesson three, we dealt with how the powers of darkness are creating strongholds to keep men in darkness. They obscure their presence as they build doctrines, beliefs, and structures within cultures. In the last lesson, you were asked to identify possible strongholds within Batswana culture. Perhaps you have already identified the stronghold of ancestors.

For centuries, the powers of darkness have held people throughout the world captive as a result of the stronghold of ancestors. Africans, like many other peoples of the world, have always viewed death as a passage into another life. In other words, death is not seen as the end of life, but as merely the transition into another state of existence.

Because ancestors are considered partly living and partly spirit, they are often described as the *living-dead*.¹ Since they are still a part of the extended family; they become the senior elders. They are believed to be mediators between God and men. Ancestors are therefore feared and respected, as the living elders are, but to an even greater degree because of what they can do to the living. It is believed that they can communicate by dreams or through prophets, cause health or social problems, and possess people or animals. Ancestors may be either a blessing or a curse toward the living.

It is fear of what ancestors can do, and of how they can manifest themselves, which has led to various methods of appeasement. They are appeased in a variety of ways; through prayers, food offerings, sacrifices or rituals performed at different functions such as marriages, funerals, etc. For many

Africans, forsaking the dead is equivalent to mistreating the living.² One Motswana describes ancestors as the center and height of existence among the Batswana. He says that one's life in the physical world determines his relationship with his ancestors who are dead, and who are alive at the same time.³

It is on this fear of ancestors that the powers of darkness have built their stronghold. There remains an unanswered question that should be raised, "Who is really demanding this devotion?"

Review

Distinguish between the correct and incorrect attitudes toward ancestral strongholds.

- _____ 1. The concept of ancestors is wrong because it keeps men in darkness.
- _____ 2. A stronghold is something which stands in opposition to the true knowledge of God.
- _____ 3. Batswana are the only people who believe in the power of ancestors.
- _____ 4. The blessing bestowed by ancestors has brought about the need for appeasement.
- _____ 5. The powers of darkness have built their stronghold on fear of the ancestors.

Biblical Perspective of Ancestors

Before investigating the powers operating behind ancestors, we must examine what scripture says about them. The scriptures provide definite revelation from God on how we should view ancestors.

First, the Bible supports the view that ancestors can be described as the *living-dead*. Death is not an end in itself. Men and women continue to exist; but as spirits. Jesus indicated this when He was speaking to the Jews.

Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgement (John 5:28-29).

Here Jesus affirms that all men will hear the voice of God and be raised. However, some will be resurrected to eternal judgement instead of to eternal life. One thing is clear: all men continue to exist after death. The body dies, but the spirit lives on.

Secondly, according to scripture, ancestors (family members who have died) cannot communicate with the living. This is revealed in Jesus' parable concerning the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). This parable provides us with a window into the spiritual realm. It clearly indicates that once a person dies, he is cut off from the living. There can be no communication between them. The dead are confined to certain places; the righteous to one, the unrighteous to another (Luke 16:23, 26).

This parable further reveals that if someone were going to communicate from the dead, they would be seeking to lead people to repentance. The rich man begged Abraham to send someone from the dead to his house in order to warn his family about the impending judgement after death. But Abraham replied that even if it were possible, a dead man could not bring about repentance (Luke 16:30-31). Furthermore, the writer to the Hebrews speaks of the finality of death (Hebrews 9:27).

Thirdly, the Bible is very explicit about ancestors as mediators between God and men. Since men are confined to a certain place after death, as well as being unable to communicate with men, they cannot be intermediaries. The word of God says that there is only one intermediary between God and man.

For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Jesus is the only mediator because he himself became the perfect sacrifice for mankind's sins. He therefore is our advocate with God (1 John 2:1) and the one who lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

Review

Match the phrases which best describe the biblical perspective on ancestors.

_____ 1. Ancestors cannot

A. be described as the living dead

_____ 2. The Bible teaches

B. communicate with the living

_____ 3. Jesus affirms	C. that ancestors cannot mediate
_____ 4. Ancestors can	D. is the only mediator between God and men.
_____ 5. Jesus	E. that the spirits of all men continue to exist after death.

The Powers of Darkness Poised as Ancestors

Since ancestors cannot communicate with the living by any means. Who is inspiring this devotion, this fear, and the offerings that are made to them?

The powers of darkness themselves are poised as ancestors seeking the worship of those who would make sacrifices to them or call upon them. This is made evident in Paul's teaching to the Corinthians.

What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons (1 Corinthians 10:19-20).

Paul was writing to the Corinthians to clear up the question of whether meat, which had been sacrificed to idols, could be eaten. In his response, he reveals that anything offered to an idol is actually offered to a demon. Perhaps you are

wondering, "Where is the connection with ancestors?" Paul asserts that there is no such thing as an idol because it is only something made with earthly materials (1 Corinthians 8:4). But he also asserts that even though they themselves are nothing, behind them lay the powers of darkness who carry out the works of the devil himself.

In the New Testament, the term idolatry is used figuratively of undue obsession with any object less than God.⁴ An idol is whatever claims the loyalty that belongs to God alone.⁵ Therefore, ancestors fall into this category of idolatry. As a result, when sacrifices or anything is offered to the ancestors, it is in reality offered to demons. As we saw in lesson one, the powers of darkness can cause health and social problems. They can communicate in all the ways in which people believe that ancestors themselves do because they pose as the ancestral spirits.

The Bible therefore, condemns and forbids those who call upon the ancestors in any way (see the memory verse for this lesson).

There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you (Deuteronomy 18:11).

Involvement with ancestors is not forbidden because of some arbitrary will of God, but because they are associated with the adversaries of the kingdom of God. To participate in them not only reflects unbelief and disobedience, but involves the

participant in the works of the powers of darkness.⁶ This is absolutely detestable to God.

Review

Fill in the blanks of partially written sentences which describe the powers of darkness poised as ancestors.

1. Idols are nothing because they are only made with _____.
2. In the New Testament the term idolatry is used figuratively of undue _____ with any object less than God.
3. Therefore anything sacrificed to ancestors is actually sacrificed to _____.
4. An idol is anything, which claims _____ belonging to God alone.
5. The powers of darkness can communicate in all the _____ that ancestors are believed to communicate.
6. The Bible _____ and _____ those who call upon ancestors.

7. Involvement with ancestors is forbidden because it is associated with the _____ of the kingdom of God.

Summary

From this lesson you should have learned---

- The practice of ancestor worship and consultation is a stronghold of the powers of darkness. These evil powers have built upon people's fears of how ancestors sometimes communicate their displeasure. There is, therefore, a great need to appease them. Abandoning ancestors is viewed in the same way as mistreating a living person.
- The Bible affirms the view that ancestors are the living-dead. The Bible teaches that all men, when they die, continue to exist, and will one day be judged. At death, man is confined to a certain place and is unable to communicate with the living. Ancestors are not intermediaries between God and man because God has only one mediator, the man Christ Jesus.
- The powers of darkness pose as ancestors in order to receive worship offered to them. The biblical record reveals that anything offered to idols (idols being anything, which is an obsession with people) is, in reality, offered to demons. Any involvement with ancestors is forbidden because it is an association with the powers of darkness who are God's adversaries.

NOTES:

The Stronghold of Divination

Lesson Five

Lesson Goal: Upon completion of this lesson you will be able to explain how divination is a stronghold of powers of darkness.

Lesson Indicators: To demonstrate your achievement of this goal you will do the following---

1. Distinguish between correct and incorrect attitudes toward the stronghold of divination.
2. Match the phrases which best describe the biblical perspective of divination.
5. Underline the correct word or phrase which best describes the powers of darkness in divination.

MEMORY VERSE

Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God (Leviticus 19:31).

The Divination Stronghold

In the last lesson we looked briefly at the stronghold of ancestors. We are now going to look at yet another very

common stronghold in African culture. This stronghold is known as the practice of divination. This practice is not common just to Africa; it exists in many different countries in a variety of forms.

The word *divination* comes from a Latin word *divinus* meaning *divinely inspired* and pertaining to a deity.¹ Divination, therefore, is the practice of foreseeing the future. But it has become much more than just foreseeing the future. Divination is a method for bringing into the open what is hidden or unknown in order to make everyday decisions of life.² These everyday problems involve seeking the cause of a misfortune, seeking physical healing, advancing beyond a certain situation, seeking the interpretation of dreams or visions, as well as discerning the guilty party.

The agents for the practice of divination are usually traditional healers or Sangoma. They employ the use of bones or stones in determining the cause of misfortune or the solution to whatever problem is being sought after. Many times, however, ancestors are the ones who are sought in order to gain insight into these occurrences.

The practice of divination is a stronghold of the powers of darkness. It is a means for people to gain power, influence, and control, all of which belong to God alone. In exercising the remedy to their problems, people often pay large sums of money, sacrifice cattle or goats, or carry out measures, which harm innocent people. Thus, the powers of darkness are firmly entrenched in a stronghold that keeps people in darkness. While people are involved in the practice of divination, they are being destroyed, unaware that the powers are stealing, killing, and destroying them.

Remember from one of the previous lessons that the goal of the powers of darkness is to destroy.

The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly (John 10:10).

Review

Distinguish between correct and incorrect attitudes of the stronghold of divination.

- _____ 1. Divination is practiced only in Botswana.
- _____ 2. The word “divination” comes from the Greek word meaning “secret things.”
- _____ 3. Ancestors are not involved in the practice of divination.
- _____ 4. Divination is means for people to gain power, influence, and control over their lives.
- _____ 5. Divination is a method or bringing into the open what is hidden or unknown in order to make everyday decisions.

Biblical Perspective of Divination

Divination can be traced all the way back to man's rebellion against God. God had explicitly told Adam and Eve that they could eat every tree in the Garden of Eden except one.

God's goodness was overabundant. Yet, the serpent deceived Adam and Eve when he led them to focus on what God had not given them. As the father of lies (John 8:44), he offered knowledge and power apart from God. He said you will be like God knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5). As a result, Adam and Eve rebelled against God in their quest for knowledge and power like God's. Divination is the gaining of knowledge or power, which is otherwise withheld, from human beings.³

The Old Testament is filled with prohibitions against divination.

You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor practice divination or soothsaying (Leviticus 19:26).

Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God (Leviticus 19:31).

When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer (Deuteronomy 18:9-11).

It was prohibited because it was an attempt to manipulate the spiritual forces of God's world to find out its secrets and use them for personal benefit.⁴ God looked upon divination with such severity that he ascribed death as the punishment for anyone who was found to be a diviner or spiritist.

Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their bloodguiltiness is upon them (Leviticus 20:27).

The true God is one who cannot be manipulated, coerced, or forced because he is the source of all power. Therefore, the use of impersonal spiritual power is a negation of the ultimate power of God in Christ.⁵

Review

Match the phrases which describe the biblical perspective of divination.

- | | |
|--|--|
| _____ Divination can be traced all the way back to | A. one who was found to be a diviner or spiritist. |
| _____ The serpent offered | B. because it was manipulation of the powers of darkness for personal benefit. |
| _____ God prohibited divination | C. knowledge and power apart from God. |
| _____ Death was the punishment for | D. man's rebellion against God. |
| _____ Divination is the gaining of knowledge | E. which is otherwise withheld from human beings. |

The Powers of Darkness in Divination

Divination is the offspring of idolatry.⁶ As such, it is the powers of darkness operating within the practice of divination (1 Corinthians 10:20). The agents who do the divining are often able to perform many miracles as well as being able to properly discern causes of misfortune. However, their power does not come from within them, it comes from the powers of darkness who provide the information requested or who reveal the guilty parties involved.

Scripture reveals that the powers of darkness indeed have power, and are able to perform even signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, Revelation 13:13-18). Luke describes an incident in Acts 16 where a young girl was possessed with a spirit of divination. She was bringing her masters much profit at the expense of the people (Acts 16:19). Paul was able to discern that he wasn't dealing with just a person. He recognized the power source operating within the young girl as a demonic spirit. It was the evil spirit who provided the unknown information. When confronted with the power of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the demonic spirit had to release his grasp and flee (Acts 16:18).

The Bible clearly warns us that divination of any kind is forbidden (Isaiah 8:19; Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Leviticus 20:6, 27). The prophet Isaiah warns of the folly of divination. He sternly warns that God will oppose those who practice it.

Thus says the Lord, your redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself, and spreading out the earth all alone, causing the omens of boasters to fail, making

fools out of diviners, causing wise men to draw back, and turning their knowledge into foolishness (Isaiah 44:24-25).

Divination, like the stronghold of ancestors, associates people with evil powers, which oppose God. To be involved in it is dangerous to us, and is therefore forbidden by God.

Mr. Mpatla was a young man who had finished secondary school as well as further studies at a Vocational Training College. He continually looked for work, but he was always refused. He decided he needed help, and went to a traditional healer who gave him some muti to chew during job interviews. It cost him eighty pula. Whenever he went for an interview, he would reach into his pocket and chew it. He continued looking for work but to no avail. Now he not only didn't have a job, but he was eighty pula poorer.

Mpatla is one example of many Batswana who pay large amounts of money to traditional healers when seeking help. Sometimes the powers of darkness will accommodate people by seeing that they receive what they want. This only reinforces the person's bondage to them. They will return again and again. Their desire is always to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). However, God's desire is for people to seek Him first in everything, and He will provide us with the necessities of life (Matthew 6:33).

When men seek traditional healers rather than God, it is evidence of demonic idolatry. They are setting God aside, rather than giving Him first place in their lives.⁷

Review

Underline the correct word or phrase which best describes the powers of darkness in divination.

1. Divination is the offspring of (**idolatry / lost men**).
2. The powers of darkness have (**power / information**) to perform signs and wonders.
3. The spirit of divination in the young girl in Acts 16 was a (**demonic spirit / holy spirit**).
4. The evil spirit in the young girl was providing the (**unknown information / known information**) sought by people.
5. Men who seek out (**signs & wonders / traditional healers**) are involved in demonic idolatry.

Summary

From this lesson you should have learned---

- Divination is a stronghold of the powers of darkness, which exists in many different countries of the world. Divination is the practice of revealing unknown information to aid people in making daily decisions. The powers hold people in darkness who continually seek power, influence, and control over their lives.
- Divination originated in the Garden of Eden when the serpent tempted Adam and Eve with the possibility of having knowledge and power like God's. Divination is forbidden in scripture because of its involvement with the adversaries of God.
- The powers of darkness are the source of information behind all agents of divination, such as traditional healers. These demonic spirits have the power to perform miracles as needed. All those who seek the services of these agents of darkness are actually involved in demonic idolatry.

Lesson Five Test

1. Is divination only practiced through traditional healers or are there other ways to practice divination?

2. Why does the Bible strongly prohibit divination?

2. How can traditional healers sometimes give correct information or appropriate advice for healing?

3. Should people of your nation ever visit a traditional healer?
Why or why not?

Seminar Questions

1. Why do people in your nation turn to the practice of divination?
2. How does knowledge of the nature of evil spirits help us to understand divination?
3. Should a Christian in your culture seek help from a traditional healer for good reasons?
4. Should seeking help from traditional healers be classified as idolatry? Why or why not?
5. What specific teaching should pastors provide Christians who seek help from traditional healers?
6. What is the source of true information that is revealed through divination?
7. Should divination be replaced with a Christian substitute?

NOTES:

The Cross - Defeat of the Powers of Darkness

Lesson Six

Lesson Goal: Upon completion of this lesson you will have gained an understanding of the cross in the believer's victory over all wicked spirits.

Goal Indicators: To achieve this understanding you will do the following---

1. Distinguish between the true and false statements of the cross as a cosmic battle.
2. Complete partially written sentences related to the cross as the basis for the believer's victory.
3. Matching scripture verses and phrases on God's disarmament of Satan and wicked spirits.
4. Identify situations where victory is being appropriated through the cross.

MEMORY VERSE

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

The Cross - A Cosmic Battle

Numerous reasons are given in scripture for Christ's coming into the world. Luke states that, *Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost* (Luke 19:10). Mark writes that, *Jesus came to serve and to give his life a ransom for all* (Mark 10:4). Matthew describes Jesus' coming in a different way. He says, *He came not to bring peace but a sword* (Matthew 12:30).

Each reason noted gives a slightly different perspective. One reason does not contradict another one. It is like the facets of a diamond. The more you turn it, the more you are able to enjoy its beauty. But one reason for Christ's coming is commonly left unnoticed. It is found tucked away in one of the apostle John's little letters. It is a short statement, but a very powerful one. It unveils an aspect of Christ's coming, which is normally overlooked.

For the son of Man appeared that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

These little words penned by John reveal the cosmic battle that culminated in the cross more than all others. Jesus came into the world to do battle with the enemy. Satan never caught Jesus off guard. Jesus himself had an agenda. On his agenda was the destruction of Satan and his works. Satan fought hard to destroy Jesus. He never gave up.

From the moment that Jesus was born into the world, Satan was seeking to remove him. Satan often works indirectly through human agents. He worked through Herod, attempting to kill him by murdering all male children under the age of two (Matthew 2:16). When his plan failed there, he tried to tempt

Jesus to sin against the Father (Matthew 4:1-10). He knew that one act of sin would destroy Jesus' ministry. Unsuccessful, he entered into Judas to betray Jesus into the hands of enemies, who would have him crucified (Luke 22:3). Satan began to work in a more direct fashion.

It was not just Herod, nor Judas, nor the High Priests who were responsible for trying to destroy Jesus. It was the principalities and powers inspiring them.¹ It was Satan, the head seeking to destroy Him. Had the principalities and powers known the outcome of the cross, would they have nailed Jesus to the cross? This is the question that the apostle Paul answers in his letter to the Corinthians.

The wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8).

Review

Distinguish between the statements which are true (T) and those which are false (F).

- _____ 1. Jesus came into the world to destroy the works of Satan.
- _____ 2. The cross was a cosmic battle because Satan was seeking to destroy the Son of God.
- _____ 3. The cosmic battle culminated when Jesus was nailed to the cross.
- _____ 4. Earthly rulers were used by Satan to crucify Jesus.
- _____ 5. The earthly rulers, along with Satan, were fully aware of the outcome of the cross.

The Cross - Basis of Victory

To seek to destroy strongholds, cast out demons, or resist the enemy in any fashion without standing on the finished work of Jesus Christ at the cross is to labor in vain. Our victory rests upon the work of Christ upon that cross. It is not the pieces of wood that make up the cross, but the supreme act of the one who gave his life upon it that assures our victory. The ground of our victory lies neither in our strength nor our might but in the power of the cross. Though the cross may mean different things to different people, it is the Christian's focal point.

For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).

The history of the Batswana records stories of how different tribes fought one another over and over. It is always a test of strength. The warriors who are strong in numbers and strength usually defeat those less skilled in combat and fewer in number. The basis for this kind of victory always lies in physical strength.

When the Lord sent Jesus to die on Calvary, he proved that our ways are not his ways. The prophet Isaiah records that the Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways (Isaiah 55:8). As humans the test of victory is our strength. But God's ways are different. Our Lord secured victory through humility. The cross was an act of supreme humility for all who would become united in Christ Jesus. The apostle Paul describes this act of humility in his letter to the Philippians.

Who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:6-8).

Can we really call Christ's death on the cross the basis of our victory? Was it truly the basis of victory when one side has all the wisdom and all the power and all the might and all the dominion, and when that side knows before it all begins exactly what will happen, so that every detail is the simple fulfillment of an eternal plan?² Yes, even knowing all this, it is still the basis for victory. Christ became the payment for mankind's debt of sin in order to strip the spirits of power and free man from their grasp (2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 2:15).

Review

Complete the following sentences which explain the cross as the basis for the believer's victory.

1. The ground of our victory lies not in our strength or might, but in the _____.
2. According to the world's ways victory is usually the result of _____.
3. Christ's death was the fulfillment of an eternal _____.

4. Christ's death on the cross was an act of humility

that _____ the winning blow
against the enemy.

5. Christ himself became the payment for mankind's

_____.

The Cross -Disarming of Spirits

The cross was where Satan was made powerless. Since then the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14). Jesus through his willful submission to death on the cross, brought Satan, the head of all evil spirits, to a state of powerlessness. Many times Jesus had spelled out this inevitable judgement upon Satan (and therefore all the powers of of darkness) to his disciples (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11).

Now judgement is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out (John 12:31).

It was on the cross that the judgement of the enemy was carried out. The apostle Paul provides a vivid picture of Christ's disarmament of Satan and all evil spirits in his letter to the Colossians.

Having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross, when he had disarmed the rulers and authorities, he made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through him (Colossians 2:14-15).

The word for *rulers* and *authorities* depicted here are translated differently elsewhere. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, these two words are translated using the terms *principalities* and *powers*.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).

Not only did he pay the debt of our sin, but he disarmed them. The term translated disarm is a word which describes the actual stripping and removal of arms from a defeated foe. What confidence this should give us! The spirits are powerless! After rendering them powerless, he made a public display of them. This is a picture of a Roman general who has conquered his enemy and is allowed to parade his armies through the streets, followed by his defeated foes.

Christ conquered, stripped, and publicly triumphed over our enemy. This raises an important question. If the spirits are defeated, why don't we experience more victory in our daily lives?

Review

Match the scripture verses with the appropriate phrases regarding the disarmament of wicked spirits.

A. Hebrews 2:14 B. Colossians 2:13-15 C. John 12:30

- _____ 1. The ruler of this world has been judged.
- _____ 2. Christ's death rendered powerless the one who had the power of death.
- _____ 3. Christ disarmed all evil spirits on the cross.
- _____ 4. Christ's death on the cross was a public display of his victory over all principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

The Cross – Our Victory by Appropriation

It's true! Satan is a defeated foe. The death sentence has been pronounced upon him. Our victory over wicked spirits is guaranteed. We are working from victory, not toward it.³

To gain a better understanding, let's imagine a great war between two tribes where they enter into one last battle that is to determine who will conquer. One tribe defeats the other in this great battle. However, scattered throughout the land are many warriors refusing to surrender. It's only a matter of time before the conquering tribe will enforce its authority and might over these rebellious warriors. The winning battle has been fought,

and the winner determined. Enforcing submission is next on the agenda.

Satan's kingdom has been conquered, but he still prowls about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). His prowling is done in a deceptive style for he has no authority over the believer who appropriates his victory in the cross. In fact, the believer has the privilege and responsibility to manage the authority given by Christ and passed on to him as a result of the cross.

Demons will admit to defeat when we by faith (believing what Christ has done) point to our crucifixion with Christ on the cross (Galatians 2:20), and our resurrection with him into the heavenlies (Colossians 3:1), where we are seated with him above all rule and authority, dominion and might (Ephesians 1:21). When we take this step of action, we will send the demons fleeing.

Review

Identify which prayer best characterizes how to appropriate our victory on the cross.

- _____ A. Father, I thank you that my debt of sin has been cancelled on the cross, and that all powers of darkness have been stripped of their power. By faith, I claim this victory over any evil spirits seeking to harm me because ofI stand against them through Christ's blood on the cross. Amen.

_____ B. Father, thank you for loving me and making me a new creature in Christ. Help me to have the power to walk in victory over all enemies. In Jesus name. Amen.

Summary

From this lesson you should have learned---

- Jesus' birth into the world gave visible manifestation to the cosmic battle over the powers of darkness. They attempted to destroy the son of God over and over. If they had known that the cross meant their defeat, they would not have crucified him.
- The basis of victory for any battle rests in the strength of the warriors. However, the believer's victory is based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and nothing else. We cannot rely upon our strength, nor our works in gaining freedom from sin or Satan.
- The Christian's victory is guaranteed. It was settled once and for all with Jesus' death on the cross. Though it is guaranteed, we may not experience victory over the powers of darkness until we enforce our authority. This is called appropriation. We must stand against these enemies with the certificate of debt that has been paid with Christ's blood. The powers of darkness will have no choice but to yield.

Lesson Six Test

1. What is the relationship between Christ's payment for our sins, and the cross as Christ's disarming of evil spirits?

2. List at least three scripture verses that explain Christ's purpose for coming into the world.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

3. How would you appropriate your victory in the following incident?

A curse has been placed upon you because you refuse to become involved in your family's traditional ways, such as sacrificing to the ancestors. What will you do?

NOTES:

Breaking Down Strongholds With Truth

Lesson Seven

Lesson Goal: Upon completion of this lesson you will gain an understanding of how strongholds can be broken down when exposed to the truth.

Goal Indicators: To demonstrate your achievement of this goal you will do the following---

1. Complete the incomplete sentences, which describe how the powers of darkness suppress the truth.
2. Indicate which case studies are actually exposing strongholds to the light.

MEMORY VERSE

Jesus was therefore saying to those Jews who had believed Him, if you abide in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free (John 8:31-32)

Powers of Darkness - Suppressing the Truth

All strongholds are raised up in opposition to the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). The powers of

darkness do not want people to experience the truth because it is truth that can set us free (John 8:32). The powers of darkness unleash their greatest hostility toward the proclamation of the gospel. They work through man's fallen nature as well as through the structures of the world to blind people from discovering the truth about God's redemptive work in the Lord Jesus Christ.¹

Satan is the god of this world, who, along with thousands of evil spirits, is keeping people in darkness concerning the truth of salvation (2 Corinthians 4:4). In Jesus' parable of the soils, He made known that the powers of darkness are quick to take away the truth when preached to unbelievers (Mark 4:15). The young demon-possessed girl in Acts who followed Paul around kept crying out, *These men are bond-servants of the Most High God*, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation (Acts 16:17). A better translation would be, *who are proclaiming to you a way of salvation*. The demon was trying to confuse people by saying that Paul was only proclaiming another way of salvation, not *the way*. The powers of darkness do not want the truth to be made known.

As believers we can become snared into Satan's strongholds through believing his lies. However, what we must first deal with is exposing people to the truth. According to the scripture, truth is more than a concept, or system of beliefs. It is a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6). He was proclaiming himself to be *the truth*.

Review

Complete the incomplete Sentences which describe how the powers of darkness suppress the truth.

1. The powers of darkness unleash their greatest hostility toward the _____.
2. They work through man's fallen nature and the Structures of this world to _____ men to the truth.
3. The powers of darkness are quick to _____ the truth when preached to _____.
4. The destruction of strongholds begins first with the _____.
5. Exposing people to the truth involves more than sharing beliefs, it means exposing them to _____.

Exposing Strongholds to the Truth

In helping people come to salvation, we may need to expose some stronghold to the truth of God's word. This furthers one's understanding of who Jesus Christ is. Strongholds are essentially nothing more than lies propagated by the powers of darkness. Whenever they are exposed to the light of God's word, they will flee.

Submit therefore to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

Our resistance is always based on God and obedience to His word, never ourselves. When we submit to God by obeying Him, then resist the devil, the powers of darkness will flee us.

When Jesus was confronted with the prince of darkness himself, He continually exposed his lies to the light of the scriptures. To each lie of Satan He responded with, *It is written* (Matthew 4:4,7,10). Counterfeit money is very difficult to detect. Bank employees, however, have a very small device with a special light that enables them to detect counterfeit money by exposing it to the light. This is our task if we are to break down strongholds that are keeping people in bondage. We must expose the lies of the powers of darkness to the light of God's penetrating Word (Hebrews 4:12). If we fail to do so, then we miss an opportunity to allow people to encounter truth.

In a small village in Northern Liberia people were continually dying of water-borne diseases. Within several hundred meters of the village were two springs. One was a muddy spring, which flowed over the face of a rock, contaminated by mud and animals. The other was free-flowing

spring and uncontaminated. The villagers drew water from the dirty spring, taking a long time to fill one jug.

Some missionaries who came into the area decided to offer a proposal to the elders of the village. They would cap the good spring and pump it into a reservoir providing good safe water. The elders refused the offer. The refusal was based on the belief that the dirty spring was sacred for fertility rites. If they disturbed it, they would become barren.² The principalities and powers opposed to God work in various ways to alienate people from God. They use gods who are no gods so people will believe in them and worship them.³

The powers of darkness had built a stronghold that needed to be exposed to the truth but wasn't. This stronghold was stealing time from people and destroying many. Exposing this stronghold to the light could have provided a unique opportunity to bring people to the truth Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In a small village in Botswana, the Mogwera family had joined a small independent church. This particular group practices ancestor worship, encourages people to seek out traditional healers, and even practices purification through repeated baths, which require payment. Mr. Mogwera began to listen to a colleague at work who constantly shared the Word of God. Through this colleague Rre Mogwera was exposed to the truth--the Lord Jesus Christ. When he accepted Christ he realized that he was free from all the many practices that were keeping his church in bondage. He now understood that he no longer needed continual purification nor did he need to sacrifice to the ancestors. He was a free man.

Through studying the word of God he realized that he had to leave his church. Before leaving he exposed many other

members to the truth. These people also left the church. A stronghold of the powers of darkness had been broken by the truth.

When we proclaim and teach people to act upon the truth of God's word, then the captives will be set free. Jesus said, *And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free* (John 8:32). To know the truth does not mean intellectual knowledge, such as knowing about something. Jesus' words are referring to experiential knowledge where we trust what is being said.

A chief in Polynesia who had become a Christian attempted again and again to convince other leaders that he had made the right decision. He finally decided to demonstrate the truth of his new faith by eating the flesh of the tribe's totem, a turtle. The turtle, which was believed to be sacred, was never to be eaten or it might result in serious harm. When the chief ate and nothing happened; this stronghold upon the people began to break down.

There is little doubt that the powers of darkness were operating through this stronghold. When it was exposed to the truth that God has given us all things to enjoy (1 Timothy 4:4), it began to crumble. This experience led the people to give their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who sets the captives free.⁴

Sometimes when we expose the strongholds of the powers of darkness to the light they will react. This can lead to a power encounter. We will examine how to deal with power encounters in the next lesson.

Review

Indicate which case studies are actually exposing strongholds to the light by placing an (X) in the blank.

- _____ 1. Salena is constantly plagued by bad dreams. each night she places a Bible under her pillow to protect her from these dreams. Her brother, who is a believer, challenged her to leave the Bible and to place her trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who alone is able to help and protect her.
- _____ 2. Mrs. Baboloki refuses to move into her newly acquired house until the local traditional doctor comes to purify it. Her sister, who is a prophetess in a local Zionist church, has encouraged her to wait until all evil spirits are cast out before moving in.
- _____ 3. When Jeremia entered his sister's courtyard and saw a charm attached to his niece's ankle he immediately tore it off. His sister says any harm that now comes to the little girl will be his fault.

Summary

From this lesson you should have learned---

- The powers of darkness are actively engaged in blinding people from the truth. They accomplish this through the works of the flesh as well as by creating strongholds that keep men from discovering the truth. They prevent people from knowing the person of truth, the Lord Jesus Christ. Destroying strongholds begins first by leading people out of darkness into an encounter with the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Exposing various strongholds to the truth can assist people in their pilgrimage of receiving the Lord of truth. Strongholds are destroyed only as we expose them to the light of God's Word. Exposing strongholds means that we challenge the lies of Satan, which are holding people in bondage.

Lesson Seven Test

1. Give two Biblical examples of how the powers of darkness are suppressing truth.

2. In the story of the two springs in Liberia, what should the missionaries have done differently?

3. Describe a stronghold in your culture that you are familiar with, and which needs to be exposed to the truth.

Seminar Questions

1. What is the most defeating truth to the powers of darkness?
2. How did Jesus deal with Satan during the temptations in the wilderness?
3. How can truth overcome strongholds of the powers of darkness?
4. How did the powers of darkness react to the presence of Jesus during His ministry?
5. In what way can we expose the powers of darkness to the truth?
6. Is proclamation of the truth enough to conquer strongholds? Why or why not?

NOTES:

Breaking Down Strongholds With Power Encounters

Lesson Eight

Lesson Goal: Upon completion of this lesson you will have an understanding of how power encounters are sometimes needed to break down strongholds.

Goal Indicators: To demonstrate your achievement of this goal you will do the following---

1. Match the scripture verses with the phrases that define the term power encounter.
2. Identify true and false statements about power encounter.

MEMORY VERSE

Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you (Luke 10:19)

Power Encounter Defined

In the last lesson we noted that sometimes when strongholds are exposed to the truth, the powers of darkness

operating in the stronghold may react. When they react, we are then involved in something more than simply a truth encounter. We are face to face with the powers of darkness in a power encounter. A power encounter may be described in this way,

Power encounter is the demonstration by God's servants of God's incomparably great power for us who believe (Ephesians 1:19), based on the work of Christ on the cross (Colossians 2:15), and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), in confrontation with and victory over the works of Satan and demons (Luke 10:19) in their attacks on God's children, or their control of unbelievers, resulting in the glory of God and the salvation of the lost, and/or up-building of believers.¹

God wills that the powers of darkness be resisted and that their evil schemes be exposed to the truth.² This exposure sometimes causes them to react violently as they attempt to exert their power. It is then that we must use the authority delegated to us by the Lord Jesus Christ, to send them fleeing (Luke 10:19).

Review

Match scripture verses with the phrases that define the term power encounter.

- A. Ephesians 1:19-20 _____ Demonstration of God's great power.
- B. Luke 10:19 _____ Based on the work of Christ on the cross.

C. Acts 1:8	_____	Confrontation with and victory over demons.
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D. Colossians 2:15	_____	Effected through the Holy Spirit.
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From Truth Encounter to Power Encounter

Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ exposes strongholds and people to the truth (truth encounter). The disciples of Jesus not only proclaimed the truth they demonstrated it. Jesus told Peter that the gates of Hades will not overcome the church (Matthew 16:18). The gates of Hades are the strongholds of satanic powers that seek to destroy us (Ephesians 6:10-12). As Christ's instruments, we are to wage war on these strongholds, replacing their dominion with the kingdom of God.³

At certain times the powers of darkness may manifest themselves, which shows the need for a demonstration of the power of Christ (power encounter). The spirit of divination in the young girl in Acts 16 was a stronghold upon many who wasted their money seeking information. The profit was going into the pockets of her masters. This spirit reacted to Paul's preaching of truth (Acts 16:17). The reaction persisted so much that Paul needed to demonstrate the truth by confronting the demonic spirit. Here, proclamation of the truth led to a need for demonstration.

Paul's ministry in Asia continued for over two years. As he proclaimed the truth, God used him in the demonstration of many power encounters (Acts 19:10-11).

From Power Encounter to Salvation

Often, power encounters can be effectively used in leading people to salvation. An encounter with truth leads to an encounter with power, which leads people to give their total allegiance to Jesus Christ.

The confrontation of the powers of darkness during Paul's ministry led many to faith in Christ (Acts 19:18). So real was their conversion, that many openly confessed and disclosed their evil practices (Acts 19:19). Paul's demonstrations of power over the powers of darkness were influential in their decisions to come out of darkness into light.

As Pastor Mothusi was preaching at an open-air meeting in town, he noticed an elderly man approaching the platform. Pastor Mothusi knew this influential man in the community. He also knew that he opposed the preaching of the gospel. He began to publicly mock the preaching. At the end of the meeting elders of the church who began ministering to him approached him. That night he was delivered from an evil spirit. Through his conversion, many came to receive Christ. Preaching truth led to a power encounter, which led men and women to salvation in Jesus Christ. This example occurs all the time throughout the world.

In the West African country of Burkina Faso, a Muslim sorcerer named Abou who lived in Burkina Faso went through a dramatic change when he was converted to Jesus Christ. His life

changed so that he began sharing his newfound faith with everyone. It was not long, however, until other sorcerers in the area tried to kill him. They made many attempts, but were unsuccessful.

Not long after these unsuccessful attempts, a very powerful sorceress invited Abou to her village to preach. The real purpose was to hear him preach, but to challenge the power of Jesus. This sorceress made yet another attempt on his life by planting explosives on his bicycle. Abou escaped unharmed. After arriving at the village of the sorceress, he was able to share his source of power with her. She accepted the truth of Jesus Christ. That night he stayed in the house of the evil spirit, which was no longer able to stay there because it had not been victorious in the power encounter, with Abou's Jesus. As a result, many in the area became Christians.⁴ The powers of darkness that operated through the stronghold of sorcery, and robbing many people of time and money, had been defeated.

Power encounters do not always lead to salvation. In the case of the young girl with the spirit of divination, the proclamation of the truth led to a need for demonstration. But the demonstration that occurred, which was a power encounter, did not lead anyone to salvation. In fact, the masters of the young girl became very hostile to Paul and Barnabas (Acts 16:19).

The Bible does not commission us to go on a “lion hunt” in order to create power encounters. However it is very clear that we are to be equipped and prepared to meet such confrontation victoriously when they do arise.⁵

Review

Identify true and false statements about power encounters.

- _____ 1. Preaching the truth can expose demons to the light.
- _____ 2. The powers of darkness will always manifest themselves when truth is proclaimed.
- _____ 3. Paul's proclamation of the gospel led him into many power encounters.
- _____ 4. Power encounters always lead people to salvation.
- _____ 5. When Paul cast the demon out of the young girl in Acts 16, many people were saved.
- _____ 6. The Bible commissions us to seek encounters with the powers of darkness.

Summary

From this lesson you should have learned---

- Whenever the strongholds of the enemy are exposed to the truth, power encounters may occur. A power encounter is a direct confrontation with the powers of darkness. It is claiming authority over the powers of darkness, which is possible because of Christ's defeat of all these powers on the cross.
- Proclaiming the truth is a means of exposing the works of Satan. When the works are made manifest and confronted, this becomes a demonstration of the power of Jesus Christ. This demonstration of power can sometimes be used to lead people to salvation. No where does the Bible encourage us to seek power encounters, but only to be prepared to meet them when they come.

Lesson Eight Test

1. Define the term power encounter in your own words.

2. Explain the difference between "truth encounter" and "power encounter."

4. Cite one scriptural example where a power encounter was effective in bringing people to salvation, and one example where it was not.

Seminar Questions

1. How would you describe a power encounter? What biblical examples can you give?
2. Can you clearly define the difference between a "truth encounter" and a "power encounter?"
3. How did Jesus reveal his power over the powers of darkness?
4. Do all believers have this same power?
5. What is the difference between power and authority?
5. How did evil spirits usually react to Jesus before he cast them out?
6. Will all who see a demonstration of Jesus' power receive him as Lord?

NOTES:

Breaking Down Strongholds with Prayer

Lesson Nine

Lesson Goal: Upon completion of this lesson you will have learned how prayer can break down strongholds of the powers of darkness.

Lesson Indicators: To demonstrate your achievement of this goal you will do the following---

1. Underline the word or phrase which best describes the most divine weapon of the believer.
2. Select the correct statements which describe how to bind the strong man.

MEMORY VERSE

But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house (Mark 3:27).

The Most Divine Weapon

We have now come to the third lesson on breaking down strongholds. We have already seen that we must expose the

powers of darkness to truth. In doing so, they may react bringing about a need to confront them with the authority of Jesus Christ. This act of exerting our authority we called a power encounter.

Though we need to proclaim truth, and take authority over the enemy through power encounters; we must not neglect our most important weapon in breaking down strongholds. Breaking down strongholds is no easy task. It requires that we rely not upon our own strength and abilities, but wholly upon the strength of Christ. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood. Neither are our weapons of the flesh, they are spiritual! When Paul wrote about strongholds, he stated clearly that the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4).

The most divine weapon we possess against the strongholds of the powers of darkness is prayer. It is the central foundational activity in spiritual warfare. Without prayer, we are powerless in our struggle against the powers of darkness.¹

In order to plunder the strong man's property, we must first bind him. The little parable of the strong man comes from Jesus. The disciples obviously saw the importance of this parable because three of them included it in their gospels (Matthew 12:22-45; Mark 3:20-27; Luke 11:14-23).

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder (Luke 11:21-22).

The context of this parable reveals Jesus casting out demons, and yet being accused of doing so by the power of Satan. Jesus responded to their accusations with this parable describing how Satan would be foolish to cast himself out, or in other words, to divide his kingdom by destroying his own work.

The strong man in the parable is Satan and the powers of darkness. No one can plunder his property unless they first bind the strong man. The strong man's property refers to those people who are being held in bondage to him in his kingdom of darkness. The strong man is not going to sit around while his house is being destroyed and his possessions taken. In other words, Satan will not let his kingdom be plundered easily without some resistance. Therefore, we must first neutralize him before we can release his captives.

In this instance a stronghold may be compared to a prison. The powers of darkness are holding the prisoners captive. We can preach about freedom all day outside the prison walls, but the prisoners will still remain prisoners. We must begin by binding the guards of the prison house, and storming the gates of the prison to free the captives. We must learn to bind the strong man.

The powers of darkness are quick to remove the truth of God's word to keep their victims in darkness. Jesus explained this in his parable of the soils. He said the birds of the air who come and snatch up the seed (the word of God) are the powers of darkness (Mark 4:15). Unless we learn how to bind the enemy through prayer, we will not experience the breaking down of the powers of darkness.

Review

Underline the correct word or phrase which best describes the most divine weapon of the believer.

1. The weapon of prayer is (**powerful / helpful**) for the destruction of strongholds.
2. Prayer is the (**central activity / main issue**) in spiritual warfare.
3. Binding the powers of darkness may be compared to binding the (**guards of a prison / shopkeeper of a shop**).
4. The strong man (Satan) must first be (**neutralized / fought**) before the captives can be set free.
5. Binding the powers of darkness will (**prevent / cause**) the removal of the truth of God's word.

Binding through Prayer

The ministry of binding is the ministry of intercessory prayer on behalf of those held captive by the powers of darkness.² When we pray, we are not trying to convince God to join us in our service for him. We are actually joining God in his ministry. It is here that the work of the cross comes in. We must demand release on the basis of our authority, and Christ's defeat of the powers of darkness on the cross.³

As we bind Satan and demand release, we will slowly see these rebel forces being disarmed. Jesus remarked about this in his parable of the strongman.

But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder (Luke 11:22).

The basis of our authority over them lies in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross (Colossians 2:15). What remains is for us to enforce the decree of freedom that was made. Therefore, when God's people go to prayer, they provide the legal and moral justification for God to release his power.⁴

In praying for the destruction of strongholds, we must pray specifically. General prayers of *God save everyone* will not be effective in our warfare with the evil ones. We must be specific.

- 1) Pray that God would open the eyes of **(name the person)** to come out of darkness to light (2 Corinthians 4:4; Acts 26:18).
- 2) Pray that God would destroy the stronghold of **(name it)** in the lives of **(name them)** (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).
- 3) Pray that the powers of darkness would be bound when we preach, so that the gospel will lead people to repent (Mark 4:15).

Pastor Gape was annoyed every Sunday by the neighboring people next to the tree where he preached. He knew that the powers of darkness were seeking to disrupt the preaching of the word of God. He decided to fast and pray and

bind the powers of darkness from their disruption. The next Sunday the neighbors were not disruptive. In fact, they began to be friendly toward him. Many examples like this require us to engage in prayer, binding the powers of darkness. When we do, we will see a greater freedom among people to receive Christ.

Another pastor in West Africa has realized the power of prayer to break down strongholds of the powers of darkness. Every year during Easter, he organizes a crusade to evangelize his city. Months before the crusade, he organizes teams of men and women who meet daily for prayer. During the crusade, these same people gather themselves behind the platform in a large stadium where they pray continuously. One Easter, out of an attendance of nearly forty-five thousand, ten thousand people made decisions for Jesus Christ. Hundreds were set free from various sins that had held them captive for years.

The proclamation of truth was intense. The resulting power encounters with the powers of darkness were numerous. But the greatest work, which under girded everything, was the binding of the strong man. This occurred before, during and after the weekend. We must learn to bind the strong man. We must become engaged in the ministry of binding the powers of darkness through prayer in order that our preaching and our encounters will not be in vain. Then we will see men and women experience true freedom from the strongholds that have kept them in bondage for years.

Review

Select the correct statements which describe how to bind the strong man by placing an (X) in front of them.

- _____ 1. When we bind the powers of darkness in prayer we are joining God in His ministry, enforcing His previous work on the cross.
- _____ 2. Binding the powers of darkness should involve specific prayers.
- _____ 3. When God's people go to prayer God is forced to act on their behalf.
- _____ 4. Engaging in the ministry of prayer will undergird our proclamation of the truth.
- _____ 5. Praying for the salvation of everyone in a village is the same as binding Satan.

Summary

From this lesson you should have learned---

- The most important weapon for the breaking down of strongholds is intercessory prayer on behalf of those in darkness. Without it, we are inadequate in our struggle with the powers of darkness. We must learn to neutralize the strong man (Satan) in order to see men and women set free from being held captive to various strongholds.
- Binding the strong man involves our going to prayer to join God in his ministry. We bind the powers of darkness on the basis of Christ's defeat of them on the cross (Colossians 2:15). We must be specific in our praying as we bind the evil one. When we engage in this ministry of binding through prayer, God's power will be released to plunder the powers of darkness and set the captives free.

Lesson Nine Test

1. On what basis can we bind the strong man (Satan)?

2. What method may we use to bind the strong man?

3. Why is the proclamation of truth not always enough to see people set free from darkness?

4. Describe a person that you know of who is captive to a stronghold of the powers of darkness?

Write out a specific prayer for this person, binding the powers of darkness. Base it on scripture (note scripture references).

Seminar Questions

1. What is the greatest weapon of the believer? Why?
2. Who is capable of binding the strong man?
3. In what way are we able to bind Satan?
4. Why is preaching the truth and casting out demons not enough to breakdown strongholds?
5. What is the most effective way of praying when attempting to break down strongholds?
5. Why is the believer exhorted to pray at all times (Ephesians 6:18)?
6. How is prayer a divinely powerful weapon for the destruction of strongholds?

NOTES:

A Balanced Perspective

Lesson Ten

Lesson Goal: Upon completion of this lesson you will have learned to keep a balanced perspective when dealing with the powers of darkness, because the battle belongs to God.

Goal Indicators: To achieve this understanding you will do the following---

1. Underline the correct response concerning the balance needed in dealing with the powers of darkness.
2. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate response concerning the correct attitude.

MEMORY VERSE

In order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11)

Demon behind Every Bush

In Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, he stated that he was not ignorant of Satan's schemes. The last nine lessons have dealt with some of the schemes of the enemy. The aim has been

to inform you as a believer about some of the schemes of the powers of darkness in Batswana culture.

We must constantly be on the alert concerning Satan's schemes. One such scheme of his is to get us to believe that behind every bush in Botswana, there is a demon. But this idea is not in balance with scripture. Our adversary would like nothing better than for us to have an unhealthy interest in demons. To believe that a demonic spirit is behind every evil deed and every traditional practice in Batswana culture is out of balance.

There are two opposite errors into which everyone can fall concerning the powers of darkness. One is not to believe in their existence. The other is to believe and to become obsessed with them. The powers of darkness are pleased with both errors.¹

We must not attribute everything to the powers of darkness, nor should we attribute nothing. We must find the delicate balance between these two extremes. It is here that the spiritual gift of discernment can help us (1 Corinthians 12:10), along with the admonition of the apostle John to discern the spirits (1 John 4:1).

We must also remember that many practices of man are the result of man's own fallen nature. Through one man sin entered the world (Romans 5:12). As a result, we all have an evil nature within us that can deceive us. At times, man's own fleshly nature can lead him into practices which are in opposition to the spirit of God, even without the work of the powers of darkness (Galatians 5:17-21). Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us how God even gives men over to their foolish darkened hearts when they, because of their sin, refuse to worship and serve him as the creator (Romans 1:21-24).

Review

Underline the correct response concerning the balance needed in dealing with the powers of darkness.

1. One scheme of the powers of darkness is to cause us to attribute (**all / some**) evil practices to them.
2. Satan would like for us to have an (**unhealthy / healthy**) interest in him.
3. The spirit of (**discernment / prophecy**) can help us into practices which are in (**opposition / harmony**) to God even without the work of evil spirits.
4. Paul's letter to the Romans (**affirms / denies**) that God sometimes gives men up to their own fleshly desires.

Living With Unanswered Questions

In our encounters with the powers of darkness, many questions will need to remain unanswered. We ourselves must not be guilty of divination, that is seeking information or answers that do not belong to us. We might be tempted to ask questions like, how do angels respond to our prayers? What part of cultural strongholds should be attributed to man's fallen nature? Why does God continue to allow the powers of darkness to deceive people? We may never find the answers to these questions and many more like them. All we can do is to

seek God's wisdom (James 1:5) and walk by faith (Colossians 2:6-7).

Job was a classic example of a man who did not understand all that was happening to him. The counsel he received from his wife and his friends was to forsake God. In spite of this counsel, and in spite of his lack of knowledge and understanding, he refused to forsake God. Because of his perseverance, God rewarded him with knowledge and understanding (Job 42:2-3). We must learn from the patience of Job when things remain a mystery to us.

The Battle is the Lord's

Whenever we encounter spiritual strongholds where the powers of darkness have become entrenched, we must always realize that ultimately the battle is not ours, but God's. This is beautifully illustrated in the life of King Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat received a report that a great multitude was coming to war against him (2 Chronicles 20:2). Jehoshaphat responded in the same way that you and I would: he was afraid (2 Chronicles 20:3). Yet, his fear caused him to seek God. He turned to his people to seek God through prayer and fasting. His prayer is a tremendous declaration of God's sovereignty.

And he said, O Lord, the God of our Fathers, art Thou not God in the heavens? And art Thou not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Thy hand so that no one can stand against Thee (2 Chronicles 20:6).

Jehoshaphat knew that his strength lay not in himself, but in God's power. In response to Jehoshaphat's faith, God

responded to him through the prophet Jahaziel: “do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's” (2 Chronicles 20:15). God's word through this prophet should be a constant reminder to anyone confronting the powers of darkness. We cannot war with them in our strength. We are more than conquerors through Christ, only because the **battle is not ours, but God's.**

Review

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate response concerning the correct attitude which we should have in our encounters with the powers of darkness.

1. At times we may be _____ to seek questions that God has chosen not to reveal to us.
2. We may never find the _____ to some of our questions.
3. Job's persevering faith was rewarded with _____, _____, and _____.
4. All spiritual battles belong to _____.
5. The life of Jehoshaphat is a constant reminder of the correct attitude we should have toward the _____.

Summary

From this lesson you should have learned---

- The Christian life is a life of balance. Everything must be kept in balance, including our view of the work of the powers of darkness. We must not be guilty of attributing every evil practice to the work of these powers. Many evil practices are merely the result of our own fallen nature.
- Dealing with the powers of darkness can bring about many different questions. We will find some answers, but some questions will remain unanswered. God has chosen not to reveal some things to us at this time.
- Whenever we encounter the powers of darkness, we must realize that we cannot war with them in our own strength. We must remain strong in the Lord, knowing that the battle is ultimately the Lord's and not ours.

Lesson Ten Test

1. How could Satan gain an advantage over us if we attribute all evil to him?

2. What should we do with all unanswered questions about the powers of darkness?

3. Describe in your own words why our battle with the powers of darkness ultimately belongs to God?

Seminar Questions

1. Is every evil deed in your culture inspired by the powers of darkness?
3. What does it mean to live a balanced Christian life?
4. How could an unhealthy interest in the powers of darkness be a scheme of Satan?
5. Has God promised to answer all questions that might arise from learning about the powers of darkness?
6. Did Job know that he was battling with Satan?
7. How did Job's lack of knowledge and understanding about his circumstances affect his walk with God?
8. Should fear have any place in our lives when dealing with the powers of darkness? Why or why not?

ANSWERS TO REVIEW QUESTIONS

Lesson One

Page 4 1. F 2. F 3. T 4. F 5. T

Page 6 1. d, 2. a, 3. c, 4. b

Page 8 1. Angels, 2. Prince, 3. Ruler of all demons, 4. Satan, 5. Losing

Page 11 1. B, 2. A, 3. D, 4. C, 5. G, 6. F, 7. H, 8. E

Lesson Two

Page 19 1. C, 2. D, 3. A, 4. B.

Page 21 number 1 and 4

Page 23 1. Sovereignty 2. Judge 3. Never 4. Limited 5. Instruments

Lesson Three

Page 30 1, 2, and 3

Page 33 1. Worship 2. Altar & idol 3. Divination, sorcery, and sacrifice of children 4. Way of life 5. Demons

Page 37 1. Artemis 2. Crop production & animal production 3. Demons 4. Trusted 5. Beliefs or practices

Page 40 1. Lies 2. Strongholds 3. Lies & deception 4. Present 5. Knowledge of God

Lesson Four

Page 48 1, 2, and 5 are correct

Page 50 1. B, 2. E, 3. C, 4. A, 5. D

Page 53 1. Earthly materials 2. Obsession 3. Demons 4. Worship 5. Ways 6. Condemns & forbids 7. Adversaries

Page 61 3, 4, and 5 are correct

Page 63 1. D, 2. C, 3. B, 4. A, 5. E.

Page 66 1. Idolatry 2. Power 3. Demonic spirit 4. Unknown information 5. Traditional Healers

Lesson Six

Page 73 1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. T, 5. F

Page 75 1. Power of the cross 2. Physical strength 3. Plan 4. Struck 5. Debt of Sin

Page 78 1. C 2. A 3. B 4. B

Page 79 best answer is A

Lesson Seven

Page 87 1. Preaching of the gospel 2. Blind 3. Take away & unbelievers 4. Proclamation of the truth 5. Jesus Christ

Page 91 best answers are 1 and 3

Lesson Eight

Page 97 1. A, 2. D, 3. B, 4. C.

Page 101 1. T 2. F 3. T 4. F 5. F 6. F

Lesson Nine

Page 109 1. Powerful 2. Central activity 3. Guards of a prison 4. Neutralized 5. prevent

Page 112 best answers are 1, 2, and 4

Lesson Ten

Page 119 1. All 2. Unhealthy 3. Discernment & opposition 4. Affirms

Page 121 1. Tempted 2. Answers 3. Knowledge & understanding 4. God 5. The Battle is not ours but God's

END NOTES:

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⁵ Rheezen 1991, 236

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⁷ Gehman 1989, 111

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