

Strongholds - Summary for lamps.

This is a summary of the background to the Strongholds ministry, which can be listened to on the LAMPS page of visionworld27.org

Casual readers will find that this material needs to be read alongside all the other lamps material on the website.

What are some of the stronghold spirits of Europe?

1. Control

Here are a few examples of the controlling spirits as seen in the Bible:-

Balak. *“A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed.”* (Num. 4:4-6)

The people of God were fulfilling the purposes of God, and journeying towards the promised land. Balak was afraid of them, fearing for his land and people. So he tried to exercise control over God – **using spiritual powers to get control**, so that he could turn the people back. This is a classic demonstration of the spirit of control. It seeks to:-

- * Pervert the purpose of God.
- * To control the people of God, so that they cannot or will not respond to those purposes.

Ultimately, the spirit of control wants to assist the enemy in getting control over God, in order to be God. (Rev 13)

Nebuchadnezzar: *“This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language. As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”* (Daniel 3:4-6)

Here is another classic exercise of control - **to force obedience by might and power**. The image of gold was massive, and so was the show of force.

By this force, Nebuchadnezzar sought to control Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego, and control their freedom to worship God.

Eve: “Did God really say..?”

Satan wanted to destroy God's work, so what better way than to deceive Eve away from the way of truth, into the path of her own human desires? Satan controls **by deceiving**. He drags people away from the covering of God's blessing, and into the area of his control. He deceived Ananias and Sapphira, (Acts 5:1-11) Demas, (2 Tim 4:10) and even tries to deceive even the elect (Matt 24:24)

Goliath: “*This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.*” *On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.*” (1 Sam 17:11) T

The spirit of control is not averse to using other spiritual powers to get its way. In the story of Goliath, the controlling spirit is the **spirit of fear**. Fear causes us to stop acting, to stand terrified and open to the control of the enemy.

Demonic: “*What do you want with us Jesus of Nazareth?*” (Mark 1:24)

The demonic forces tried to control Jesus by the use of his name. The controlling spirit tries to get access to people by using the most special feature about us - using our names. Is this relevant to the 21st century? It warns us that control is a devious and pervasive force.

Caiaphas: “*One should die..*” (John 11 49-50)

The threat to Jesus came from within religion, and that is where we see the controlling spirit at its most powerful and most dangerous. This is, I think, the controlling spirit working within the inner demonic of religion. How does the spirit of control work within religion? Ultimately, it strives to:-

*Silence all dissent. (Daniel 3:-kill Shadrach.)

*Shut people's minds to the reality of what is happening. (Laodicea. Rev 3:14. “You say you are rich...”)

*Lock people in to a system which gives them position. (John 8:39. “We have Abraham as our father.”)

*Destroy the moving of the Spirit. (Acts 19:17-20. Ephesus.)

The controlling spirit is one of the most dangerous powers we will ever face. The lively moving of the Spirit is replaced with dull formalism and ritual (“These people honour me with their lips”) which people will believe will make

them safe. They are totally unaware of the spiritual danger they are in. Any who speak the truth will be reviled, (Micaiah) thrown out, (Jeremiah in pit) or killed. (Jesus: Stephen.) Rooting out such a spirit is very hard - almost impossible in fact.

2. Deception

The great deceptions of the Bible:

* **“Did God really say...?”**(Gen. 3:1)

Demonic deceit, based on the selfishness of the human spirit.

What really happened to Eve? Did she fancy a nice piece of fruit? Was she hoping to advance knowledge? Was it her undisciplined human spirit which caused the problem?

These may have all played their part, but whatever it was in her thinking, the heart of her problem was that she was deceived. The enemy deceived her into thinking that there was something better than God's presence. She desired that, and was unaware of the consequences. They came to her soon enough, but then it was too late.

The “crafty” serpent, had clear plan to deceive Eve. He spoke to the pride of her heart. Jeremiah warned us of this plan, telling us that the heart is deceitful above all things. The Apostle warned us of his “methods”, and Jesus warned us that he was a father of lies.

* **Pharaoh.** The deceit of **power.** (Ex 6;20)

Pharaoh thought that he had the power of life and death over his people, in much the same way as Nebuchadnezzar and Goliath did. The Israelite foremen gave into this power (Ex5:15-16) and so did all the people except Shadrach (Daniel 3:17-18), and all Israel except David.(1 Samuel 17:32) This threat was to reoccur in the teaching of Jesus about the stronger one.

* **“By beelzebul.”** Deception of **the spirit.**

This brings us back to the inner deceit of the demonic in religion. The religious authorities, saw in the activity of Jesus the work not of the Holy Spirit, but of the demonic- in this case Beelzebul. Their minds were deceived into committing the greatest sin of all - the sin against the Holy Spirit. This fits alongside the spirit of religion - “We have Abraham as our father.”

The Jews believed that they did not need to open their minds to anything new, because they were safe within their religion. Having Abraham as father did nothing to correct the sinfulness of their natures. But they were deceived away from seeing this truth, hiding behind the walls of religion.

The point of all these deceptions? To control God's people, and eventually to control God, and become God.

These great systems - control, deception, darkness - overlap again and again. They have "methodia" - satanic organisation in order to achieve their goal. It sometimes seems to me that they are better organised than we are. I sometimes wonder who is the divided house.

There is no deception in the face of Jesus. With him, it is the complete contrast - openness, glory, joy:-

"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (2 Cor 4:4-6)

3. Darkness. "Angel of light." (2 Cor 11:14)

Jesus said "I am the light of the world", and he did not hesitate to shine the light into many dark places, to dislodge the enemy and bring freedom. (Legion.) In the Old Testament, it was the pillar of fire which protected, separating the light from the dark, and allowing those in the light to be free. But that didn't stop the darkness trying to invade creation. In the New Testament we read "Light has come into the world," but we also read "the god of this world has blinded mens' eyes." The battle continues, even though the light has triumphed at calvary, and will continue to triumph.

Let's look at what ways darkness tries to invade.

*** The darkness of paganism**

"So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if

Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing.” (1 Kings 18:20-21)

In these verses, we see how much the paganism of the surrounding areas had crushed true religion. We see it in the people's response – they said nothing. They didn't rise up to support God's man, confess their sinfulness, repent and return to the Lord. They said nothing. Their minds had been darkened by the enemy. Paganism, and included in this we have to see the pressure from other religion which do not acknowledge Jesus as Lord, darkened the mind. The enemy whispers, “Is Jesus really Lord? Couldn't you accommodate another faith - you are very intolerant. Look at the emptiness of so much of your faith. Isn't it time for a change?”

*** The open doors for darkness**

Satan is always seeking for such open doors for darkness. He found one in Judas (Lk.22:3) and in Balak.(Numbers 22) He found one in Alexander, (2 Tim 2:14)and he found one in the Pharisees.

We see these open doors in humanism, secularism, and unsanctified science. Millions of people fail to ask the questions, or examine the claims. The media exalt these claims, and millions accept these unsubstantiated claims and fall prisoners of the darkness. Once the mind is darkened by the infiltration of evil, it become more dark. The journey is downwards. The person becomes more dark, more lost,more hopeless. This is usually not obvious to them. (See King Saul)

*** Darkness of the arrogant spirit**

“Where did this man get these things?” (Mk 6:2)

The only defence against the invasion of the enemy into the darkened mind is the light of Christ. The enemy has planned many strategies to prevent people recognising this - we see this every day in our media. One of those strategies is the response of arrogance to the words and works of Jesus. The people of Nazareth could no open their minds to Jesus, and so they arrogantly dismiss him. This arrogance slammed the door to the entry of the light of Christ. They had to remain in the darkness. “The god of this world has blinded men's eyes..”

*** Darkness of pride**

“Our forefathers ate manna in the wilderness. (John 6:31)

“We are Abraham's descendents.” (Jn 8:33)

Pride shuts the mind to the light of Christ. For the Jews, it was their great heritage. No “Messiah” could ever come in the way Jesus came. They were a great people, and expected to have a suitably great Messiah. In this thinking, they were shut in, untouchable by the light. God would not force their belief. In fact, quite the opposite. The Lord takes great exception to pride. (See Mary's song – The Magnificat) Now we see why – it blinds people to the light, and leaves them in darkness.

For us, it is our great enlightenment heritage, our exaltation of self, of every man being his own king, of scientific achievement which has cleansed us from much physical darkness, but at the same time has shuttered the light from our minds.

The enemy loves this form of darkness. Pride appeals to the human spirit, and he loves to play on these feelings. (Agrippa. Acts 26:28)

*** Darkness of mind open to the occult.** 2 Kgs.3:27

Nothing darkens the mind more than being open to occult practices. The King of Moab was open in the extreme, and such things do happen today. But many are open to the occult at more simple levels - the fortune tellers, the mediums, the revival of the pagan gods (trees, stone, moon) all reveal a world wide open to invasion by the darkness.

These things are also found within religions. Some make it a key platform, where communicating with the spirit world is part of the daily ritual – Juju, Fetish. Others have it embedded in less obvious ways – the evil eye of Islam. The occult fills our TVs and cinemas, with films which expose those who watch to occult doorways. Once the darkness has gained entry in this way, there is always a corruption of standards, an acceptance of things previously regarded as taboo. With the darkness, here is only ever one way - down.

*** Darkness of the deceived spirit.** “Then Satan entered into Judas..”
Lk 22:3

Deception is at the root of much of the darkness which surrounds us. Pride and arrogance are deceptions. But sometimes the enemy just comes straight out and deceives, with no attempt to hide. Judas was so deceived. He obviously had some big problem with the ministry of Jesus, although we are unsure exactly what that was. This issue had corroded his faith and trust. Into this came the idea that he could manipulate Jesus, and change the direction

of things himself. Then one day, the deception matured, Satan entered into him, and he entered the darkness, never to escape. From there on, there was little hope for him, He was so deceived that he didn't even grasp the opportunity of repentance, but remorse drove him to suicide - a victory for the deception and the darkness.

*** Darkness of perverted sexuality.** (Tamar:(2 Sam 13:) David (2 Samuel 11)

One writer said recently that there was an erotic explosion tearing through our society. It's hard to deny the truth of this observation. Sex, and the exploitation of this natural human function has given access to darkness into many minds. The Bible is quite realistic about the problem. The rape of Tamar, and the corruption of Bathsheba and the murder of her husband show how easily sex can be exploited by the enemy, to gain access and darken the mind. Once darkened, the sexually perverted mind can go from corruption to corruption, without being aware of what is happening.

Jesus was totally realistic, when he said, **“You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matt 5:27-28)**

*** Darkness of religious spirit**

The religious spirit is one of the most dangerous weapons of the enemy. It's always hardest to see his workings when they are within the church, and disguised as good religious practice. In Mark 3:6, the Pharisees, full of righteousness, planned murder, even though such an act was against their own teachings, except for blasphemy, which had not been committed. They saw Jesus as a challenge to their religion, and so rose up to kill him. Caiaphas summed up their intention accurately:- *“Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”* (Jn 11:49) Alexander the silversmith gives clear expression to this spirit:- *“There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.”* (Acts 19:27) and interestingly enough, he was a pagan, worshipping a false god.

The religious spirit hardens the human spirit, closing it to the working of the Holy Spirit, and opening it to the invasion of the darkness of bigotry, which

leads, in the end, always to murder. It also drives out the true voice of God, and those who truly bear the vision for the church in their hearts.

* **Darkness of anger.** Herod and children.

“When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.” (Matt 2:16)

Anger darkens the mind, and shuts us off from the voice of God. The extreme danger of this darkness is what it often leads to - acts of violence, ethnic trouble, national xenophobia and invasion, and murder, often on a large scale.

* **Darkness of the fear of death.**

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” (Hebs 2 14-15)

The enemy has used this darkness for centuries. Death is the great unknown for those who do not have faith in Jesus. The enemy uses this fear to get control of people. Some stray into the occult, some into spiritism, some into works based faiths. All these routes darken the mind. Jesus has dealt with this issue, but millions, billions have no idea of his light shining into this darkness

* **Darkness of sin against the Holy Spirit.** Jn7:12 Jn 7:20

“But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.” (Matt 12:24)

“And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven .” (Lk 12:10)

This last darkness is truly terrible, because there is no healing for it. Any who ascribe the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan are in such darkness that no light can ever reach them. God help them.

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