

# **The Gospel of Luke & The Acts of the Apostles**

## **The Theme of Satan and Spiritual Warfare**

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### **Purpose & Summary**

This thematic study cannot be divorced from the previous theme studies in Luke. In fact, the studies on Jew, Samaritan, and Gentile, the 'Repentance' series (especially Challenging Materialism) as well as Table Fellowship and Speech and the Holy Spirit should be done prior to this study on spiritual confrontation. Otherwise it will seem like the gospel's only challenge to demons is that of simple deliverance: interesting, but entirely individual. There is substantially more.

This series of studies was designed for use with two fairly different groups of people. People with an interest in deliverance ministry (a broad term including exorcism, etc.) will of course appreciate it. But we have not titled this 'The Ministry of Deliverance' because there may be people with an interest in seeing how the spiritual realm intersects with the political realm. In either case, this study serves several purposes. First, it introduces the ministry value of confrontation in the spiritual realm, commonly called 'spiritual warfare.' Second, this theme study is a companion to the one preceding it, called 'Jesus as Humanity's True King: The Ministry of Political Confrontation.' In Luke, as Paul puts more succinctly, the political powers and the demonic powers are linked. Third, it is an introduction to a more systematic technique of studying biblical narrative. It consists of a complete set of notes including illustrations, intro questions, and inductive study questions on various passages out of Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. It encourages creative ways to illustrate the bible study and make it accessible, such as using songs, movie clips, references to literature, art, etc. In fact, it uses movie-going terms for the bible study process itself. These suggestions are only starting points to encourage further creativity from the bible study leader.

### **The New Testament Worldview**

Many ancient peoples thought of the world as existing on two levels simultaneously. There was the physical realm and the spiritual realm, and events in those two realms were linked to each other. When a nation went to war with another nation, their gods were thought to go to battle, too. If a nation won or lost, it indicated that their god(s) won or lost as well.

Beliefs in ancient Israel were both similar to and different than this. The Israelites did indeed believe in the linkage between the physical and the spiritual realms, especially when it came to nations. Naturally, the Israelite belief in one God made it hard to explain why Israel would be defeated by their foes and taken captive. God certainly couldn't lose to any other god if those other gods didn't exist! Israel had another explanation. They were defeated by other nations because God was punishing them for their sins. In other words, God's rule in history was not evidenced by the state of His people, but by the veracity of His word. God's rule was not shown in historical events as they blithely unfolded per se, but in the verbal interpretation of those historical events, for instance, that such and such a defeat was a punishment for Israel, but they would be restored again.

During Israel's long exile following the Babylonian invasion, Israel developed (or received) a new insight into the cosmos. Israel's exile started in 586 BC when Babylon razed Jerusalem and deported the survivors to Babylon. This exile did not end theologically when some Israelites returned to the land of Palestine. Rather, the Israelites continued to suffer at the hands of military power after military power, one after the other. Nehemiah and Ezra voiced their lament that they were still 'slaves' in the land (Neh.9:36). After Babylon came Persia, then Greece, then Rome. By the time Jesus of Nazareth appeared, this long exile was thought to still be in effect. Israel's long and humiliating subjugation to Gentile powers reflected its being under God's wrath. What else could explain her condition?

The book of Daniel is vital in exploring this Israelite worldview. Daniel is said to see that an angelic 'prince of Persia' and 'prince of Greece' existed behind the human governments of those nations. Daniel is said to see the angel Gabriel dispatched by God to fight on Israel's behalf, perhaps to preserve Israel from being consumed by these foreign powers.

The movie *The Matrix* shows us a world ruled by evil machines that survive by feeding off of human beings. While their bodies are immobilized, in their minds humans experience a computer-generated dream world called the Matrix. The world of the Matrix is not too far from the biblical worldview.

The Messenger: Gabriel  
The Songs: The Toppling of Thrones and the Liberation of God's People  
The Break-In: The Birth of Jesus  
The First Challenge to Satan: Jesus in the Wilderness vs. Satan the Ruler of the World  
The New Conquest: Jesus' Exorcisms in Israel  
The Really New Conquest: Jesus' Exorcism in Gentile Lands - the Legion Demoniac  
The Second Challenge to Satan: The Sending of the Twelve  
The Third Challenge to Satan: The Sending of the Seventy  
Defining the Contest: Plundering the Strong Man  
Liberating God's People: Jesus and the Bent Woman  
The Darkness Strikes Back  
The Death of Jesus  
The Victory and Enthronement of Jesus

C.S. Lewis Screwtape Letters  
Handbook of Spiritual Warfare  
Francis Frangipane's The Three Battlegrounds  
Movies: Angelheart, Devil's Advocate