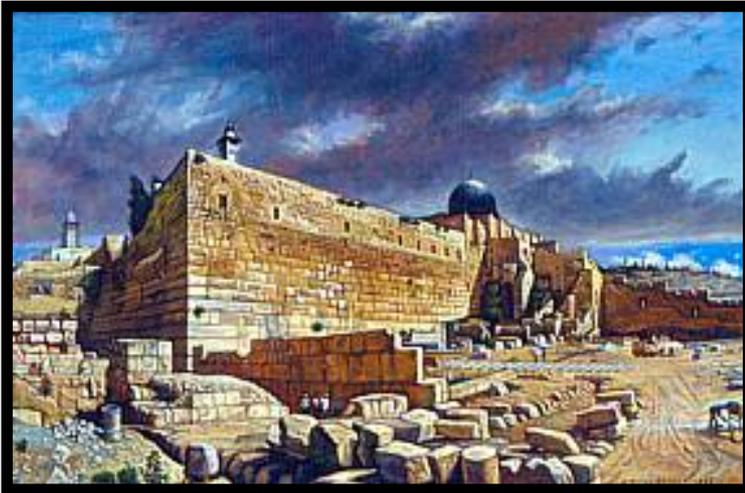




Islam & World Events

8. THE SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLD OF ISLAM



Introduction to Spiritual Strongholds

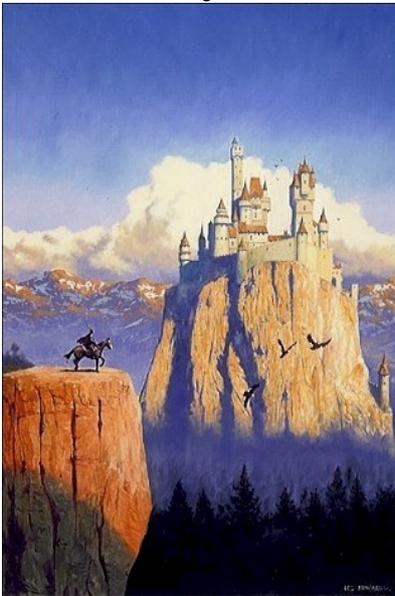
Is the world around us just physical or is there a spiritual realm beyond our five senses? This question continues to be debated in the realms of science and religion. These two realms often seem at odds, how did the world and universe come into existence? How was life formed? Was there a spiritual source, from a spiritual realm, or is the universe formed from a Big Bang, and life from accidental mutations?

At the heart of these and other debates is the existence of a spiritual realm, which cannot be detected via the physical senses, of hearing, tasting, touch, smell or sight. The

Atheist says no, there is no evidence of such a spiritual realm. Science says, if we cannot examine it in the physical world, there is no evidence it even exists. The debate rages, is religion and the spiritual world, just wishful thinking for those who hope something greater than this world exists?

In contrast to the rejection of the spiritual realm, the Bible proclaims not only the existence of the Spiritual realm, but its superiority to the physical, since it is the source of the physical.

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. Hebrews 11:3



By faith, we understand these principles, as opposed to the physical rules, which govern the realm of the visible physical world.

The Bible continues, not only is the world's creation the result of the invisible, spiritual realm, but the spiritual realms are involved in conflicts taking place in the physical, according to Ephesians.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12

Paul writes the source of our battle is not in the physical world, but in the spiritual, against principalities and rulers in an unseen spiritual dimension, who have power in this age, over the physical realms of humanity. The Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments reveals an unseen world, with beings who are in conflict in the physical.

The Bible paints the picture of strongholds, called *principalities* and *rulers of the darkness*. A stronghold is also known as a fortress or fortified city, which allows the occupants to dwell safely, because walls protect them, which keeps enemies at bay. Fortresses also allow a kingdom to wage war on outlying areas, advancing the kingdom. The stronghold becomes a base of operation, allowing armies to assemble,

arm and plan the attack.

As Christians, we are engaged in a spiritual battle, taking place in the Heavenly realms, played out in the physical world. Paul writes about the role of the Christian, how we should respond to the challenges put forward.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.
4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,
2 Corinthians 10:3-4

In this light how are Christians to view Islam and other religions? Is there a greater battle, then we see in the physical world, a spiritual battle? Should Christians try to convert Muslims?
Before we go further, we need to understand just who is involved in this spiritual battle.

The Spiritual battle

Why is there a spiritual conflict? According to the Bible, the spiritual conflict involves the fallen angels whose goal is to subvert God's authority in the world (Job 1:6-12). When God created the physical world, he also created life to dwell in His creation (Genesis 1). Along with creation in the physical, was the creation of the spiritual beings called angels (Psalm 8:5, 104:4). Angels were created perfect and without sin, they like humanity were created with freewill, an ability to choose or reject their creator (Ezekiel 28:15-17).

The angles who rejected God and rebelled were led by Satan, which in Hebrew (שָׂטָן *Satan*) means *adversary*. These angels rejected God's authority, choosing to follow Satan; they became "fallen angels" who worked against God. According to the book of Revelation, one third of the angels followed Satan in his rebellion (Revelation 12:4).

Satan and his angels were cast to earth, there Satan tempted Adam and Eve, to reject God's command by eating from the "*Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*" (Genesis 2:17). Satan, who came to them in the form of the *Serpent*, urged Adam and Eve to reject God's order and eat (Genesis 3:1-7). The first man and women, like the fallen angels listened to Satan, man's nature was now fallen. God appeared to Adam, Eve and the Serpent (Satan) and pronounced judgment, promising the eventual defeat of Satan, as the *seed of the women* (The Messiah) would one day crush the *serpent's head*. (Genesis 3:14-19). The Messiah, the seed of the woman, would one day redeem humanity from the fall of Adam, the Messiah would be the Redeemer¹. The spiritual war had now begun, as Satan and his fallen angels waged war in the physical world, to prevent the coming of the Messiah, who would crush Satan and redeem mankind.

Because Adam and Eve rejected God, authority on the earth was turned over to Satan (Luke 4:5-6), who became the god of this age, blinding the eyes of humanity.

3. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,
4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

Hell was prepared for the Devil and the fallen angels (Matthew 25:41), but with the fall of Adam and Eve, Satan's judgment was put on hold, until man's judgment is complete, which takes place at the *Great White Throne* (Revelation 20:10).

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' Matthew 25:41

10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:10

Prior to the white throne judgment, Satan and his angels are cast into the Lake of Fire, where lost will also be cast, to spend eternity. Satan and his fallen angels, know their destiny and their limited time (Matthew 8:29, Revelation 12:12), therefore their goal is take as many souls with them as possible, by opposing the Kingdom of God, and the Messiah Jesus Christ.

¹ The concept of Redemption is throughout the Bible, redemption in the Bible occurs when a kinsman redeemer (גֹּאֵל *Ga'al*), a relation to the person in debt has the right to purchase the debtor goods, being a relation he has the right Leviticus 25:25. The Messiah, was God (Isaiah 9:6) who became man, and thus became our kinsman redeemer, who purchased humanity with His sacrifice at the cross (Isaiah 53:11).

Satan and his fallen angels, called Demons are engaged in a spiritual battle against God and man. Satan's objectives have been revealed in scripture, as the battle in the spiritual realms proceeded.

	Strategy	Scripture
1.	Satan seeks to destroy the line of Messiah, by destroying the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.	a. Corruption of earth in the days of Noah (Genesis 6:10-13) b. Tower of Babel (Gen. 11;1-6) c. Pharaoh takes Sarah (Gen. 12;12-20) d. Ishmael as the child of promise e. Assimilation of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 1:16) f. Golden image at Sinai g. Turning Israel towards Baal worship h. Haman tries to destroy the Jews in the time of Esther (Esther 9;1-3) i. Herod kills the children 2-yrs and under in Bethlehem (Matthew 2;16-18)
2.	Satan seeks to take as many souls with him into eternity as he possible.	Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. I Peter 5:8
3.	Satan seeks to prevent the nation of Israel coming to saving knowledge of Christ, to prevent the Lord's Return	Jesus said to Israel they would not see him again until they acknowledged him as Messiah Matthew 23;38-39 Revelation 12:13-17 Satan pursues Israel
4	Satan counterfeits the saving work of Christ, with a false gospel, keeping humanity in a lost state	7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:7-8 Also Revelations 2:9,13,24, 3:9
5	Satan want to unite the world under his leadership,	13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle that great day of God Almighty. Revelation 16:13-14 Also Revelation 12;12,14
6	Satan wants to be worshipped.	"Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." Luke 4:7, Also Matthew 5;9, Revelation 13:8, 12,14,15

The Spiritual Realms

Since and the his fallen angels have a concerted plan to thwart the advancing Kingdom of God, becomes its fruition becomes their doom. In the ancient world, kingdoms were composed of city states, where individual kings from cities would rule over and area. Eventually as these individual cities became more powerful or allied themselves with other city-states, the territory controlled would then expand, encompassing more sovereignty. Some of the more famous city-states are Athens, Sparta, Nineveh, Rome, Babylon many of these later became kingdoms and these kingdoms became empires.

In the same way these city-state strongholds became powerful and were able to influence the world around them, the spiritual realms operate in a similar fashion. Paul in Ephesians chapter 6, revealed the detailed order, which Satan engages in this war.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
Ephesians 6:11-12

Satan has an ordered system of warfare, with a hierarchy of fallen angels, each with their own spiritual kingdoms, doing the bidding of Satan in the physical realms. Paul wants the reader to understand, the battle is not taking place in the physical realms, but in the spiritual realms. He uses four phrases to emphasize the battle-taking place.

against principalities	ajrch <i>Arche</i>	Meaning the principle or first, hence spiritual kingdoms, having primary or first domain.
against powers	ejousia <i>Exousia</i>	These powers have authority, they operate freely in their realms, demonstrating control and independence in the spiritual realms.
against the rulers of the darkness	kosmokratwr <i>Kosmokrator</i>	<i>Kosmos</i> means world and <i>Krator</i> means ruler, world-ruler of darkness. These forces are the rulers of evil in this world. With Adam's fall, Satan received dominion.
against spiritual hosts of wickedness in high places	ponhria <i>Poneria</i>	<i>Poneria</i> means depravity, iniquity and wickedness. The source of the evil in the heavenly realms, it is only being played out in the physical .

These realms operate independently in the physical world, under a chain of command, leading to Satan himself, who as the god of this age has ultimate control. His offer to Christ on the mountain of temptation was if Jesus would worship him, he would and could offer him all the kingdoms of this world.

5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 "Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." Luke 4:5-7

Satan appoints his rulers in the spiritual realms, who rules over the earthly kingdoms of men. As followers of Christ, we are engaged in the spiritual battle in the Heavenly realms.

Daniel and the Prince of Persia

In Daniel chapter 10, the Bible gives us a glimpse of these spiritual principalities and how they interact with God's kingdom, and His angelic messengers. Daniel chapter 10 takes place in the third year of Cyrus the Great 536 B.C., King of the Persia. Cyrus who defeated Babylon in 539 B.C., allowed the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple, by the third year, the Jews who returned were facing opposition. The people of the tried to stop the work of the Lord, which was to reestablish the Temple and Temple sacrifices. To those on the ground the battle seemed political as one group, the people of the land, opposed another group, the returning Jews.

1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Lord God of Israel,
4 Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building,
5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. Ezra 4:1,4-5

Daniel however did not see the issue as political, but spiritual. Daniel who had been taken captive in 605 B.C., as a young man or boy was now in his eighties. He took the matter to God, praying and fasting for 21-days. At the end of the twenty-one days, Daniel saw vision of an angelic being who told Daniel about, a certain Prince of Persia who resisted or withstood him during the 21-days. Finally, after that period, the angel Michael appeared, the *Prince of Persia* was taken out of the way.

Daniel 10
1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision.
2 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.
3 I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.
4 Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is, the Tigris,
5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz!
6 His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.
7 And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

8 Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength.
 9 Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.
 10 Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands.
 11 And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.
 12 Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.
 13 "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.
 14 "Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."
 20 Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come.
 21 "But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.

From this point, chapters 11 and 12 of Daniel, reveal the coming years of history of the nation of Israel and how events surrounding the Temple, will be central in the end times. To draw out the illustration from Daniel 10, we see Daniel was engaged in the Spiritual battle, through prayer and fasting. His prayer was not immediately answered because there was interference, from the demonic realms, specifically the "Prince of Persia". This demonic "prince" was opposed to the restoration of the Temple, and Daniel intervened in the heavenly realms by praying and fasting. As a result, an answer was given, which involved Daniel's people and Jerusalem in the future years, including the time of the end.

Since these prophecies in chapter 12, point to a *Third Temple*², on a spot now occupied by the Dome of the Rock, Islam is involved with Israel in the last days. The issue as in the days of Daniel, was not just physical, but spiritual. As the spiritual realms were played out in the physical.

The demonic force known as the "Prince of Persia" could very well play a role in the last days.

Strongholds in the world Today

A stronghold is a base of operation, which opposes the Gospel in the world. Satan's goal is to prevent the Gospel from reaching the ends of the earth. He has a strategy to accomplish this goal. In the world, Satan uses bases of operation, to further his attack, preventing the Gospel from reaching the lost, thus prolonging his existence. He does this by several ways, including

- Presenting a false gospel
- Building walls to prevent the Gospel
- Distracting people from hearing the Gospel

Some Spiritual Strongholds	
	<p>Salt Lake City Utah Headquarters of Mormon faith, which denies presents a false gospel to the world. The book of Mormon on its cover states "another testament". The Jesus of Mormonism is the brother of Satan, the Mormon Jesus married Mary, Martha and the other Mary. He is one of many god's who make up the universe of gods.</p>

² **The Third Temple**, The history of the Temple Mount, Mt. Moriah, is central to Israel's history. Abraham was given the promise at Mt. Moriah (Genesis 12) . Later Isaac was used as test of faith for Abraham (Genesis 22). One thousand years after Abraham, David purchased the land for a Temple. Solomon built the first Temple, it lasted from 960 B.C. to 586 B.C. This was the **First Temple** period. The Temple was rebuilt in 516 B.C. and lasted until its destruction in A.D. 70 This was the **Second Temple** period. In order for there to be a **Third Temple**, the Dome of the Rock must be taken down. This is still a future event.

	<p>Mecca Saudi Arabia Mecca is the focal point of 1.3 billion Muslims, who put their hope in the words of Mohammad, which originated from this city 1300-years ago. Muslims feel they have the "Truth", but what they have denies the very Gospel, which Christians are to follow.</p>
	<p>New Delhi, India The capital of India, the majority of whom are Hindu, India has approximately 1 billion people. Hinduism has many gods, for the Hindu, salvation comes as a result of being reborn, through reincarnation, eventually the soul escapes this world.</p>
	<p>Shanghai, China The economic capital of China, as China seeks the economic prosperity of the West, Shanghai has become the "New York" of mainland Asia. Here people look to salvation, through having "Things", an economic prosperity.</p>
	<p>Beijing China, The political center of China, which controls the life of over 1-Billion souls, China represses Christian churches, forcing them to be part of a state controlled church. Pastors to house churches are imprisoned on a regular basis.</p>
	<p>New York, New York The economic hub for the United States and a great part of the world, the city is the envy of many nations, which try to model it. Through materialism³, the idea that if you have enough "things" you will be happy, thus people die without Christ.</p>
	<p>Las Vegas, Nevada Called the gambling and entertainment "Mecca" of the United States, many a soul comes to this city looking for hope by chance. Though the main power is its distraction, from the Gospel, as people seek to be "entertained" they are distracted from their lost state.</p>

Is Islam demonic?

To understand the nature of Islam, we need merely compare its message to the Gospel. The word gospel means, good news, what is this good news? The good news is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world, to die for our sins, to redeem and restore us with God. Jesus called on His church to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:14

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:18-19

Notice, when the Gospel reaches all the nations, the end will come. Satan does not want the end to come, because the end means he is judged. Its part of Satan's stake to prevent the Gospel from reaching the nations. When he and the angels are judged they will be cast into *everlasting fire* (Matthew 25:41)

³ This materialism links to the philosophical materialism Marx and Engels which places the sole reality in the Material world.

When we compare the Gospel to the teachings of Islam, we see Islam opposes the essential Gospel on almost every point, presenting “another gospel”, a counterfeit truth.

Islam	Gospel
Jesus is not the Son of God	Jesus is the Son of God
Jesus is not God	Jesus is God
Jesus did not die on the cross	Jesus did die on the cross
Jesus did not die for our sins	Jesus died for our sins

The clear rejection of the Gospel, demonstrates its spiritual opposition to the truth of God’s word, thus the fingerprints of Islam’s origin are clear for the believer.

How should a Christian respond?



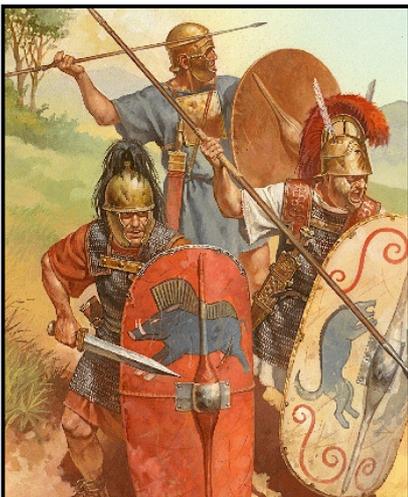
As followers of Christ, we are part of his kingdom; we have a commission to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth. This includes to Muslim world, along with the other strongholds, which resist the Gospel. We are the light of Christ to the nations, Paul states our mission in 2 Corinthians,

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.
 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,
 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ
 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Our battle is not one of politics or flesh, but spirit. We are to challenge the strongholds of the world bringing them captive to Christ. The image Paul presents is one of siege warfare, we are to take the battle to the enemy, laying siege to satanic strongholds. Pulling down the walls of deception with truth, bring the world captive to Christ.

The weapons of our war are not carnal, but spiritual, we operate in the power of the King of the Universe, we have his mandate to go forward and conquer.

The weapons of our warfare



Ephesians 6:13-20

Our war is not in the flesh, but we can use the example of the physical to illustrate the spiritual realms. Paul uses the picture of the Roman soldier to paint a picture of the Christian, who is to war in the spiritual realms. Paul writes,

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,
 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.
 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;
 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints
 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,
 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

We are to advance the kingdom, by bring the truth of the Gospel, to the ends of the earth. Therefore we need to equip ourselves for service, by knowing the Gospel, being prepared to respond to

the claims of this world, having the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the Bible at our disposal we can advance the kingdom around us.

Seek the Lord ask Him how you can be of service, to advance the kingdom. You can be involved in the following ways.

- Equip yourself for service
- Pray for those in the front lines
- Support those in the front lines, ...Money, Bibles,...words of encouragement
- Work with the people around you...make a stand for the Lord