

## Spirits and Degrees of Evil

### Commentary for November 22, 2011 — They Are Individuals

I was recently reminded that evil spirits (demons) and other spirit beings vary in the amount or degree of evil they perform toward human beings. In Matthew we read:

**"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."**

• **Matthew 12:43–45**

Speaking about the generation in which He lived, Jesus gives us evidence that there are rankings and a hierarchy in the spiritual realms. One such ranking is indicated in Matthew 12:24, in which the Pharisees refer to **"Beelzebub the prince of devils,"** a label which Jesus did not dispute (though they falsely accused Him of being under Beelzebub's influence).

Even the creation of evil (Isaiah 45:7) was accomplished in a hierarchical system both on earth and in the spiritual realm. We know that God uses the worst and evil men in the human realm, men such as Nebuchadnezzar who God used to punish Judah (Jeremiah 27:6; Daniel 5:18). He often puts "the basest of men" to rule and lead nations (Daniel 4:17). Therefore it should not surprise us that God uses evil spirits of varying degrees of wickedness to accomplish His purposes. Read 1 Kings chapter 22. These are facets of God's creation that we need to understand.

### **What Is the Significance?**

When we hear of great evil occurring in the world, we often think, why did God allow that horrible act of evil to occur. There are differing degrees of evil in the world. There are differing degrees of evil among individuals, including the acts that individuals carry out, which society regularly witnesses and is affected by.

There also are differing degrees of evil in the spirit realm. Remember the evil spirit of Matthew 12:43–45 had help of **"seven other spirits, more wicked than itself,"** because the man did not change his life. As a result, **"the final condition of that man is worse than the first."** Jesus used this illustration to show the condition of His generation.

We know from the apostle Paul that there are numerous gradations of spiritual powers in God's creation. In fact one of the purposes of the members of the *ekklesia* is to communicate to those beings the Mystery of God given to the apostle Paul:

**"to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret, which has been concealed from the eons in God, Who creates all, that now may be made known**

**to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God.**

• *Ephesians 3:9–10, Concordant Literal Version*

Please understand, we are not to communicate that information directly to any of these entities by any direct contact with them. It is done corporately by the example of the *ekklesia*. These beings are your enemies. They want to spiritually seduce you. If that is not possible, they want you dead. Any communication with you is deceptive, containing lies. We are to relate to them only through the example of our lives.

**“For the rest, brethren mine, be invigorated in the Lord and in the might of His strength. Put on the panoply of God, to enable you to stand up to the stratagems of the Adversary, for it is not ours to wrestle with blood and flesh, but with the sovereignties, with the authorities, with the world-mights of this darkness, with the spiritual forces of \*wickedness among the celestials.”**

• *Ephesians 6:10–12, Concordant Literal Version*

We have the victory through Christ. The enemy is already vanquished. Yet the “mopping-up” operation continues and the enemy is still dangerous — extremely dangerous, even deadly:

**“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. ...**

**Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels [or any spirits or entities posing as God’s servants], intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God.**

• *Colossians 2:15, 18–19*

Often, God’s goals and activities necessarily discipline and educate us, we who are members of the Body of Christ (the *ekklesia*). He will see to it that we acquire whatever necessary and important lessons we need to build and strengthen our faith and for us to grow in perseverance and self-control so that we can ultimately focus on the most essential matters of life: God and our relationship with Him.

At times God’s goals in our lives are achieved through the assistance of and delegation by God of spirit beings with differing degrees of evil. Each one of them is a unique individual with a personality. Each one will be saved eventually, through Christ. It is not your job or my job to teach them or to lead them to salvation through Christ now. That task may come to us later, if we are assigned to do that by God.

All spirit beings are a part of God’s expansive creation. Almost all of them are evil, otherwise they would not have to be taught about the Mystery (Ephesians 3:9–10 above) to be reconciled to God (Colossians 1:20). All are dangerous, even righteous angels. Yet God shall reconcile all of the spirit realm as He has reconciled the world to Himself through Christ.