

Straight Talk #9 On Spiritual Mapping and Territorial Warfare by William J. Schnobelen, © 2010

in the title of this *Straight Talk* are terms that may need some definition upfront, just so we understand what we are talking about. "Spiritual Mapping" is a relatively recent concept that grew out of the idea of territorial warfare. Thus, it would make sense to define the latter term first.

Territorial warfare is a form of spiritual that is more "cosmic" in scope. The pre-1990's idea of spiritual warfare was that of praying aggressively against strongholds (**2Cor. 10:4**) in peoples' lives (including oneself) which may be preventing them from either:

- 1) receiving Christ as Lord and Savior or
- 2) getting the full victory in Christ that salvation offered them.

It also included other tactics such as praying against curses and praying for someone to be set free from satanic oppression.

However, Territorial Warfare takes this up to the next "field" of battle. It posits the idea that different areas (neighborhoods, cities, even nations) are delegated to certain strongmen that are a little higher up on the infernal "food chain" than the demons which bedevil individuals. These demons (or perhaps fallen angels) have jurisdiction over entire nations, cities, or perhaps religions. This premise is based on a passage in **Daniel 10:**

Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me,

And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.

Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince. Dan. 10:18-21

Here, the concept is drawn that the angel speaking is fighting not with a physical prince of Persia, but with a spiritual one. This would be a fallen angelic or demonic being to

which Satan had given jurisdiction over Persia. That is probably a valid Biblical assumption, since there are other places where such names are applied to obviously angelic beings (i.e.. **Ezek.28**).

The spiritual warfare tactic drawn from this concept is that we (as Christians) should be praying against these evil strong men that hold our cities or our nations in bondage. It has also been applied to missiology in terms of getting across the idea that perhaps a nation (such as Iran) is held in bondage by a strong man of Islam. By praying against and binding this strong man of Islam over Iran, theoretically, it would be easier for missionaries to go in and proclaim the gospel there.

Indeed, early books which popularized this idea gave accounts of missionaries observing that handing out tracts on one side of a foreign city street was violently resisted by the people and unsuccessful, while on the other side of the street, the people were open. Supposedly, this was because a border of territory (county or district?) went down the middle of the street, and the spiritual "godfather" who reigned over the bad side of the street was somehow tougher to get through.

In the US, leading figures in the ministry have been holding "Prayer Concerts" in certain cities (i.e., Detroit, San Francisco) which are major centers of wickedness; in an effort to turn aside the momentum of evil in these cities.

In the past couple of decades, it has been getting very popular among missiologists, and we hear all sorts of talk about doing spiritual warfare against the strong men over the "10-40 Window" (a longitude/latitude parameter which basically covers the **least evangelized** parts of the world, such as Iran, Tibet, Nepal, Afghanistan, etc.) to see an increased harvest of souls in those regions of the world.

Mapping out the Attack

Spiritual Mapping is a further development in this same trend. Here, the idea is to take on "territorial strongmen" and map your city to identify areas of high concentrations of evil (crime, porn shops, crack houses, abortion clinics, etc.). Then, maps are made in which these areas of evil are etched in, and prayer intercessors are tactically sent out to pray in those parts of communities against certain key demonic strong men.

For example, one group of intercessors might go out into an area full of taverns and porn shops and pray against the spirit of bondage; another might go to where abortions are being performed and pray against the anti-Christ spirit and the spirits of Molech and Lilith.

All of this sounds, good; but is it Biblical? In our ministry, we try to only do those spiritual things for which there seems to be clear, Biblical warrant. The Bible is the source of our authority, Amen? We can search in vain for New Testament examples of

people mapping out cities or taking on territorial spirits. If anyone should have needed that sort of tactic, it would have been Paul. He entered city after city of unalloyed, evil paganism. Ephesus was a stronghold of Diana (queen of heaven) worship; Corinth was an ancient version of San Francisco, and Athens was the center of godless philosophy, humanism and hedonism in its day.

Is It Us or the Angels?

Remarkably, Paul doesn't say one word about "spiritual mapping" or taking on "territorial strongmen." If this is such a vital part of the church/evangelism dynamic, *why didn't he discuss it?* This entire movement is based on that obscure passage in **Daniel 10** where the "Prince of Persia" and the "Prince of Grecia" are mentioned. It is always tricky to build a doctrine on just one, isolated passage of scripture. This is how many cults, like the Mormons, get started. Let's look at that passage carefully, to see what actually was going on.

In the earlier part of the chapter, Daniel is NOT tearing down territorial strongmen. He is fasting and praying and interceding for his people. Now THAT is good intercession. Please notice what the angel tells him. He says *"the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me."* Later on, in vs. 20, he adds, *"now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come."* He follows this with verse 21b by saying, "there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince."

Does he say, "Daniel, you have to help me fight this Prince of Persia"? Does he indicate that there is any human being helping him in the fight? No, he says there is *"none that holdeth with me...but Michael, your prince."* We know of course that Michael is the angelic prince over Israel. This sounds more like a battle that is being fought FAR over the heads of the people of earth. The angel says HE must fight these princes, not that he somehow must have help from the intercessory prayers of Daniel to prevail. Surely, if there were a place for us to stand in prayer, "shoulder-to-shoulder" with the angels of heaven, on these cosmic battlefields, this would have been an excellent time to teach about it. But the angel does not ask for help, does he?

See, this is what I call *"Peretti theology."* Don't get me wrong, I love Frank Peretti; and I even happen to know him personally; but this concept is more drawn from his exciting FICTION than it is from the Bible. He would be the last person on earth to say he was writing theology texts. He was writing encouraging, inspiring, entertaining fiction! Now, let's take this over to some other passages.

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise

government. ***Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.***

Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.— 2Pet. 2:9-11.

Rushing in Where Angels Fear to Tread?

Here in a New Testament passage, addressed to us Church Age Believers, we are warned against speaking evil of "dignities." This means higher-level territorial strongmen! As if it needed to be clearer, see Jude:

Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.—Jude 9

Of course, the devil is the "ultimate" strongman. These two passages together tell us that we must be very careful how we address these higher-level fallen angelic beings. We have seen a few people who felt "called" into this sort of ministry nearly get killed or have their families wiped out because they were unprepared for the backlash which came back when they attacked these beings.

Our authority over evil spirits (demons or devils) is **clear**. You can find it in **Mark 16:17** "*And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils.*" We can see *examples* of that in Paul's ministry (**Acts 16:16-18; 19:15**). However, territorial strongmen are an entirely different order of magnitude! Did Yah'shua [Jesus] triumph over them at the cross (see footnote 1)? Certainly! Did He give us the command to fight them? Uncertain. Neither He, nor Paul, nor any other New Testament writer ever commands his readers to do spiritual mapping or to fight against such strongmen. There is no record of them doing it. *Do you think we are wiser than they? Have we somehow learned something about prayer or evangelism in the last decade which eluded Paul, the greatest evangelist in human history?* I don't think so.

Because the scriptural warrant for doing such kinds of warfare is a bit muddy and obscure (and possibly contra-indicated by **Jude 9** and **2Pet. 2:9-11**), it may not be wise to engage in such combat—unless you are absolutely certain you are in the Lord's will.

"Honey, I Shrunk the Devil!"

We are not alone in this opinion. Mario Murillo, an aggressive prayer warrior and evangelist if one ever lived, calls this the "Honey, I Shrunk the Devil" Syndrome. (See endnote 2) Murillo says forget about learning the names of the strongmen or stronghold

places in your city. Instead just proclaim the "NAME THAT IS ABOVE EVERY OTHER NAME." That is all Paul did, and he "turned the world upside down." (Acts 17:6)

Murillo thinks many people, especially in the charismatic movement, tend to lose sight of the power of the devil. We don't want to give Satan too much credit, but still, honor be to him to whom honor is due. (**Rom. 13:7**) Satan is not a being to be trifled with, nor taken on lightly! The charismatic battlefield is littered with the bodies of "mighty men of God" who thought they could sneer at Satan's power. Many of them have fallen into adultery or other sin because they were presumptuous.

Some leaders in this movement like Larry Lea have gone to cities and had "Prayer Concerts" to tear down the strongholds in the area and have had the cities *get worse after they left!* This happened in Detroit two years in a row on their "Hell Night." San Francisco certainly hasn't improved any, in spite of being the focus of many huge intercessory prayer pushes into these realms.

Much hoopla was raised when a supposed high-level witch was saved at one of these Larry Lea meetings in San Francisco a few years back. Then, it came out that the supposedly saved witch was living in sin with his girl friend months after salvation. This sort of thing does not bode well. I fear that such efforts are just spitting into the wind, and misplacing a focus that should be placed more on individual one-on-one soul-winning. THAT is Biblical.

Yes, Satan is a defeated foe; but we need to be careful not to get out in front of our Captain as we try to fight the devil (**Josh. 5:14**). That is how people get wounded—sometimes by friendly fire.

This isn't to say that there might be people called by the Almighty into this very high-octane kind of ministry. But, I would be very careful about it. If you can find Biblical texts to support spiritual mapping, etc. and taking on territorial spirits, please let me know; but I've been through the entire Bible 26 times, and I've never found any.

I would say that if your "house" was completely in order, (or at least reasonably so-**1Tim. 3:4-5**) and you really think that the Holy Spirit has anointed and called you into this kind of battle, then perhaps go for it. That is certainly between you and Him (**Rom. 14:4**). Just be aware that many people have gotten into this, since it is the latest "hot fad" in intercession, and in our ministry we have had to help them put the ruined pieces of their lives back together.

Ministry or Magic?

One final cautionary thought on this entire trend. I hate to say it, but actually this spiritual warfare trend reflects more of the MAGICAL world-view than the Biblical world-view, in my humble opinion. The idea that one must know the "names" and

"places" (and perhaps even go there) in order to pray effectively **is not supported in the Bible**. It is a ceremonial magical doctrine. Magic demands one know the names of the spirits one wishes to control. The Bible does not.

I am not certain that there is any Biblical evidence that it does a prayer warrior any good to know where all the porn shops or crack houses are in his or her community. This idea of power residing in special places is an occult concept, barely (if at all) supported by scripture.

We had one of the ladies who was a leader in our prior state of residence (Washington) spend weeks designing and laying out maps of where all the "power spots" were that the Holy Spirit (supposedly) had told her about. She sent out her "troops" to go and camp and pray and intercede on all those spots. Every woman that I knew who went to do that ended up either physically very ill or spiritually devastated because of it. You can't fight the devil with the devil's tools or the devil's doctrines. The Holy Spirit knows the names of every imp on earth and in hell; and He can certainly tell you if He wants you to know. However, he doesn't seem to be doing much of that. Perhaps because it is irrelevant.

All the great soul-winners of the past had to do was cry out "*God, give me souls 'else I die!*" and they came by the thousands. Finney didn't do spiritual mapping, yet in his day, sea captains testified that revival would break out among the passengers (without any preaching) just because their ships were nearing a port where Finney was ministering! (See endnote 3)

The Great Awakening saw 50,000 people get saved out a New England population of only 300,000 (1/6th of the population!)(See endnote 4) They didn't do spiritual mapping! They were living on a continent that had been under the sway of pagan (Native American) power for a thousand years, with hundreds of their gods and ancestor worship to contend with. Yet, without any coming against territorial spirits or any of this "high-tech" stuff, the mightiest revival in the history of America happened within 110 years of the first Christians setting foot on the continent. It has not been rivaled since. Why?

I would humbly suggest that it is NOT because we haven't been doing our spiritual mapping. *It is because we have neglected prayer and Bible study, and spend more time in front of the TV than we do on our knees before the Almighty.*

We have cast the true and living Word out of many of our churches in favor of false, New Age translations. (See endnote 5) You can map out cities until your fingers fall off, but if your only offensive weapon—the Holy Bible—has been neutralized, you have nothing to fight with! Only a fool field strips his weapon in the middle of a fire fight, and yet that is just what most pastors in America has done.

Forget about spiritual mapping and just draw the true Sword of the Spirit, the Authorized Version, and lay aside the NIV plastic butter knife! (See endnote 6) The real Sword is powerful and sharp enough to run the devil through a spiritual Cuisinart (**Heb.**

4:12)! That is an entire subject in itself, of vital importance. (See endnote 7) But there is neither the time nor the space to deal with it now.

It's just that sometimes Christians must prayerfully prioritize and choose between the *better* and the *best* will of God (**Rom. 12:2**). Also, please understand, I am not saying that these people who teaching these "spiritual warfare" tactics are wicked. They are sincere Christians who have gotten excited and hopped onto a bandwagon because it made sense to them in their flesh, and in their 20th tendency to do things in a scientific fashion.

They've forgotten that God has gotten along quite well without human science (**1Tim. 6:20**), and has been for 6000 years!

What needs to happen is that these people need to throw out their maps and their computers and their "latest translations" (which deny the virgin birth and the deity of Christ) and begin picking up the King James Bible and leading people to Christ. That will hurt the devil more than a dozen spiritual mapping missions.

Endnotes:

1) Yah'shua is the Hebrew way of saying Jesus. It is the name He was given at birth and the name He was called as He walked the earth and ministered. We believe it is more respectful and a bit more powerful (from the standpoint of spiritual warfare) to call Him by His real name.

2) See his excellent book, *Fresh Fire*.

3) Ed Reese, "*History of Evangelism and Evangelists*," unpublished lecture, Hyles-Anderson College, p. 15, cited in William P. Grady, Final Authority, Grady Publications, 1993, p.355.

4) Charles L. Thompson, D.D., *Times of Refreshing, A History of American Revivals from 1740 to 1877, with Their Philosophy and Methods*, M.W. Smith and Co., 1877, p. 64.

5) The NIV, the Living Bible, the NAS, the NKJV, etc. If this assertion surprises you, contact us! We have some eye-opening literature!

6) Most of the "giants" in the spiritual warfare field mock the Word of God and run awhoring after false translations. If they are truly Spirit-led, they should know better! (John 16:13)

7) See chapter 16 of our book, *Blood on the Doorposts*, for more on this.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the author through:

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