

*Building Biblical*  
**COMMUNITY in CHRIST**

**ANGELS AND DEMONS**  
**Ephesians 6:12**

We are beginning today what I believe to be one of the most important studies that we have had here at Central Bible Church. I say that because of the reminders I have had in recent weeks of the intense, daily struggle that each one of us has against the flood of evil in our lives. It is intense, unceasing, and at times overwhelming.

I personally became more acutely aware of the nature of our spiritual warfare during our years on the mission field in France. You might say that I began to experience a sort of paradigm shift in my thinking about the on-going reality of what has been called “intelligent evil” in the world. Not only did I see it on a personal level, but on a broader national level. And this makes sense... there are more full-time practicing mediums in France than medical doctors.

**IT’S WORTH FIGHTING FOR**

Maybe you remember this scene from *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. Both Frodo and his friend Sam find themselves on a dangerous journey to save Middle-Earth. On their way to the treacherous slopes of Mount Doom, they are famished, exhausted, and Frodo shows more and more of the strain of bearing the ring. Here’s what happens:

Movie clip

Yes, there’s some good in this world. And it’s worth fighting for. And it is this fight between good and evil that Paul is speaking of in Ephesians 6. Notice how Paul describes just what we are up against in Ephesians 6:10-13, our text for this morning:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Ephesians 6:10-13

**TWO OPPOSITE ERRORS**

There are various reactions to the reality of what we might call “intelligent evil” in this world. No one has more concisely stated the potential of error when it comes to this topic than C.S. Lewis:

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”<sup>i</sup>

Many today disbelieve in the existence of the devil and his demons. According to a *New York Times* report in 1997, nearly two-thirds of Americans do not believe in the devil as a personal, living entity. In a random telephone survey of over one thousand people, over 62% believed Satan was nothing more than a symbol of evil.<sup>ii</sup> The reasoning of many is: he can't be seen, therefore he's not real. But did you know that scientists estimate that 98% of matter in the universe is invisible?

Of course the other tendency is to have an unhealthy fascination with the world of evil. Actually, since 1997 and that *New York Times* report, there has been an increased interest in the world of paranormal. A recent Gallop Poll shows that about three in four Americans profess belief in at least one paranormal experience, especially such Halloween-related issues as haunted houses, ghosts and witches.<sup>iii</sup> Lynn Buzzard in the book *Demon Possession*, states it well:

“Our age seems to have a deep fascination with evil, the bizarre, and the inexplicable. It thrives on horror and repulsion. What makes one faint or vomit or experience nightmares has a kind of magnetic charm.”<sup>iv</sup>

Some of us may need to be reminded of Paul's words to the Roman Christians: “I would have you wise unto that which is good and simple concerning that which is evil” (Romans 16:19). This is particularly evident as we approach the Halloween season. In fact, one of the dangers of even addressing this topic is that we begin to focus on the devil and all that is evil rather than upon God and all that is good. This itself is one of Satan's tactics. But it is only as we keep our eyes on God and the assured victory we have in Christ can that we see the defeat of the forces of evil in and around us. “Our demonology cannot be more true or adequate than our doctrine of God,” writes J.I. Packer. “We can see the truth about the devil only in the light of truth about God. Demonology concerns one aspect – the basic aspect – of the mystery of evil; evil has to be understood as a lack, a perversion of good; and we know what good is only when we know what God is. Only through appreciating God's goodness can we form any idea of the devil's badness.”<sup>v</sup>

But the Apostle Paul was neither a materialist nor a magician. He was guided along by the Holy Spirit to give us penetrating insight into the reality of the spirit world and its influence on our everyday lives as believers. And he makes it explicitly clear: We are not called into a religious playground, but into bloody spiritual conflict.

## THE CONTEXT

Let's set the context. Paul begins this important section by saying “*Finally*, be strong in the Lord...” In other words, in light of all I have told you up to this point about your spiritual *wealth* in Christ (chapters 1-3) and your Christian *walk* as believers (Ephesians 4:1 – 6:10), you are now to arm yourselves for the spiritual *warfare* you will inevitably face as believers.

Paul's final words to the Ephesian believers have often been referred to as *the* manual of spiritual warfare. All through the history of the church believers have turned to this passage for encouragement and wisdom in opposing the forces of darkness.

This text certainly does not touch on all the Bible has to say about the church's titanic struggle against evil, but it amazingly and concisely pulls together the essential truths about our enemy, the believer's identity, and the powerful resources available to us in Christ. Paul's words are a clarion call to fight the *right* battle and with the *right* resources.

In 2 Timothy 4:7, and probably just weeks or days before his martyrdom, Paul writes his final words to his young disciple, Timothy: "I have fought the *good* fight..." As Paul looked back on his some thirty years of Christian life and ministry, he could say that he had not only fought battles, but that he had fought the *right* battles, the *good* fight, i.e. the *noble* fight.

Some of us as Christians are fighting battles, but not the *right* battle. And the reason is that we fail to correctly identify the enemy and take up the spiritual armor so essential to ongoing victory. In other words, we have to know two things:

- The enemy and his strategies
- Our identity in Christ and consequent authority

## **A LESSON FROM LAWRENCE**

Aqaba (in modern day Jordan) in 1917 seemed impregnable. Any enemy vessel approaching the port would have to face the battery of huge naval guns above the town. Behind Aqaba in every direction lay barren, waterless, inhospitable desert. To the east lay the deadly "anvil of the sun." The Turks believed Aqaba to be safe from any attack. But they were wrong.

Lawrence of Arabia led a force of irregular Arab cavalry across the "anvil of the sun." Together, they rallied support among the local people. On July 6, 1917, the Arab forces swept into Aqaba from the north, from the blind side. A climactic moment of the magnificent film *Lawrence of Arabia* is the long, panning shot of the Arabs on their camels and horses, with Lawrence at their head, galloping past the gigantic naval guns that are completely powerless to stop them. The guns were facing in the wrong direction. Aqaba fell, and the Turkish hold on Palestine was broken, to be replaced by the British mandate and eventually by the State of Israel.

The Turks failed to defend Aqaba because they made two mistakes. They did not know their enemy, and they did not have the right weapons.<sup>vi</sup>

Amazingly, the same two mistakes made by the Turks at Aqaba surface also among many believers today in the ongoing struggle against sin and Satan. We often fail to know our adversary and his subversive strategies. And even more importantly we frequently rely upon human resources and methodologies rather than upon the mighty spiritual weapons God has so graciously placed at our disposal.

## **THE REALITY OF OUR ENEMY IN THE WORLD**

So look with me first this morning at the reality of our enemy.

Paul here reminds us that our real battle is not “against flesh and blood.” He is saying this: “In all the relationships that I have just spoken of – between husbands and wives, between children and parents, between employers and employees, or more generally in any of our relationships – where there division and alienation, conflict and discord...our real struggle is *not* against these people but against the spiritual powers of darkness that are intent on working havoc in our lives.”

Because of this, we must know our enemy and his strategies. In any warfare, an efficient intelligence agency is important if successful warfare is to be waged. Here in Ephesians 6:10-12 Paul paints a graphic picture of the enemy’s general headquarters or command center. This, we might say, is the “board room of hell.”

Who are these beings? And why does Paul mention so many different categories of supernatural powers? Does this imply a sort of demonic hierarchy? And are those mentioned in the epistles to be identified with the demons who so frequently afflicted individuals in the gospel accounts? And how did the devil and his demons originate in the first place?

### ***The devil and his demons are fallen angels.***

First, the Bible teaches that the devil and his demons are fallen angels.<sup>vii</sup>

The Bible doesn’t say a lot about this, but there are several passages that indicate that certain angels fell from their original condition as members of God’s “heavenly council” or angelic army:

God did not spare *angels* when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment... 2 Peter 2:4-5

And the *angels* who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home-these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. Jude 6<sup>viii</sup>

You may have heard people refer to two Old Testament passages – Ezekiel 28:12-19 and Isaiah 14:4-20 – as speaking of the fall of Satan. In fact, based on Isaiah 14:12, many refer to Satan as “Lucifer,” a name that appears only here in the Bible. But all this is based on an erroneous translation. The word here means literally, “brilliant star.” But when the Bible was translated into Latin (called the Vulgate), the word Lucifer was chosen, which means “carrier of light.” In fact, the same word here translated “Lucifer” refers in Revelation 22:6 to Christ, the adversary of Satan! *So Sunday School teachers, don’t tell your children any more that Satan was once called Lucifer!*

### ***The devil and his demons are a vast army with specific roles.***

Second, the Bible teaches that the devil and his demons are a vast army with seemingly specific roles.<sup>ix</sup>

Paul first mentions the devil in verse 11 whom he calls the “evil one” in verse 16. The description devil, or *diabolos*, means “false accuser.” He is the commander-in-chief

of a vast horde of Satanic allies. Elsewhere he is called the “prince of this world (John 12:31:14:30; 16:11).

Paul then goes on to mention in verse 12 various diabolical beings in league with the devil, using a variety of terms: “rulers,”<sup>x</sup> “authorities,”<sup>xi</sup> “powers of this dark world,”<sup>xii</sup> and “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”<sup>xiii</sup> Elsewhere he adds to these terms other classifications such as “dominions,” “thrones,” “lords,” as well as the much debated expression “the basic principles of the world.” Beyond these terms, the gospels in particular add the more generic designation of “demons.” And all of these scheme together in a world-wide program of seduction and destruction. How do they do this? That leads me to the third point.

### ***The devil and his demons exert a three-fold influence.***

But third, and most importantly, I want you to notice that the devil and his demons exert a three-fold influence that we need to be aware of.

**Cultural.** First, *these satanic allies exert a cultural (or socio-political) influence in this world.* Did you notice that nearly all of these terms – rulers, authorities, powers – are borrowed from the sphere of human government? In fact, these same terms are often used elsewhere in the Bible to refer to civil authorities and kings. This seems to indicate an intimate connection between the invisible world and earthly society.<sup>xiv</sup> In other words, in a sense that we cannot fully understand, cosmic spiritual powers “hide” behind the earthly governmental authorities. It is little wonder that Satan offers to Jesus the power (*exousian*) and glory of the kingdoms of the world. Satan’s proposition is justified: the kingdoms of this earth are under his *temporary* control and influence.<sup>xv</sup> No wonder John writes in 1 John 5:19-20, “We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

An amazing example of this is found in Daniel 10. We don’t have the time to look at this text this morning. But I encourage you to read this week Daniel 10 in relation to Deuteronomy 32:8 in the *New Living Translation*. As we compare the two passages we get the clear impression that there are pernicious spiritual powers that exert their influence over the societies and governments of this world.

**Personal.** But *not only is the influence of the devil and his demons cultural and socio-political in nature, it is also very personal in nature.* The devil and his demons are concerned not only with *peoples*, in the sense of cultures and societies, but also with *people*, in the individual sense...that is, with you and me.

We may not be able to say that Satan and his demons *instigate* every temptation in our lives, but they are certainly *interested* in every temptation and are ultimately behind the sin we struggle with daily. How is this?

The Bible teaches us that there are three forms of evil that you and I are up against. In fact, three verses in this same epistle to the Ephesians summarize for us just what these enemies are. Paul says this in Ephesians 2:1-3:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this **world** and of the **ruler of the kingdom**

**of the air**, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our **sinful nature** and following its desires and thoughts.

The world is the unhealthy social environment in which we live (1 John 2:15-17). The sinful nature or better termed the “flesh” is that inner inclination to do wrong (Galatians 5:19). And working through both of these is the devil, the “ruler of the kingdom of the air,” who is ruthlessly committed to promoting evil and destruction in our lives (Ephesians 4:27).

Now these three “fronts” of our warfare are intimately connected and often cannot be separated when trying to discern the source of our struggle. We cannot attribute a particular sin in our lives *entirely* to the devil, any more than to the world and the flesh. We need a balanced perspective, viewing our spiritual warfare as three-dimensional.

Some Christians give too much credit to the devil, taking the old “the devil made me do it” approach (graphic).



These Christians, you might say, see a demon behind every bush and give the devil too much credit. Every sin in their lives seems to be “demon inspired.” And if they can simply cast out the demon (whether it be of lust, alcohol, anger, or pride), then they will be “cured” of their struggle. Such an approach is both simplistic and unbiblical.

There are other Christians who minimize the work of the devil in their lives (graphic).



In a knee-jerk reaction to the “demon behind every bush” perspective, these Christians believe that their struggle is limited to me and the world I live in. This is a dangerous stance, and the enemy can broadside you quite easily through such a belief. First of all, demons don’t hide behind bushes; their strategies are far more subtle than that. Secondly, these Christians fail to recognize the intimate, inseparable connection between the world, the flesh and the devil.

The biblical view of evil influence in our lives sees our spiritual warfare as multi-dimensional in nature (graphic).



These three influences are so intertwined that often they cannot be differentiated. They can be compared to this piece of rope that I have in my hand. Three strands, intertwined

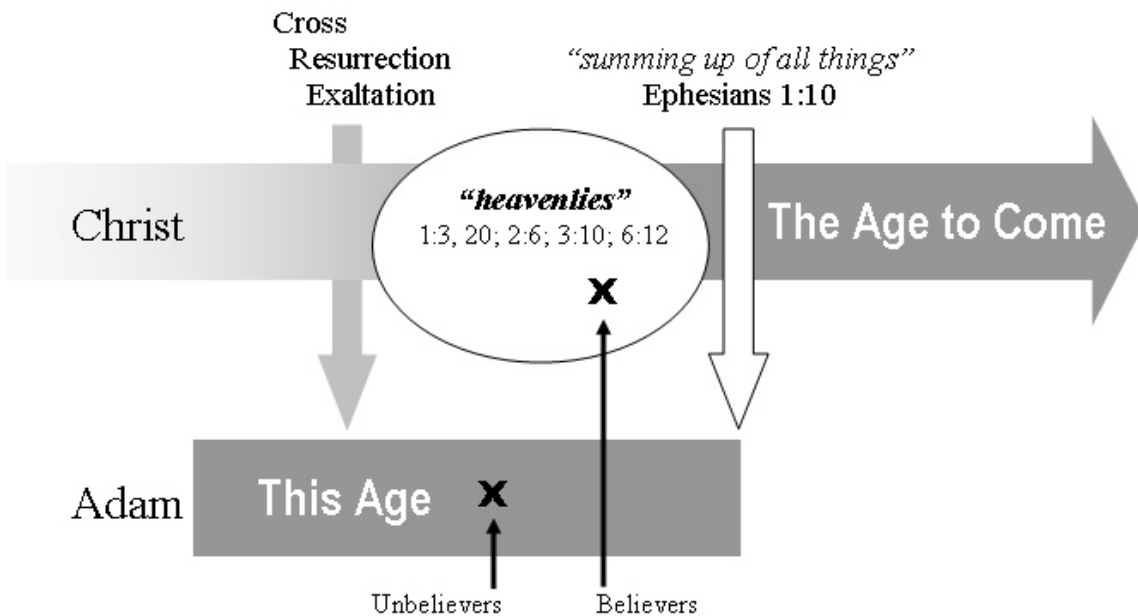
together, make for a strong rope. And it is this “rope” so to speak, that can hold you and me in bondage to sin.

Martin Luther is quite right when he writes: “*For still our ancient foe, doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.*”

**Temporal.** But thanks be to God, the cultural and personal influence that the devil and his demons seek to exercise is also *temporal*.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4 the devil is called the “god of *this age*.” Literally, he is the god of this *aion*. An *aion* is a period of time that is passing.

As we have gone through Ephesians, we have seen that as unbelievers, we are connected to this present age (see attached chart).



As descendants of Adam, we share his sin and alienation from God. We are part of what Paul calls the “old man,” corrupt and passing away.

But as believers in Jesus Christ (who died, was resurrected and exalted to heaven), we are now seated with Christ in what Paul refers to five times in this book (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) as “the heavenlies.” In other words, we already partake *partially* but not yet *fully* of the age to come. We are already in Christ, but have not yet experienced the “summing up of all things in Christ.” And yet, because of our intimate union with Christ in his death and resurrection, we have been invested with great authority over evil in its three-fold expression (the world, the flesh and the devil).

## THE AUTHORITY OF OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Paul reminds us: Be strong...not in ourselves...but *in the Lord and in the strength of his might*. In his death and resurrection, Jesus judged the prince of this world! When the general is defeated, so is the whole army (John 12:31; 16:11). Every legal claim Satan has against you was cancelled at the cross.

Before coming to know Christ, these Ephesians believer's lives were marked by much anxiety about their "fate," thought to be determined by the stars and cosmic powers. Even a cursory reading of Acts 19, which tells of the conversion of many of these believers, clues us into the sorcery and magic that influenced their lives and world-view. In Ephesus, the great goddess Diana, also known as Artemis, was worshipped as supreme in divine power and position. The signs of the zodiac around her neck assured the devotee that she possessed authority superior to that of astrological fate.

But in stark contrast to such supposed power, nothing is like the divine power made available to us as believers and which assures you and me that what God has promised us He is perfectly capable of bringing about. Paul piles one word upon another in verses 19-20 to get his point across: "incomparably great power" and "the working of his mighty strength."<sup>xvi</sup> All of this, he says, was "exerted in Christ."

Now I want you to notice four things that God did for his Son in these verses as a demonstration of his power.

First, he raises him from the dead (v. 20). In the resurrection, God did not simply reverse the process of death and mortality; he superseded it! Jesus was raised with an altogether new body, a transformed, immortal body! That's why Thomas Goodwin says, "His resurrection has the power of all resurrections contracted in it."

Secondly, God's power gave Christ the seat of kingly authority at His right hand (v. 20). In this position, every demonic power that could possibly come against Christ or against you and me – threatening the fulfillment of God's promises in our lives and the inheritance which is ours – has been placed under Christ's authority. This includes every "rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come" (verse 21).<sup>xvii</sup>

Thirdly, everything in the universe will be ultimately in subjection to Christ. Here Paul makes allusion to Psalm 8 and Psalm 110 which look forward to Christ's ultimate rule over the earth and universe. As the writer to the Hebrews says, "At present we do not see everything subject to him." But someday we will. In the meantime, God is exercising this authority through the Church. And this leads to the next statement.

Fourthly, God gives his Son, with all that universal power and authority, to the church as head. As believers, we are part of the Body, and every body has a head. The head of the Body of Christ, the Church, is Jesus himself. God did not raise Jesus from the dead, exalt him as King, and place all things in subjection to him and then say, "Now go ahead and fill the earth and universe with your glory; do it yourself." No, even as Jesus had a physical body while on this earth, through which he carried out his ministry, so today he has a "body," the church, through which his authority to rule is carried out. Christ was united to his body then as he is united to his body – the church – now. Christ as head and the church as the body are inseparable...just as inseparable as your body is to your head. And according to Paul's words, it is through this Body – the Body of Christ – that God is filling everything in every way (cf. Ephesians 4:11-17; Matthew 28:19-20)<sup>xviii</sup>.

In light of this, do you resonate with Martin Luther's words?

*“And though this world with devils filled,  
should threaten to undo us,  
we will not fear for God has willed,  
His truth to triumph through us.*

*The prince of darkness grim,  
we tremble not for him.  
His rage we can endure,  
for lo, his doom is sure:  
one little word shall fell him.”*

And that word is Jesus.

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<sup>i</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*.

<sup>ii</sup> Reporting on a survey by the Barna Group. Gustav Niebuhr, “Poll Indicates Diminished Role of Devil,” *The New York Times*, Saturday, May 10, 1997.

<sup>iii</sup> George Gallup, June 16, 2005, <http://poll.gallup.com/content/default.aspx?ci=16915&pg=1>. The same report also indicates that 42% believe that “people on this earth are sometimes possessed by the devil.”

<sup>iv</sup> Lynn R. Buzzard in *Demon Possession*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1976), 17-18.

<sup>v</sup> J.I. Packer, “The Devil,” *Eternity*, April, 1964, 8 as cited by Gordon Lewis, “Response,” *Demon Possession* ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1976), 38-39.

<sup>vi</sup> Michael Boyland in *Fresh Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching* (Baker), from the editors of *Leadership*; <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/search.html>

<sup>vii</sup> C. Fred Dickason, *Demon Possession & the Christian*, 24-25. Several points can be made to indicate that demons are fallen angels: First, they have a similar relation to Satan as do Satan's angels. The parallel expressions “the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41) and “Beelzebul the ruler of demons” (Matthew 12:24,26) support this. Second, Satan as a fallen angel is designated *archonti*, meaning “first” among the demons. Third, angels are termed “spirits” (Psalm 104:4; Hebrews 1:14) and so are demons (Matthew 8:16; Luke 10:17, 20). Fourth, angels and demons perform similar activities such as joining in war against God and man (Revelation 9:13-15; 12:7-17; Mark 9:17-26) and seeking to control and inhabit men (Matthew 17:14-18; Luke 22:3; John 13:27). Fifth, their ranks are similar if not identical (Romans 8:38-39; Ephesians 6:10-12; Colossians 1:16; 2:15).

<sup>viii</sup> Compare 1 Timothy 3:6; Matthew 25:41; John 8:44; Isaiah 14:4-20; Ezekiel 28:12-19. We do know that the devil and his demons were created by God and that all God creates is good (1 Timothy 4:4).

<sup>ix</sup> The New Testament writers didn't invent the terminology used to designate the spiritual powers. They found in the nomenclature of the Old Testament and of the writing of late Judaism as well as the magical papyri of the day a rich vocabulary reflecting the *weltbild* (world-view) of the New Testament. But does Paul list them in a particular order indicating an organized hierarchy? It is difficult to say. In Ephesians 1:21, *archē* and *exousia* are listed first whereas in Colossians 1:16 the order is reversed and they are listed last. Furthermore, the last term in Ephesians 1:21 *kuriotētos* is listed second in Colossians 1:16. This would seem to indicate that Paul was not particularly interested in any speculation on the hierarchy of these demonic powers.

<sup>x</sup> The meaning of this term *arche* in the New Testament depends largely on its use in the Old Testament. The use of the term in both the Old Testament, late Jewish literature and the New Testament indicates that the *archai* exert their influence directly over geo-political spheres of society (cf. Daniel 10 and the “prince of Persia”) rather than over other evil spirits. If the author desired to indicate an influence over other evil spirits, he would have chosen the term *archontes* as in Ephesians 2:1-3 (Cf. Delling, *TDNT*, 1.483; Clinton Arnold, *Ephesians*, 61).

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<sup>xi</sup> This term, *exousia*, appears 59 times in Greek Old Testament and always refers to either God or human magistrates. The only reference to spiritual powers is found in the apocryphal work 2 Macabees 3:24 “The Sovereign of spirits and every *authority*.” In the New Testament, the term is most frequently used for civil authorities. Of the 89 times it is used, only 8 refer to spiritual powers (Col 1:16; 2:10, 15; Eph 1:20ff; 3:10; 6:11ff; 1 Cor. 15:24; 1 Pet 3:22). Only the context can determine whether the meaning is civil magistrates or spiritual authorities.

<sup>xii</sup> This expression, *kosmokratores tou skotous toutou*, is found only here in the New Testament. Arnold suggests two possibilities: (1) either the author (in this case Paul) created the term, or (2) the expression reflects a usage already in vogue at the time of the NT. The term is found in the magical papyri to designate angels or spirits invoked in prayers. It may be that *kosmokratores* is one of the “names which can be named” in Ephesians 1:21. Since this term was also used to refer to other deities of antiquity, it’s possible that Paul was thinking here of the goddess Artemis described in Acts 19:23-42. But there the term is plural, there are many of these *kosmokratores*. all other types of demonic powers under the direction of the prince of the power of the air (2:2).

<sup>xiii</sup>

<sup>xiv</sup> Cf. Isaiah 24:21 – “In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below.”

<sup>xv</sup> John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Matthew 9:34; 12:14; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15.

<sup>xvi</sup> Altogether Paul uses five different terms to describe this power. The words “surpassing greatness” refer to the unimaginable divine potency directed toward all who believe. Both of these terms were used extensively in magical papyri in Asia Minor. The word “power” means literally “ability, capacity” and is also found in Ephesians 3:20 (“to Him who is able”). In the magical writings of Paul’s day it indicated the “substance obtained by chanting magical words or names” (cf. Rom 1:16; 2 Cor 4:7-12; Phil 3:10). But in contrast to the magical background of the Ephesians: (1) the power of God alone is sufficient and supreme; and (2) the power of God is personal – received through faith in a personal God and not by chanting magical words or names. The word “working” indicates the exercise of superhuman power. It is used in v. 20 (“brought about”) to refer to the *realization* of God’s power in raising Christ from the dead. In 3:7 it is the “working of His power” that gives God’s grace. In the magical documents that the Ephesians were so familiar with, it always refers to a recipe, spell or charm that has been found to “work” and is therefore “effective.” For the term “mighty strength” compare Ephesians 6:10 “be strong in the Lord and in the *strength of His might*”. The two terms are synonyms. Clinton E. Arnold *Ephesians: Power and Magic* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992).

<sup>xvii</sup> The term “*rule*” is used in Dan. 10 for the Princes of Greece and Persia. The term “*authority*” refers eight times to spiritual powers. The basic meaning is “official power” and so the term often refers also to human magistrates. The “*powers*” in the OT often translate the expression “Lord of powers” or “Lord of hosts” (Deut 4:19; 1 Sam. 4:4; Is. 42:13; 2 Kings 21:3). The term “*dominion*” is used only one other time in Col 1:16 and may be the equivalent of the “so-called gods” of 1 Cor. 8:5. Notice that these powers are contrasted to the five terms used to describe the power of God in v 19.

<sup>xviii</sup> “The church is the fullness of him...” What is the meaning of this concept? If taken in the *active* sense (“that which fills”), the church is the fullness (compliment) of the one (i.e. Christ) who is being completely filled.” In this sense, the church is the completion of Christ. But Paul has just finished talking about the supremacy of Christ. Why would he now talk about the church “completing” Christ? Taken in a *passive* sense (“that which is filled”), the church is filled by Christ, as a container is filled with water. Christ provides for the church and through the church fills all things. This is precisely what he is said to do in 4:10. Christ then who fills the church fills also the universe. In other passages where the same or similar expression is used (1:10, 23; 3:19; 4:13; Col. 1:19; 2:9; Rom 11:12,25; 13:10; 15:29; 1 Cor. 10:26; Gal. 4:4), it is always with a passive sense. This is especially clear in the phrase “the fullness of time” (1:10). “Fullness” here then suggests two things: (1) that which is *filled by Christ*; i.e., the church is filled by Christ not only with his own life and presence but also with the gifts and blessings he gives; and (2) that which is filled with Christ; i.e., the church contains the fullness of Christ. As the glory of God filled the OT temple (Ezek 44:4; Is 6:1), so Jesus Christ today fills us, his temple (2:21-22).