

SPIRITUAL  
**WARFARE**  
IN THE  
**END**  
**TIMES**

RON RHODES



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## **Spiritual Warfare in the End Times**

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*In loving memory of  
Mark David Stout*

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During the writing of this book, my long-time friend Norman Geisler exited earthly life and entered heavenly glory. He was one of my primary mentors at Dallas Theological Seminary in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Little did I know as a seminary student that I would one day be doing conferences with him and even writing some books with him. I continue to be appreciative for all I've learned from him through the decades—including such doctrines as angelology and demonology. His legacy lives on in his many students.

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*Thank You, Lord, for providing us all we need to know about spiritual warfare in Your Word.*

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## PART 1

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# UNDERSTANDING YOUR ENEMY

*We do not wrestle against flesh and blood,  
but against the rulers, against the authorities,  
against the cosmic powers  
over this present darkness,  
against the spiritual forces of evil  
in the heavenly places.*

**(EPHESIANS 6:12)**

## The Reality of Satan in the World Today

A big problem for many of us is that we base everything on what our five senses tell us. Since the spiritual world is not subject to any of these, we often act as if it does not exist.

The eye of faith can perceive this unseen reality (Hebrews 11:1). The spiritual world lies all about us, enclosing us, embracing us, altogether within our reach. This spiritual world will come alive to us the moment we reckon upon its reality. Unfortunately, this spiritual world is brimming with not only benevolent spirit entities (God and His holy angels) but also malevolent spirit entities (Satan and his fallen angels, or demons).

We find many examples of the spirit world in the pages of Scripture. In 2 Kings 6:8-23, for example, we read of how Elisha found himself surrounded by enemy troops, yet he remained calm and relaxed. His servant, however, panicked at the sight of this hostile army with vicious-looking warriors and innumerable battle chariots on every side.

Undaunted, Elisha said to him, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them” (2 Kings 6:16). Elisha then prayed, “‘O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.’ So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (verse 17). God was protecting Elisha and his servant with a whole army of magnificent angelic beings!

I’ve often wondered if Elisha and other great prophets of God could also perceive Satan and demons as easily as Elisha could perceive God’s angels. Regardless, one thing is certain. Satan’s *modus operandi* today is to operate incognito. He does not want his presence known or detected. He prefers to engage in his devious deeds by stealth.

## Denying or Redefining Satan

There are many denials of Satan’s existence today. Modern psychology rests upon the foundation of secularism and humanism, worldviews that deny the supernatural. This means most psychologists deny the existence of a literal Satan and demons.

It is ironic that psychologists often refer to a person’s “demons.” By this they do not mean to express belief in wicked spirits. They use the term to describe specific psychological issues that a patient needs to resolve.

Liberal Christian scholars, who say the Bible is a manmade book, also deny the existence of Satan. Like humanistic psychologists, they have an antisupernatural bias. They often say belief in Satan and demons is part of the mythology from which the biblical writers borrowed when they wrote Scripture. They conclude that Satan and demons are nothing but legend and lore.



Such liberal scholars assert that there is no place for mythology in the modern world. A national poll of five thousand American clergymen—almost all of them liberal—found that 73 percent ridiculed the concept of a personal devil of any sort.

The famous liberal scholar Elaine Pagels, in her book *The Origin of Satan*, claims belief in Satan emerged around 150 BC among dissident Jews such as the Essenes at Qumran.<sup>1</sup> She claimed that some followers of Jesus also accepted the belief. These, too, she says, were “dissident Jews.” She concludes that the idea of Satan became a means of interpreting human conflict or characterizing human enemies.

Some modern New Age leaders, such as David Spangler, suggest there is no literal evil being known as Satan, for everything in the universe is God (Spangler is a pantheist). If everything in the universe is God, he reasons, then how could there be a distinct evil angelic entity?

Spangler, like some other New Agers, believes in a single God-force that has both a *positive* pole (a force known as the Christ) and a *negative* pole (a force known as Lucifer). “Christ” and “Lucifer” are two sides of the same coin. The Christ energies and Lucifer energies work together in keeping the universe in a cosmic balance.<sup>2</sup> (Such an idea is not unlike “the force” in the *Star Wars* movies, which has both a light side and a dark side.)

The Christadelphians, categorized as a cult of Christianity,<sup>3</sup> claim Satan is not a real supernatural angelic person but refers to the human tendency to engage in sin. They believe “Satan” is an evil principle deep in human nature, inclining people to evil acts.<sup>4</sup>

Satanists have different views about Satan.<sup>5</sup> Some believe what the Bible says about Satan (and God), but they have given allegiance

to Satan even though they understand they may have to suffer eternal punishment in hell after death. Others hold to a more dualistic concept, believing that both God and Satan are equal and opposite spiritual forces—either of which human beings can use to achieve their goals in life. Still others interpret Satan to be a force that governs the world of nature, and that they can harness this force to bring about their personal desires. Still others—unquestionably the majority—use the term *Satan* as a metaphorical way to symbolize their rejection of the Christian faith, which they interpret to be a powerless religion that involves nothing more than self-sacrifice, self-denial, and oppression.

Modern Wicca—prevalent today among teenagers and women who seek personal empowerment—has become popular because of such books as *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* by Scott Cunningham; *The Craft: A Witch's Book of Shadows* by Dorothy Morrison; and *The Element Encyclopedia of 5000 Spells: The Ultimate Reference Book for the Magical Arts* by Judika Illes. These books express a disbelief in Satan. This may come as a surprise to some Christians, for many incorrectly believe that Wicca and Satanism are essentially the same. They are not.<sup>6</sup>

Many people in modern Western culture claim that *Satan* refers to a personification of evil. A personification involves the representation of an idea in the form of a person. An example is how sin in the Old Testament crouches at the door, ready to pounce on a person (Genesis 4:6-7). In similar fashion, many today believe Satan personifies all that is evil in the world.

It is regrettable that we often find caricatures of the devil in popular media today that make fun of the very idea of a personal devil. Some, for example, portray the devil as a reddish, two-horned, pointy-tailed, impish-looking creature who carries a pitchfork. The

late stand-up comic Flip Wilson made a fortune causing millions of people to laugh with his famous “the devil made me do it” line. The idea communicated in all this is that belief in Satan is childish.

There is a lack of recognition of Satan and his influence even in some conservative churches. Bible-believing pastors and laypeople sometimes seem reluctant to “give the devil his due.” Bible scholar Harold Willmington enlightens us on this:

Suppose there is a Bible-believing church which is going through a spiritual crisis. For some months no soul has walked its aisles. The attendance and offerings are down and the members are becoming restless. All Bible pastors have had these experiences. Finally, in desperation, a special committee is appointed by the congregation to discover the source of this coldness and lifelessness. After considerable prayer and probing, the committee submits its report. What are its findings? I believe it may be safely assumed that the average committee would lay the blame on one or more of the following: (1) the pastor; (2) certain officials; (3) a cold congregation; or (4) a difficult neighborhood.

But what fact-finding group would return the following indictment? We believe the main source of our heartaches for the past few months is satanic! We believe the reason no souls have been saved recently is due to an all-out attack on our church by the devil! We close this report with a strong recommendation that the congregation call a special meeting, rebuke Satan, plead the blood of Christ and claim the victory!<sup>7</sup>

Willmington concludes: “If I were the devil I would deny my existence in the world and downplay it in the local church, thus freeing me to go about my business unheeded, unhindered, and

unchecked.”<sup>8</sup> This reminds me of one of my favorite Christian writers, C.S. Lewis, who wrote, “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the 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.”<sup>9</sup>

Lewis’s point is insightful!

I’m convinced Satan himself has been busy promoting nonbelief in his existence on a global scale. It is a sound strategy: If there is no real personal enemy, then there will be no preparation for defense against that personal enemy. If there is no preparation for defense, the enemy can attack at will and work his evil while remaining completely incognito.

## The Biblical Evidence for Satan’s Existence

There is scarcely a culture, tribe, or society in this world that does not have some concept or fear of an invisible evil power. Christian missionaries and secular anthropologists alike attest to this. Witch doctors, shrunken heads, voodoo dolls, and totem poles all give dramatic evidence of this universal fear.

*What do the Christian Scriptures teach?* The Bible is the Christian’s barometer of truth. We test all spiritual truth claims against the Bible (Acts 17:11). In Scripture we discover the real truth about Satan and demons.

The biblical evidence for the existence and activity of Satan and demons is formidable. Seven books in the Old Testament specifically teach the reality of Satan—Genesis, 1 Chronicles, Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah (for example, Genesis 3; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 2:1; Zechariah 3:1-2).

Every New Testament writer—and nineteen New Testament books—also refer to Satan. *Devil*, another term for Satan, occurs thirty-five times in the New Testament (for example, Matthew 4:1; 1 Peter 5:8-9; James 4:7; 1 John 3:8; Jude 9).

Interestingly, out of twenty-nine references to Satan in the four Gospels, Jesus made twenty-five of them. Anything Jesus talks a lot about is something you and I need to pay attention to (see, for example, Matthew 4:10; 25:41; Luke 10:18; 22:31-32; John 8:44).

In view of the foregoing evidence, we conclude that a denial of Satan's existence amounts to a denial of both the statements of Scripture and the testimony of the Savior Himself.

## Satan Is a Real Person

Scripture reveals that Satan is a person. When I call Satan a person, however, I do not mean that he is a human being. I mean that he is a spirit being who has all the attributes of personality—*mind*, *emotions*, and *will*.

We know Satan has a mind and intelligence because he uses intelligent tactics to deceive people. Paul warned the Corinthian Christians, “I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3). Only a person can purposefully engage in deception.

Satan also has emotions. He will become “furious” with Israel during the future tribulation period (Revelation 12:17). He abhors the racial lineage of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. He also manifests the emotions of desire (Isaiah 14:13-14), jealousy (Job 1:8-9), hate (1 Peter 5:8), and anger (Revelation 12:12).

We know Satan has a will, for he volitionally rebelled against God (Isaiah 14:12-14). He literally *willed* to take God's place.

Satan's will is also clear in that he gives commands (Luke 4:3,9) and leads a rebellion against God and His people (Revelation 20:7-9).

Other persons in both the Old and New Testaments interacted with Satan as a real person. One example is how Satan verbally interacted with God about Job (Job 1). He also dialogued with Jesus: "The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread'" (Matthew 4:3). Jesus met each of the devil's temptations with strategic Scripture quotations and defeated him.

We can also observe that the names, titles, and ascriptions used of Satan would make sense only if he were a person. For example, Satan is the evil one (John 17:15; 1 John 5:18-19), the accuser of our brothers (Revelation 12:10), the tempter (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5), the ruler of this world (John 12:31), the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), and the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). Satan is a real—*albeit evil*—person.

Still further, other persons in both the Old and New Testaments use personal pronouns to describe him (Job 1; Matthew 4:1-11). He also engages in a variety of personal actions (Matthew 4:1-11; John 8:44; 1 John 3:8; Jude 9).

## Satan's Existence Illustrated in Job

There is perhaps no more potent example of undeserved pain and suffering than Job, an upright and godly man (Job 1:1). One minute everything was fine in Job's life; the next he had lost nearly everything—his family, his wealth, and his health (1:6–2:10).

Job had no idea of what was going on behind the scenes in “the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). He did not understand that his body was serving as a spiritual battleground between God and Satan. He was blind to the reality that the powers of darkness had launched an insidious assault against him and that God purposefully allowed this assault.

You and I are fortunate. We have the book of Job to inform us about Satan’s behind-the-scenes activities. Job had no such book. To him, it seemed like his calamities had perfectly natural explanations: The Sabeans took his oxen and donkeys; fire from heaven—perhaps lightning—burned his sheep; the Chaldeans took his camels; and a great wind (a tornado?) wrecked his oldest son’s house and killed his children. The truth is, *Satan was behind all of this!*

When we encounter sufferings in life, it may appear that there are natural explanations for all of them, but in reality there may be a satanic or demonic attack behind them. This happened in Job’s life, and it may well happen to us. The problem is that our earthly perspective has limitations, and we often cannot know whether there is spiritual warfare going on behind the scenes. I therefore suggest:

- Trust in God and depend on Him, no matter what. Our painful circumstances may or *may not* relate to a demonic attack. Let’s follow Proverbs 3:5: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.”
- God is never blind about why bad things happen to us, and, in fact, He always has a good purpose for allowing whatever circumstances come our way (Romans 8:28). That is all the more reason to trust Him.

- Cover all your bases. Pray specifically that God will remedy your painful circumstance (Philippians 4:6-7). But also make sure there is no sin in your life that has given place to the devil for an attack (Ephesians 4:26-27). Be sure to keep your spiritual armor on (Ephesians 6:10-18), resist the devil (1 Peter 5:8-9), and stand strong in your position in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14). (I'll address these victory steps later in the book.)

A second insight we glean from the book of Job is that Satan cannot freely do whatever he wishes to do. He is on a leash. God has set parameters around him beyond which he is not free to go (see Job 1:12; 2:6). If there were no such parameters, you and I would surely be dead right now because Satan hates both God and His children, and he would delight in murdering us (see John 8:44).

Despite these limiting parameters, Satan's warfare against Christians is intense. It will intensify dramatically the deeper we go into the end times.

## Satan's Origin

It is understandable that many wonder where Satan came from. Satan's name in ages past was Lucifer. He was an angel of unparalleled beauty and might, and his fall changed the course of cosmic history. The cause of this fall was pride. Scripture affirms of Lucifer:

You were blameless in your ways  
 from the day you were created,  
 till unrighteousness was found in you...  
 Your heart was proud because of your beauty;  
 you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor  
 (Ezekiel 28:15,17).



Lucifer became so impressed with his own beauty, brilliance, intelligence, power, and position that he began to desire for himself the honor and glory that belonged to God alone. The sin that corrupted Lucifer was self-generated pride. This pride is illustrated in Lucifer's five "I wills" recorded in Isaiah 14:13-14.

*"I will ascend to heaven."* Apparently Lucifer wanted to abide in heaven and desired equal recognition alongside God Himself.

*"I will set my throne on high,"* which is *"above the stars of God."* The stars likely have reference to the angels of God. Lucifer apparently desired to rule over the angelic realm with the same authority as God Himself.

*"I will sit on the mount of assembly."* Scripture elsewhere reveals that such mounts can refer to the center of God's kingdom rule (see Isaiah 2:2; Psalm 48:2). The term can even refer to the Messiah's future earthly rule in Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom. Perhaps Satan desired to rule over humans in place of the Messiah.

*"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds."* In the Bible, clouds often metaphorically represent the glory of God (Exodus 13:21; 40:28-34; Matthew 26:64; Revelation 14:14). Apparently Lucifer sought a glory equal to that of God Himself.

*"I will make myself like the Most High."* Scripture describes God as the possessor of heaven and earth (Genesis 14:18-19). Lucifer apparently sought the supreme position of the universe for himself. He wanted to exercise the authority and control over the world that rightfully belongs to God alone. His sin was a direct challenge to God's authority. God, of course, judged Satan for this sin (Ezekiel 28:17).

Satan's sin had widespread effects. It affected both the angels (Revelation 12:7) and human beings (Ephesians 2:2), and it positioned him as the ruler of this world (John 16:11). Satan's act of rebellion was one of unfathomable consequences.

## The Evidence for Demons

Just as there are many proofs for the existence of Satan, so there are many proofs for the existence of demonic spirits. Foremost is that Scripture refers to demons as wicked spirit beings (Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37; Matthew 4:24; 7:22; 8:16,28,31,33; 9:32-34; 10:8; 11:18; 12:22,24,27,28; 15:22; 17:15,18; Mark 1:32,34,39; 3:15). A perusal of Matthew's Gospel proves that Jesus believed in the existence of demons—and even encountered them many times.

There are other proofs. An important one relates to the consistent and relentless attacks against Israel. As my friend Norman Geisler notes, "Israel as a people, considering their relative insignificance in the history of the world, have been the continual, repeated victims of conquest and genocide."<sup>10</sup> This conspiracy of hatred against the Jews is best explained as emanating from Satan and demons, with their relentless opposition to God's plans for Israel, which gave birth to the divine Messiah, Jesus Christ. We can say the same about the over two millennia of relentless attacks against Christians. The universality of temptation and evil in the world, alongside the proliferation of deception in the world, lends further support for the existence of demonic spirits (see 1 Timothy 4:1-2).<sup>11</sup>

Scripture portrays demons as real persons. Other persons use personal pronouns for them (Luke 8:27-30). They have personal names (Luke 8:30). They engage in speech with others (Luke 4:33-35,41; 8:28-30). And they manifest intelligence (Mark 1:23-24; Luke 4:34; 8:28). They are just as real as any other persons mentioned in Scripture.

## The Origin of Demons

There are several theories about the origin of demons—including

the spirits of deceased people, the spirits of a pre-Adamic race, and the offspring of angels and women (see Genesis 6:2). Most Christian theologians believe that when Lucifer rebelled against God, he fell from his place of prominence and led with him a host of lower-ranking angels. This is my view. In support of it, Revelation 12:4 affirms that Satan’s “tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.” The Bible sometimes uses the word *stars* for angels (see Job 38:7). If stars refer to angels in Revelation 12:4, it would appear that after Lucifer rebelled against God, he drew a third of the angelic realm after him. When he sinned, he did not sin alone but apparently led a massive angelic revolt against God. Just a few verses later, we read of “the dragon and his angels” (Revelation 12:7; see also Ephesians 3:10; 6:12). The dragon is Satan, just as the fallen angels are demons.

## Ranks Among the Fallen Angels

God’s holy angels have ranks. Colossians 1:16 refers to them as “thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.” All angels answer to the top-ranking archangel Michael, and angels as a company—bar none—answer to Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:16).

The fallen angels also have ranks. Ephesians 6:12 speaks of them as the rulers, the authorities, the cosmic powers over this present darkness, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. All fallen angels answer to their commander-in-chief Satan, elsewhere called “the prince of demons” (Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15).

## The Need to Understand Satanic/Demonic Tactics

Satan and his fallen angels (demons) have developed specific tactics to bring Christians down—or to put it more directly, to bring *you* down. The apostle Paul refers to Satan’s “designs”—his

evil schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11). *Satan has a game plan to bring ruination to your life.*

Satan is tricky in how he does it. Genesis 3:1 tells us that the serpent (Satan) is “subtle and crafty” (AMPC) or “cunning” (CSB) or “shrewd” (NET). He is a master deceiver. Paul therefore warned the Corinthian Christians, “I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3).

Paul—an apostle with substantial experience in dealing with the devil—understandably urges us to “stand against the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). Or as the Amplified Bible renders it, “Stand up against all the schemes and the strategies and the deceits of the devil.”

It is a given that if you desire to stand against the devil’s tactics, you first need to understand what those tactics are. That is one reason I wrote this book. I intend to reveal what I consider the most likely tactics the devil will try to use to defeat you spiritually and reduce you to a powerless Christian, depressed and wallowing in pain.

But I’ll also spend a great deal of time addressing the Lord’s provisions for us to have victory in spiritual warfare—especially our position “in Christ.” I will repeat it often: The sheep who are safest from the vicious wolves are those who stay nearest to the Shepherd.

Father, by the power of Your Spirit, please enable us to understand the Old and New Testament verses we will consult throughout the rest of this book about Satan and demons. Please help us to first understand who the enemy is and then learn about the infernal tactics utilized by the kingdom of darkness. Most of all, help us understand Your provisions for victory in spiritual

warfare. Through it all, I ask that You instill a sense of awe in each of us for the person, the words, and the works of our Lord Jesus Christ—who Himself defeated all the powers of darkness at the cross. I thank You in His awesome name. Amen.