

TERRITORIAL SPIRITS

By Don Rogers

In the past few years increasing awareness of spirit activity on a territorial level has developed. John Dawson's book, "Taking Our Cities For God" and "Engaging The Enemy" edited and compiled by C. Peter Wagner made a major contribution in helping Christians become aware of territorial spirits.

Over the years, I have encountered this kind of activity and have been able to learn from it. Understanding the dynamics of the spirit world is not for the curious or those who are fascinated by such things. This kind of understanding brings great responsibility. We become accountable to use what God reveals to us in helping others. There is often a price to be paid. The path is often difficult and only those who know how to persevere in faith are successful.

A number of years ago, the bulk of my ministry was itinerant in nature. I would travel over great distances to minister to those in need. I began to realize that there were geographical areas where I could sense a unique type of bondage pervading the countryside. At other times, I did not discern the territorial bondage, but would later be confronted by it as I attempted to minister.

I remember ministering in a region of Pennsylvania once a week for about six months. The area must have covered about 400-500 square miles. Each week I was usually in a different town. After I entered the home of the person who was to receive ministry, I would discover each person beginning to suffer from the same symptoms. They were experiencing fear, an upset stomach and buzzing in their ears. The buzzing made them feel dizzy and confused. After three cases in a row, I directed my attention to the spirit causing this phenomenon and found that I was dealing with a territorial spirit that ruled over the whole area. He did not like what I was doing. My ministry was a threat to his rule over the people of that region. He cursed me in their minds and sometimes spoke out of their mouths. Knowing what I was dealing with, I broke this spirit's power over each individual and commanded him to leave. Immediately, their physical and emotional symptoms disappeared and I was able to continue to minister and witness them set free from the powers of darkness oppressing them.

Generations of witchcraft were practiced throughout the area. It was practiced in the form of psychic healing that had religious packaging. This ruling spirit was very powerful and made claims upon a number of generations. To this very day, Satanic groups are flourishing in this area. God is letting the consequences of "the sin of the fathers: be visited upon the children (Exod 20:5; Num 14:17-18). Like the children of Israel, who rebelled against the Lord's commands, God provides a way of escape if the people will repent and seek Him.

I had been ministering in a particular area off and on for a few months. Each case that I had seemed to be exceedingly difficult. There were barriers confronting me in each case that I was working. One day, As I was ministering to a former Satanist, the territorial ruler manifested himself in the countenance of the individual. The face contorted and a raspy, sneering voice shouted out, " I have been resisting you as you ministered to Mary __, Edward

___, Jason ___ and Sheila ___ and many others. You have invaded my territory and I will fight you so they will not be set free of my power over them. If you do not stop, I will attack your wife and your children and I will destroy you. Your God will not be able to protect you from my powers!"

It was surprising to hear a powerful spirit speak out and begin naming people to whom I was ministering. The person he was speaking through did not even know any of them. I had become used to the fear tactics of the enemy. He tries to intimidate with threats in an attempt to force God's servants to back off. In reality, the spirits are afraid they are going to lose their power base and their ability to rule over people. They recognize and fear the authority of Christ that you represent. Long ago, I learned to trust the Lord for both myself and my family. He has never failed me.

In Mark 5, Jesus met a man who had demons and lived among the tombs. These spirits in him were called "Legion," for they were many. "The spirits begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area." (5:10) They had a lot of power that particular area, because raised pigs, contrary to the commands of the Lord. They tried to bargain with Jesus to send them into a herd of pigs, so that they might remain in the area. We must not think that Jesus complied with their wishes. He used this incident to show us that demons are real entities, not someone's overactive imagination or cultural superstition. Only real entities could affect a herd of two thousand pigs enough to drive them into a frenzy down a steep bank on the run into a lake and drown. Ironically, the spirits ended up without a place to dwell and probably had to go where the Lord sent them.

Another scriptural example of territorial spirits is provided in Daniel 10. the angel messenger told Daniel that the answer he had been bringing in answer to his prayer had been delayed for three weeks because a demonic prince over Persia had detained him. The messenger said the angel Michael had come to his aid (10:13). The angel also said that he would have to fight against the demonic princes of Persia and Greece on his return and that he would have only Michael to help him (10:20-21).

I remember on one occasion that I had been called in to minister to a man who had been involved in healing witchcraft. It had been a practice in his family for generations. His friends knew that it would be a battle, so there were a number of prayer partners there encircling the room for support. Shortly after I had bound the territorial spirit and the other spirits that were in this man, a presence manifested itself in the room. He identified himself as a prince from the East that had been summoned to resist us. I commanded in the name of Jesus Christ for him to be bound and to release the man. My command had no affect whatsoever. I continued to command him, but nothing was happening. The spirit had enormous power derived from the large number of people he had in bondage in the East. Suddenly, the Lord showed me that we must all begin to pray. So we prayed at great length for the Lord's intervention and for His will to be done. As quickly as he had appeared the spirit was gone, and we continued our ministry. Some high ranking spirits actually thrive on the battle and often we are led to switch course and pray against them. There are some territorial spirits that are extremely powerful, that require a lot of prayer support to contend with them. It is foolhardy for anyone to think they have carte blanche power and authority to

come against these spirits any time they please. We are always dependent on the Lord. These types of encounters remind us of that.

In Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, we notice that Lucifer is the power behind both the king of Babylon and the king of Tyre. Their domains were really his domains. It brings to mind the offer that the devil made to Jesus when he tempted him in the desert (Lk 4). "The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. so if you worship me, it will all be yours.' " (Luke 4:5-7) Jesus did not challenge that statement, because it was true. Jesus even called him the "prince of this world" in John 12:31. He rules over the kingdoms and countries working through the rulers and governments.

Remember when I said there is great responsibility when you have knowledge concerning such powerful activity? We become accountable to do something about what the Lord is showing us. God revealed to our church four territorial spirits that were attacking churches in the northeastern part of the United States. We began to pray against their activity in order to frustrate and bring down their work. We witnessed some very encouraging changes occur. But after a period of time, we began to slack off in our warfare against this enemy. Maybe we were getting weary of the same old routine. Americans are spoiled - we like variety and change. After slacking off a while, things began to go wrong in our church. Problem after problem began to develop. Before we knew it, we were putting our one fire after another. We were so busy putting out fires that we did not realize that we had stopped our campaign against these territorial rulers altogether. We had given them a chance to reorganize and retaliate against us and wreak havoc. They kept us so busy and off balance, that we forgot all about our mission. We had not persevered in that which the Lord had called us to do. This is often the way that it happens. We do not persevere in the mission which God commissions us. The Israelites did not persevere when they entered the Promised Land. They should have driven out all the inhabitants so that the Hebrews would not be corrupted by their presence. Instead, they failed to obey God completely and paid the price as a nation after that.

Territorially, Satan is the "prince of this world." (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) He has organized his kingdom on many levels with his princes serving him to keep the world in bondage. We cannot allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem. We must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and be obedient to the calling He gives to each of us. The Kingdom of God is increasing its presence in the world and one day, the Son of God will usher in the Kingdom in its completeness. The battle is the Lord's and we are his warriors who await His command.

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