The War Behind It All

God's design and the three rebellions

The whole gospel message is that God wanted a relationship with us. That's why He had Eden.

1 Eden Was the Plan

From the beginning, Eden was God's plan. It was His dwelling place. He wanted to dwell with humans. He wanted to be close. God told them to *"Fill the earth and subdue it!"* (Genesis 1:28): Eden, the garden sanctuary where His presence dwelt, was meant to expand until it encompassed the entire earth.

God's plan for you, for all of us, was Eden. He didn't want brokenness. He didn't want rebellion. He didn't want demonization. He didn't want addiction. That's why He sent Jesus.

2 Why Bad Things Happen to God's People

For many believers, the answer to suffering and evil is framed in deterministic terms: "Everything happens for a reason," or "God is in control of every detail." But while well-meaning, these phrases often raise deeper questions: Does God cause evil? Is suffering part of His divine plan?

God designed humans and angels to have free will. It wasn't that God was taken off guard. Gregory Boyd (*God at War*) argues that Scripture consistently portrays God as sovereign, but not as the author of evil. Rather, God's sovereignty includes His choice to grant genuine freedom to His creatures, both human and divine. Evil, in this view, is not secretly part of God's plan, but the result of rebellion against His will.

Blueprint worldview

Every event, good or evil, happens for a specific divine reason. Evil becomes a puzzle about God's hidden purposes.

BOYD, GOD AT WAR, CH. 1

Warfare worldview

The cosmos is at war among free human and angelic wills. Evil comes from wills other than God's, and God is certain to win.

BOYD, GOD AT WAR, CH. 1

> Then shouldn't this woman, a daughter of Abraham **whom Satan bound for eighteen long years**, be released from this imprisonment on the Sabbath day?"
>
> LUKE 13:16, NET

Boyd shows that Jesus never treated affliction as God's will: "Jesus treated her as a casualty of war" (*God at War*, ch. 6). He went around *"healing all who were oppressed by the devil"* (Acts 10:38).

In 1 Samuel 23:10-13, David asks God two questions. God answers yes to both. But those events never happen. Just because God foreknows an event doesn't mean He causes it. **True sovereignty is not about controlling every outcome but accomplishing ultimate purposes in a world of real freedom.**

BOYD'S SIX THESES ON THE WARFARE WORLDVIEW

1 Love requires freedom · 2 Freedom implies risk · 3 Risk entails moral responsibility · 4 Moral responsibility is proportionate to the potential to influence · 5 Power to influence is irrevocable · 6 Power to influence is finite

REKNEW.ORG, 2007 · SATAN AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Why this, and why me? Boyd says every event comes out of a huge web of free choices, human and angelic, so the specific reason is usually hidden from us (*Is God to Blame?*). People who have suffered at the hands of evil do not have to believe their pain was part of God's hidden purpose. Instead, they can trust that God grieves with them and works redemptively in their healing. So we want to blame God for all these things, and God is saying, **I died to disarm that thing.**

3 The Three Rebellions

One: Satan, in Eden

The serpent questions God's word, then His motive. He never touches the fruit and never touches Eve. He needs her to agree.

GEN 3:1 · EZEK 28

Two: the Watchers

Other divine beings came down and *"took wives for themselves"*. Evil got so bad that God said, I have to bring a flood.

GEN 6:2-4 · JUDE 6

Three: Babel

Humanity rebels again. Each nation gets a ruler, a divine being. This is why we have principalities. Then God raises up His own nation through Abraham.

GEN 11 · DEUT 32:8-9

Through the seed of Abraham comes Jesus, the Messiah, who came to defeat the works of the devil, which includes all these rebellions (1 John 3:8).

4 Know Your Enemy

Rebellious spiritual beings target humans because we bear the image of the One they hate. Michael Heiser (*Demons*, 2020) traces each rebellion to the enemy it left behind: **the devil** from Eden, **demons** from the Watchers, and **the ruling powers** over the nations from Babel.

Elohim Hebrew	Elohim simply means a "spiritual being." It's used for Yahweh, yes, but also for lesser gods, angels, disembodied spirits, and the spirits of the dead. It doesn't imply equality with God. It indicates that the being lives in the spiritual realm. JTD P.26
Sons of God bene ha'elohim	Spiritual beings who serve under Yahweh in His heavenly court. They are loyal servants in some places, rebellious powers in others. *"the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord"* (Job 1:6). JTD P.26
Satan the satan, nachash	In Job and Zechariah, "the satan" is a title: the adversary. The serpent (*nachash*) of Genesis 3 is a divine being, not a mere snake. Satan is not a demon; he is a divine being in rebellion. Ezekiel 28: *"until sin was discovered in you"*. HEISER, FAITHLIFE STUDY BIBLE · NAKED BIBLE 46
Demons unclean spirits	Demons are the disembodied spirits of Nephilim. They're not angels. The reason they're so hungry for a host is because they once had flesh. This is my conclusion from these passages (Genesis 6, Jude 6, Matthew 12:43-45). Heiser: demons "are consistently cast as disembodied spirits of dead Nephilim and their giant-clan descendants." CODY, 8/29 TALK · HEISER, DEMONS, CH. 12
Shedim Deut 32:17	*"They sacrificed to demons, not God"*. Heiser reads these as the foreign gods over the nations (territorial spirits), not the demons of the Gospels. HEISER, DRMSH.COM

Demonized daimonizomai	The Greek word simply means "to be demonized" or "to have a demon." The biblical language does not suggest ownership but influence or affliction. JTD P.64
Principalities and powers archai, exousiai	The rebellious sons of God over the nations after Babel. See section 5. DEUT 32:8-9 · PS 82
Not everything	Heiser warns against seeing a demon behind every problem. A lot of people will say it's not just demons, it's our flesh, and that's true. HEISER, NAKED BIBLE 91 · CODY, 8/29 TALK

5 Principalities and Powers

> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but **against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness**, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.
> EPHESIANS 6:12, NET

This is why we have principalities. The nations that arose from Babel were placed under the administration of members of God's divine council. These beings, initially intended to govern on God's behalf, would later rebel and be worshiped as gods by the very nations they were assigned to oversee. In Daniel 10, an angelic messenger explains his delay in reaching Daniel: *"the prince of the kingdom of Persia was opposing me for twenty-one days"* (Daniel 10:13). This passage unveils supernatural "princes" associated with earthly kingdoms, precisely the rebellious divine sons of God who had been assigned the nations after Babel.

Rulers
archai: rule over a geographical sphere. Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 1:16
HEISER

Authorities
exousiai: the right to use power that comes with an office. Colossians 2:15
HEISER

World rulers
kosmokratores: authority over worldly systems, political, cultural, and religious structures.
JTD P.160

Thrones, dominions
thronoi, kyriotetes. *"whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers"*: a sphere of authority, created through Christ.
HEISER · COL 1:16

These powers operate both through direct spiritual influence and through human institutions and cultural systems. Their primary weapon is deception that obscures God's truth and love: *"the god of this age has blinded the minds"* (2 Corinthians 4:4). The powers retain delegated authority but are usurpers when they operate in rebellion against God's purposes.

A caution. Strategic prayer for geographical areas is biblical, but asserting absolute territorial authority exceeds scriptural precedents. Christ is seated *"far above every rule and authority and power and dominion"* (Ephesians 1:21).

6 What Jesus Did

> Disarming the rulers and authorities, he has made a public disgrace of them, **triumphing over them by the cross**.
> COLOSSIANS 2:15, NET

From Satan, to the Watchers, to the rulers at Babel: Jesus, God made flesh, disarmed them and triumphed over them by the cross. *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"* (Matthew 28:18). Who has the keys now? Jesus. Because we are seated with Christ, we have authority now too.

Heiser: “disarmed” means stripped of legitimate authority, not destroyed. Jesus said, *“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven”* (Luke 10:18). Heiser says Satan lost his legal claim on members of the kingdom: “a prosecutor without a case.”

7 How Much Authority Does Satan Have?

The only authority Satan has on the earth is what’s given to him by humans. It was disarmed. He’s not powerless, but he doesn’t have authority. What he has is access, and access is granted, not seized. It’s given through belief, or agreement. **Spiritual warfare is won or lost in what we believe.**

This is not condemnation. Jesus never blamed those He delivered. Many were victims rather than willing participants. An entry point you did not choose is not a sin you committed, and an agreement can be withdrawn.

Jesus removed their right. They prey on our agreement.

8 It Ends Where It Started

“Look! The residence of God is among human beings.” (Revelation 21:3). The story ends in Eden restored, a garden-city where God’s presence dwells fully with His people. Jesus came on the earth to defeat the works of the devil, so that you can walk in freedom and Eden can be restored.

9 For Your Freedom This Week

Every step is an invitation. You can pause, skip a step, or say “I don’t know.”

SAY IT OUT LOUD

Invite Him. “Lord, would You shine Your light down in my mind and my heart right now. Expose any assignment of the enemy. Come, Holy Spirit.”

Ask for one sentence you have agreed with about God that He never said. Write it down. If nothing comes, that’s fine.

_____

Name it. “Lord, I believed _____.”

Renounce it. “I renounce that agreement in the name of Jesus. It is not Yours, and I will not carry it.”

Ask. “Father, what do You say instead?” Then wait. Don't recite someone else's verse. Let Him say it.

Ask Him to fill it. Swept and put in order is not the same as occupied.

Give it back. “Lord, this temple is Yours. Use it for Your glory and Your Kingdom.”

GET THE MANUAL ON YOUR PHONE OR IPAD

Freedom Pathways, free. Scan the code, or go to **battletogether.com/pdfs/freedom-pathways.pdf**.

This week: read Chapter 2, God’s Design, the Fall, and the Three Rebellions. **Go deeper:** *Jesus the Deliverer*, chapters 1 and 2. Gregory Boyd, *God at War*. Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm* and *Demons*.

Want prayer one on one? Request a Freedom Session at **battletogether.com/schedule-freedom-session**. In person or online.

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