

## Seven Flaming Darts Extinguished: Ephesians Applied Today

### 1. Introduction.

#### a. Reality.

- (1) In Eph 6, Paul says we are engaged in a spiritual war against Satan and the demons.
  - (a) **Eph 6:12** 12 For 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.
- (2) Three items of the full armour of God directly relate to truth versus deception.
  - (a) **Eph 6:14** 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth....
  - (b) **Eph 6:16** 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith [Bible doctrine], with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one....
  - (c) **Eph 6:17** 17 ...And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God....
- (3) The flaming darts of Satan are the lies he tells us. Satan's main operating strategy is to broadcast lies and deception throughout the world. His deceptions, lies, and half-truths are so sneaky, so subtle, so hard to detect.
  - (a) **Ge 3:1** 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that Yahweh God had made. He said to the woman, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?
  - (b) **Jn 8:44** 44 [The devil] was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
- (4) It is through lies that Satan controls the world system we live in.
  - (a) **1 Jn 5:19** 19 We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.
  - (b) **Re 12:9** 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world....
  - (c) **Re 20:7-8** 7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle.
- (5) It is very possible for us to be taken in by Satan's lies, either personally or corporately.
  - (a) **Eph 4:14** 14 ...So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

#### b. Our Outline.

- (1) Let's identify some of the claims we are hearing in our world today, evaluate whether they are true, and come back to *Ephesians* to reorient our hearts and minds to God's truth. Our goal is to extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one" (Eph 6:16).

#### c. Bedrock Truths.

- (1) God's is totally truthful. He's the only one we can trust without reservation.
- (2) God has communicated his truth to us in Scripture.

## 2. Lie #1: There is no plan or purpose for history.

### a. Examples.

- (1) “In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.”<sup>1</sup>
- (2) In dozens of conversations with university students, I here the same answer to my question, “What is the ultimate purpose of the universe?” “There is no ultimate purpose.”

### b. *Ephesians* presents a different picture:

- (1) **Eph 1:4-10** 4 ...Even as [the Father] chose us [believers] in [Jesus] **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he **predetermined** us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Messiah, according to **the purpose of his desire**, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us **the mystery of his desire, according to his purpose** that he set forth in Messiah 10 as **a plan for the fulness of time**, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
- (2) **Eph 3:8-11** 8 To me [Paul], though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the nations the unsearchable riches of Messiah, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is **the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God**, who created all things, 10 so that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to **the eternal purpose** that he has realized in Messiah Jesus our Lord....
- (3) Notice the repeated word “all” throughout *Ephesians*. God’s plan is total and comprehensive. It encompasses all things.

### c. Implications.

- (1) From eternity past, the Father has had a plan and purpose.
- (2) God’s plan is holy, righteous, loving, and good. In other words, it’s perfect.
- (3) There is a great purpose for angelic and human history. There is a grand metanarrative.

## 3. Lie #2: Jesus is just one of many great moral teachers or gurus we can look to.

### a. Examples:

- (1) To boldly proclaim in New Zealand today, “Jesus is the only way,” is very difficult for Christians to do.
- (2) Some churches adhere to theological liberalism, distinguishing between the “historical Jesus” and the “cosmic Christ.”
- (3) Under pantheistic monism, Jesus is welcomed as one guru among many.
- (4) Muslims welcome Jesus as a great prophet, but nothing more.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Dawkins, *River out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life*.

- b. Ephesians presents a different picture:
- (1) **Eph 1:9-10** 9 ...Making known to us the mystery of [the Father's] will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Messiah 10 as a plan for the fulness of time, **to unite all things in him**, things in heaven and things on earth.
  - (2) **Eph 1:20-23** 20 ...That [the Father] worked in Messiah when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far **above all rule, authority, power, and dominion**, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And [the Father] put all things under [Jesus'] feet and gave him as **head over all things** to the Church, 23 which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.
  - (3) **Eph 3:11** 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Messiah Jesus our Lord....
  - (4) **Eph 4:21** 21 ...Assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as **the truth is in Jesus**....
- c. Implications.
- (1) Jesus can't be compared with anyone. He is absolutely central to reality.
  - (2) To liken Jesus to any other religious or moral teacher is blasphemy.
  - (3) Christianity is not programme but a person. It's not a religion but a relationship.

#### 4. Lie #3: The Church in New Zealand is declining and increasingly insignificant. You, puny believer, are also insignificant.

- a. Examples.
- (1) Many local churches in Dunedin have closed over the years. Ours was two months away from closing.
  - (2) Among all generational groups, there are fewer and fewer Kiwis who call themselves Christians.
  - (3) Government, academia, public education, and mass media increasingly oppose the biblical worldview in matters of family, sex, and morality.
  - (4) The Church seems bewildered and beleaguered at the pace of change.
- b. Ephesians presents a different picture.
- (1) **Eph 1:22-23** 22 ...[God] put all things under [Messiah's] feet and gave him as head over all things to the Church, 23 which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.
  - (2) **Eph 2:5-7** 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Messiah—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Messiah Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Messiah Jesus.
  - (3) **Eph 3:10** 10 ...So that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.
  - (4) **Eph 3:16-19** 16 ...That according to **the riches of his glory** he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Messiah may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints **what is the breadth, length, height, and depth [of your inheritance]**, 19 and to know the

love of Messiah that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all ***the fulness of God***.

(5) **Eph 5:32** 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Messiah and the Church.

c. Implications.

(1) We are to take pride in who we are in Christ Jesus. We are to have a spring in our step. We are to be confident in our identity.

**5. Lie #4: We don't need God to form a great society because we are smart and good and can do it on our own. The basic problems in society are political, economic, or racial, not theological or spiritual.**

a. Examples:

(1) According to Thomas Sowell, political philosophers have either a “constrained vision” or “unconstrained vision” of human nature and society.

(a) Those with a constrained vision recognise human frailty, self-interest, and weakness and live with it. Basic human nature tends toward selfishness will always do so. A utopia is never possible. This view takes man as he really is. This is the conservative viewpoint. “This is the best we can do, given human nature.” It is a live and let live mentality.

- 1) Protestant Reformation, with its doctrine of original sin
- 2) British constitutional system, with its two houses of Parliament checking the power of the king
- 3) U. S. Constitution with its checks and balances between the President, Congress, and Supreme Court
- 4) Samuel Rutherford's *Lex Rex*
- 5) Edmund Burke
- 6) Ronald Reagan
- 7) Nationalism

(b) Those with an unconstrained vision view human nature as perfectible. Man is basically good. As long as the state passes the right laws and forms the right societal structures, almost always by an elite, the masses can be made to adjust to a particular vision of what the elite want it to be. Sometimes this takes a violent adjustment. A utopia is possible and should be aimed for. This view seeks to engineer man according to what he ought to be. This is the progressive viewpoint. “We must get everyone totally on board and in line with our agenda to create the world we have in our vision.” It is a crush the opposition mentality.

- 1) Jean-Jacques Rousseau
- 2) The leaders of the French Revolution
- 3) Karl Marx
- 4) Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks
- 5) KKK
- 6) Keynesian economics
- 7) Hitler and the Nazi Party
- 8) Mao and the Chinese Communist Party
- 9) Proponents of Cultural Marxism, such as Black Lives Matter

- a) "...[T]here is no neutrality in the racism struggle.... One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an antiracist. There is not in between safe space of 'not racist.' The claim of 'not racist' neutrality is a mask for racism."<sup>2</sup>
  - b) "Once we lose hope, we are guaranteed to lose. But if we ignore the odds and fight to create an antiracist world, then we give humanity a chance to one day survive, a chance to live in communion, a chance to be forever free."<sup>3</sup>
  - c) "Pain is usually essential to healing. When it comes to healing America of racism, we want to heal America without pain, but without pain, there is no progress."<sup>4</sup>
- 10) United Nations and its 2030 Agenda  
11) Labour Party in New Zealand
- b. Ephesians presents a different picture:
- (1) Flesh/Sin.
    - (a) **Eph 2:3** 3 ...Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
    - (b) **Eph 4:17-19** 17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.
    - (c) **Eph 4:22** 22 ...To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires....
  - (2) World/Age.
    - (a) **Eph 2:1-2** 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world....
    - (b) **Eph 5:15-16** 15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.
    - (c) **Eph 6:13** 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.
- c. Implications.
- (1) We must reject all attempts to form some sort of perfect society by the elite onto the masses, whether from the left or the right.
  - (2) We are to have a constrained vision of human nature, including our own!
  - (3) We are to accept tradeoffs in this very imperfect world.
  - (4) We are to advocate for the rule of law and checks and balances in our institutions (including in the church).
  - (5) We are to look forward to the unconstrained vision of society brought in by the perfect God-man, Jesus, when he begins to rule his kingdom.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (One World, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (One World, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (One World, 2019).

**6. Lie #5: It is a loving thing for the Church to compromise its doctrine of sexual ethics.**

a. Examples.

(1) InsideOut just released its government-funded pamphlet, “Join This Chariot,” which aims to convince private Christian schools to agree to the LGBTQ vision of sexual ethics and identity.

b. Ephesians presents a different picture:

(1) **Eph 5:1-8** 1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Messiah loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ...5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the [future] kingdom of Messiah and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them. 8 For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light....

**7. Lie #6: Men and women are interchangeable parts in marriage, equal in all respects. Patriarchy is evil.**

a. Examples.

(1) In New Zealand, men are not encouraged to take responsibility to lead their wives and families.

(2) New Zealand society has developed a very skewed view of marriage and its importance. “Partners” has come to be the way people speak of their husbands and wives.

b. Ephesians presents a different picture:

(1) **Eph 5:22-25** 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Messiah is the head of the Church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the Church submits to Messiah, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Messiah loved the church and gave himself up for her....

c. Implications.

(1) We are to have a biblical view of marriage, not a Kiwi view of marriage.

(2) When it comes to the marriage relationship and how it is designed to work, God knows what he is talking about.

**8. Lie #7: Satan is not a real person, just a personification of evil.**

a. Examples.

(1) In some churches in Dunedin, it would be a complete embarrassment to speak of Satan as if he actually existed.

(2) The problems in our world are political, economic, social, and racial, not theological or spiritual.

b. Ephesians presents a different picture:

- (1) **Eph 2:1-2** 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience....
- (2) **Eph 3:10** 10 ...So that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.
- (3) **Eph 6:11-12** 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For 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.
- (4) **Eph 6:16** 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

c. Implications.

- (1) Though it is hard to do so in our secular, materialistic, politically-charged environment, we are to view reality as primarily theological and spiritual.
- (2) We are to view Satan as a real angelic person who opposes God at every turn and who rules this world through his propaganda machine.
- (3) We are to put on the full armour of God so that we do not fall for his propaganda.

## 9. Conclusion.

- a. We have an enemy, Satan, who is constantly firing flaming darts at us. The flaming darts are a metaphor for the lies about God, ourselves, and our world that he is constantly invading our minds with.
  - (1) Paul pleads with the Ephesians saints not to be taken in. They need to have a comprehensive biblical worldview in all of life. They are to see the world correctly, from God's point of view. We are to do the same.
  - (2) In all of Scripture, and in Ephesians in particular, we have God's view of:
    - (a) His plan.
    - (b) The centrality of Jesus.
    - (c) The Church in New Zealand is extremely significant.
    - (d) The sinfulness of human nature.
    - (e) The inability to form some sort of godless utopia.
    - (f) Sexual ethics.
    - (g) The complimentary relationships and roles of husband and wife in marriage.
    - (h) The reality of Satan and the demons as our primary conflict in life.
- b. Gospel message.
  - (1) **Eph 2:4-10** 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Messiah—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Messiah Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Messiah Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Messiah Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.