

## ***Claiming Territory for God***

God deals primarily with individuals, but we do see throughout Scripture that He also deals with regions. He gave Abraham a geographical region. He foretold the regions in which Jesus would minister. He sent prophets to certain cities, such as Jonah to Ninevah, and some prophets to the Northern tribes and some specifically to the Southern tribes. Some prophets prophesied against cities such as Babylon and Tyre. The Great Commission ordered the Apostles to go to certain cities and regions. We can clearly see that God is concerned about geographical regions because of His concern and love for the people that live in those areas.

Revivals have often affected certain cities and their surrounding counties, some even spreading to the entire country, and a few overflowing to other nations. In Daniel chapter 10 we get a picture of what goes on behind the scenes in spiritual realms. We read there of the Prince of Persia who appears to try to manipulate and use the leader of the nation. We know that the Prince of Demons has come to kill, steal, and destroy. (John 10:10) The angelic being of Daniel 10 has the assistance of Gabriel in resisting the Prince of Persia.

If we go to Esther we see what the Prince of Persia is up to. Esther was written about 50 years after Daniel's vision. In Esther, the proud Haman was plotting to destroy the Jews. Some of the people were, no doubt, the forefathers of Joseph and Mary. Where did such an insidious plot develop and why was it so all encompassing? Could it be that the Prince of Persia was trying to stop the line of the seed of the woman, the line of David through whom the prophecies of a Messiah would come to pass? There was certainly an attempt by Herod who was an Edomite, and from the area Persia controlled. Was he too inspired to murder babies to stop the Messiah by the Prince of Persia? Someday we will know. Even today the leader of Iraq seems hell bent on destroying, killing, and stealing from everyone but especially the nation of Israel. Where were his scud missiles aimed? Why is he desperately trying to develop weapons of mass destruction? All that to say that there are battles over regions. Do you think there is a prince over the Verde Valley? How can that affect our prayers and attitudes?

*Eph 6:10-13 (NIV) 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 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. 13 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.*

*2 Kings 6:15-17 (NIV) 15 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. 16 "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the*

*servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

What is the boundary of the area here that we are fighting for? We mark out territory because then we can concentrate our efforts and see raise the spiritual awareness in a given area. To sow everywhere has a diluted affect, but if we sow in a specific area and nurture what is sown we will see greater results. When we consider that we are fighting for an area we are more likely to look for allies in other churches that share our core beliefs. Those churches that bring people to Jesus are not our competition but our allies in a war. As they increase in number the influence of individuals in that church reaches out to a larger number of people. That in turn causes other churches to increase. As we all grow together, more of the city comes under a Christian influence. That is so much more affective than one mega-church. There is always room for more because each will attract a different flavor and has its own realm of influence. New churches have a greater percentage of new converts. The more people attending churches that preach the Gospel, the more all the churches benefit and the greater the influence on the city as a whole. Wide spread church growth is one of the best ways to make it hard for people to go to hell from your city.

Imagine when Sedona becomes so full of life in the Lord that anyone visiting this town can feel the influence. The shopkeepers they meet, the place they buy gas, the motel where they stay, everywhere has a Christian influence drawing them to Jesus! Impossible? It's happened in other areas, why not here?

*Acts 8:5-8 (NIV) 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city.*

Is the success of another church a threat to us? Is our success a threat to them? It shouldn't be if we see ourselves in the same war. We need to pray for the success of other churches that present the Gospel and for the conversion of those who do not.

We need to concentrate on conversion growth – transfer growth is not changing the region. If we just have transfer growth we haven't really made a difference in our area. An outward focussed church is a healthy church. We need to seek conversions not only in our own realm of influence but for that of other churches and readily send them where they can best be disciplined.

If we pray for other churches that see things differently, but still present the truth of who Jesus is and that the Bible is the Word of God, we will learn to appreciate our differences. We will see them as strengths and not as something to criticize and nit-pick at. Onward Christian soldiers. Recognize who your allies are and pray for their success. Recognize the enemy is spiritual darkness not individuals or churches under the influence of darkness.