



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Community Group Material:

Bible Reading: Ephesians 3:10; Deut. 32:7-9; Acts 17:26

The Church—Portent to Dark Cosmic Powers

Ask one person to pray at the beginning of your meeting.

Check-in

Check in with each other about how everyone is doing.

Bible Reading: Ephesians 3:10; Deut. 32:7-9; Acts 17:26

Sermon Summary:

The Church—Portent to Dark Cosmic Powers

The cosmic powers played a role in the nations' dispersion after the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11). God appointed 'guardian angels' over each people-group (Dt. 32:8). However, these 'gods' led the Gentile-nations astray into bondage, idolatry & immorality. Christ defeated them on the cross. Paul's mission was to reverse the curse of Babel, proclaiming salvation to the Gentiles, producing multi-ethnic, multi-racial churches as portents—warning signs—to the evil spiritual forces. *This kind of church displays God's wisdom to the cosmos & fulfills God's purpose. They are God's 'outposts,' planted in 'enemy territory,' engaging in spiritual combat against the powers of darkness.*

Discussion:

1. ? Paul writes about "rulers, authorities, ?cosmic powers of darkness, evil, ?spiritual forces in the heavens." (Eph. 6:12; 1:21) Where do you see evidence of such 'evil spiritual forces' at work today—in the world, in society &/or in people's lives?

2. How would you respond to Christians who dismiss such claims as ‘ancient superstitions from a pre-scientific age’?
3. ? Read Deut. 32:8-9. How do these Scriptures support the idea that ‘guardian angels’ were appointed over each people-group/nation? [Note that Moses is giving an historical review of Israel’s origins.] Why do Bible scholars link this statement back to the “Tower of Babel” & the dispersion of the nations (Gen. 11:1-9)?
4. Read Daniel 10:12-13, 20. Is the “Prince of Persia” portrayed as a human monarch/ruler or as supernatural? Does it appear that the “Prince of Persia” (Dan. 10:13, 20) is supporting or opposing God’s plan/purpose with Daniel? What does this suggest about the “Prince of Greece”?
5. Read Acts 17:26 and compare it with Deut. 32:8. What are the common elements? Note that Acts 17:26 is part of Paul’s message given in Athens—an intellectual center among the Gentile nations. Does Paul’s statement suggest that Paul has an OT/Hebrew view of the Gentile nations’ origin/history? How might Paul, the Apostle to the Gentile/Nations, have seen his mission, against that background?
6. ?Read the key verse: Eph. 3:10 “That God’s...wisdom?may now be made known *?through the church?* to the heavenly rulers & authorities.” Why does Paul make a point that God’s wisdom is displayed to the cosmic powers ‘ *through the church* ’?(not directly through gospel-preaching or the apostles’ teaching)? ?
7. ? Against the background of the Scripture verses above,? *what kind of church* ?will display God’s wisdom? Discuss.
8. ? John Piper says: “All the principalities & powers in the heavenly places are watching this week to see if we...will live as if God is wise or as if he is foolish. Let’s show them by the way we live that God’s... plan is not failing!” In view of this, how might you seek to adjust your living this week? Discuss.
9. Does our/your church (or your small group) pose a challenge to the [cosmic] powers of evil which provokes a reaction? Why or why not?

End with Prayer.

- Pray that churches would display God’s multi-faceted wisdom and also be warning signs to the evil spiritual forces.
- Pray for any needs of people in your group.