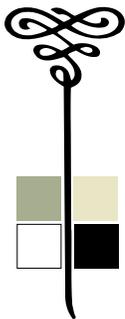


"We do not truly see light, we only see slower things lit by it, so that for us light is on the edge—the last thing we know before things become too swift for us. ■ But the body of an *eldil* is a movement swift as light; you may say its body is made of light, but not of that which is light for the *eldil*. His 'light' is a swifter movement which for us is nothing at all; and what we call light is for him a thing like water, a visible thing, a thing he can touch and bathe in—even a dark thing when not illumined by the swifter. ■ And what we call firm things—flesh and earth—seem to him thinner, and harder to see, than our light, and more like clouds, and nearly nothing. To us the *eldil* is a thin, half-real body that can go through walls and rocks: to himself he goes through them because he is solid and firm and they are like cloud. ■ And what is true light to him and fills the heaven, so that he will plunge into the rays of the sun to refresh himself from it, is to us the black nothing in the sky at night. ■ These things are not strange, Small One, though they are beyond our senses."

C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*



I AM OF THE OPINION THAT IF, LIKE BUSINESSES, individuals and families were required to sit down at the kitchen table on a regular basis and write out a check to the government for their taxes, people would be dramatically disinclined to let said government raise their taxes. If they could see, right there in black and blue ink, how much they were *already* paying to the government, they would be defiantly outraged whenever a president, senator or congressman volunteered more of their hard-earned wages for the public till.

Hence the unrivaled evil genius of the "withholding" or "payroll" tax system that

automatically removes the government's portion before the worker even cashes his or her check. Because they never see it, they forget (or don't care) how much of their wage is being levied. Invisible equals painless.

Similarly, many are untroubled by unseen enemies. They may read news or magazine articles about this group and another who wish them and their countrymen ill, but they consider the possibility of an actual, physical attack on their person remote, if not utterly absurd. They may hear snippets of dire headlines breathlessly uttered by well-groomed television anchors, but an enemy that lies well over the horizon

is, to them, not an enemy at all. At worst it is a potentiality placed so far into the fog-bound future that it may be safely ignored for the time being; at best it is a vaporous ghost, an apparition, a benign irritant. Until the bombs explode, or the planes torpedo the buildings, they remain blithely unconcerned, comfortably insulated by their own self-importance.

In an affluent, narcissistic society, what is unseen is not there. Anything lying over the horizon—and horizons today are alarmingly near—does not really exist. Either it is a fiction, or someone else's problem.

Effective Prayer

Frankly, most people would be rendered catatonic if they knew all that was present, yet unseen, around them. The prophet Daniel found out. He had been praying earnestly and fasting for three weeks over the future of Israel, when suddenly a heavenly figure appeared before him.

Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future."

Then he said, "Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come. However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince."

Daniel 10:12-14,20-21

In this episode, the "princes" of Persia and Greece are demonic angels putting up resistance against the righteous angels of

heaven. Some say this messenger to Daniel is an angel; some say He is the pre-incarnate Christ. In either case, the episode illustrates how "the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective," (James 5:16 NIV) for both sides of this epic conflict were rallied by the fervent prayers and fasting of Daniel.

Blithe Ignorance

Just as the average taxpayer is blithely ignorant of the fiscal forces arrayed to suck his pocket dry, the average believer is blithely ignorant of the unseen forces arrayed both for and against him. In Scripture, every time an angel appears to someone who is awake, the first words out of their mouth is, "Be not afraid!" Not surprising; here is how Daniel describes the angel's appearance:

I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz. His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

Daniel 10:5-6

Now, imagine if suddenly we could see the invisible forces that surround us—both good and bad. Imagine opening our eyes to see the air *filled* with angels and demons—some high and far off engaged in hand-to-hand battle, swords flashing and gleaming in the sunlight, armor shining and blood-stained; others disturbingly nearby, in intimate proximity to our person: helping, pushing, drawing us nearer to the light, shoving us toward the unhealthy darkness, lifting us up, pressing us down; and all—good and bad—bedecked in strange and frightening apparel, limbs gleaming as burnished metal, faces blindingly radiant, their noise deafening our senses.

Be afraid, indeed.

Prime Targets

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1 NKJV

All of this is, normally, invisible to the human eye. Except for rare moments when the two collide, the existence of the unseen "principalities" and "powers" is part of faith. It is something the believer knows, but cannot confirm. It is something that at times can be *felt*, but cannot be empirically proven.

Why should we care? What difference does it make to the Christian's daily walk that the ether surrounding us is filled with invisible foes and allies, angels both protective and corrosive? Why should it matter?

It matters because they are there. It matters because they are as much a part of our relationship with God and His Son as going to church, studying the word, praying on our knees. It matters because, whether we realize it or not, they exert influence on our life. The good protect, support, comfort, defend, while the bad do everything in their power to bring us down; they will do anything—*anything*—to drive a wedge between us and the Father.

It matters that we care, because evil does not always appear evil, so we must constantly be on guard.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

2 Corinthians 11:13-14

It matters because this is an ongoing conflict, of which every believer is a part. We cannot hide our heads and wish it away. As followers of Christ, we are prime targets, caught in the crosshairs of every weapon available to Satan's minions. But likewise, as followers of Christ, we have at our disposal supernatural weapons stronger and more effective than anything wielded by the enemy.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12 NKJV

It matters.



(Next Week: *Demons*)