

Is Satan the ruler of this world?

response by Tami Jelinek

Recently in response to a well-publicized shooting on a college campus, a participant on our forum shared the following consensus of his church group to the tragedy:

"Satan is the ruler of this world. There are spiritual battles in the high places that have caused this." He then asked us the questions, ***"Who is reigning on this earth? Who is really in control of this world, Satan or Jesus Christ? Is Satan still alive and well?"***

What follows is a response which, while it does not attempt to explain away or dismiss the pain which tragedies bring into our lives, does address the proper interpretation and context of Biblical references to "Satan" as "the ruler of this world":

In answering some of the issues and questions you are bringing forward, I want to first clarify I am not suggesting that biblical or theological answers to our questions about tragedy and heartache in this world remove the reality of pain. Knowing what is true does not magically alleviate grief; the "right answer" is not a panacea which instantly makes us feel that everything is OK. But having said that, knowing the truth, specifically the truth of God's sovereignty, brings me more comfort in times of distress than anything ever could.

I can only imagine what it must have been like for you and your friends on Monday. I have a child who lives away on a college campus, however. And two others whose high school was closed, coincidentally on that same day, due to a bomb threat. So of course my imagination has been working overtime this week. Again, when fear takes hold, I remember what is true. In the face of our feelings, which sometimes may even contradict what we know to be true, we must cleave to that truth all the more.

And now to a point of your post, the truth we know is this: Our God reigns!

Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

(Either He is reigning now, or our peace with God has not been accomplished, and we have not been saved.)

Again, I want to clarify that in "answering" a couple of things here, I am not denying the existence of grief, or suggesting there is a way to escape it. It serves His purposes, even when we can't see what those are. But what Biblically correct theology does offer us is a firm place to stand, and return to, when are tempted to let circumstances skew our perception of reality. So what *is* reality? Is Satan ruling this world?

When the consensus at church affirmed that "Satan is the ruler of this world," this may be the passage to which they were referring:

1 Corinthians 2: 6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age [*aka world*], nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

It is important to understand that the familiar phrase "rulers of this world" is correctly translated "rulers of this *age*." The above passage clearly identifies those rulers as the Jews who crucified Christ and were still exercising power while the temple still stood. And it is irrefutable that same "world" (again, correctly translated "*age*") was about to end in the first century.

Here is another reference to Satan as "ruler of the world" to which the consensus at church may have been referring:

2 Corinthians 4:3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age [*aka world*] has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Again, what is familiar to a lot of us as "god of this world" is accurately translated "god of this *age*". This is the same age to which Paul refers as "this present evil age" in Galatians 1, and again, which we know was about to end.

So now, with a new understanding of the context of "the ruler of the world," which prohibits us from applying it to "Satan" ruling our world today, we should ask ourselves the question, "*on what Biblical basis can we assert that Satan is ruling this world?*" In other words, we have eliminated the Biblical support for this notion that we once thought we had. There is nothing in the Bible which states that Satan is the ruler of this world.

Our God reigns!

in Christ,
Tami