

ANTITHESIS

(See Spiritual Warfare, World, Worldviews in Conflict)

God and the Antithesis

1. Antithesis is **the great war** between good and evil that happens around us all the time.
2. There are two sides to this war, and only two.
 - a. **1 John 5:19** 19 We know that we [believers] are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.
 - b. **3 John 11** 11 Whoever does good is from God. Whoever does evil has not seen God.
 - c. “The biblical doctrine of antithesis reveals that fundamentally there are only *two* kingdoms, not *many*. However varied and multiple these false systems of faith, they are one and allied in their enmity against God’s kingdom. They are united under the kingdom of Satan. Hence, Jesus doesn’t speak of three gates, just two; not three trees, just two; not many kingdoms, just two.”¹

The Great Antithesis

Good	Evil	Verses
God	Satan	1 Co 10:21; 1 Jn 3:8; 5:19
Good	Evil	3 Jn 11
Order	Chaos	Ge 1:1-2
Life	Death	
Light	Darkness	Ge 1:3-4; 2 Co 6:14
Love	Hatred	
Truth	Falsehood	Jn 8:44
Wisdom	Foolishness	Ps 1; 115; Pr 1:7; Ec 12:13-14; Ro 1:22
Obedience	Disobedience	
Justice	Injustice	Ge 18:25
Faith	Unbelief	
Spirit	Flesh	
Humility	Pride	Jas 4:6
True God	False idols	2 Co 6:16; 1 Jn 5:21
Angels	Demons	
Abel	Cain	Ge 4:3-12; Heb 11:4; 1 Jn 3:12-13
Sethites	Cainites	Ge 4:17-26; 6:5-8
Noah	Mankind	
King of Salem	King of Sodom	
Isaac	Ishmael	Ge 16:12
Jacob	Esau	Ge 25:23, 34; Ro 9:6; Heb 12:16
Joseph	Brothers	Ge 45:4-8; 50:20; Ac 2:22-39
Moses and Israel	Pharaoh and Egypt	Ex
Joshua and Israel	Canaanites	Josh
David	Goliath	1 Sa 17:45-47
David	Saul	
Elijah	Prophets of Baal	
True prophets	False prophets	1 Ki 18:23; Jer 23:16-32
Remnant of Israel	Majority of Israel	Is 8:11-9:7
Jesus	Jewish leaders	Mt 4:4, 8; 7:13-14
Jesus	Judas	
Disciples	Jewish leaders	

¹Alfred J. Poirier, “Conflicting Worldviews and the Defense of the Faith,” Rev. version (2003), 21.

Good	Evil	Verses
Paul	Jewish legalists	
Believers	Unbelievers	2 Co 6:15
Church	World	Ro 8:5-14; 2 Co 10:3-5; Ga 6:14; Eph 6:14; Col 3:5ff; Jas 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15-17; 5:19
True teachers	False teachers	
Messiah Jesus	Anti-Messiah	
Holy Spirit	False Prophet	
Jerusalem	Babylon	Re 19:11-21
Heaven	Hell	

3. God, of course, wants us to know about the antithesis, hence the Bible.
 - a. **Daniel 12:9-10** 9 Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. 10 Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.
 - b. Details about the antithesis are progressively revealed through Scripture.
4. At creation, antithesis was **potential but not actual**. Today, antithesis is actual.
 - a. **Genesis 3:15** 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

First World	Second World	Third World
Evil potential, but not actual	Evil actual	Evil neither actual nor potential
Antithesis potential, but not actual	Antithesis actual	Antithesis neither actual nor potential

5. Antithesis is abnormal and temporary.²
 - a. Reality does not require permanent antithesis (dualism).
6. Antithesis is ultimately evil, but in our fallen world it is actually good.
 - a. Where evil exists, antithesis must exist.
 - b. God wants there to be antithesis, a state of war, at present.
 - (1) **Genesis 3:15** 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.
 - c. Synthesis in a fallen world would require good to sign a peace treaty with evil. This will never happen!
7. God determines what's on the good side and what's on the evil side.
 - a. **Genesis 1:3-4** 3 Then God said, Let there be light, and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.
 - b. God could have made a world where homosexuality was good and heterosexuality evil, but he didn't do so. The reason homosexuality is evil is because God has determined it to be so, and he is the Creator of the world and the human race.
 - c. God uses the Bible to specially reveal to mankind what is good and what is evil.

² Alfred J. Poirier, "Conflicting Worldviews and the Defense of the Faith," Rev. version (2003), 17.

8. God would be evil if he allowed the antithesis to continue indefinitely into the future.

Satan and the Antithesis

1. Synthesis is Satan's strategy.
 - a. Satan has developed sophisticated ways of getting us to call evil good and good evil.
 - (1) **Isaiah 5:20** Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!
 - b. Examples of synthesis are:
 - (1) Pantheism: [].
 - (2) Hegelianism: Progress is achieved when two warring factions meet in the middle.
 - (3) Pragmatism: Don't take to me about right and wrong. Just tell me what works.
 - (4) Agnosticism: I don't know whether God exists, and it doesn't really matter.
2. Satan doesn't want us to know or think about the antithesis. That's why he hates the Bible.
 - a. "Your man has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to having a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head. He doesn't think of doctrines as primarily 'true' or 'false,' but as 'academic' or 'practical,' 'outworn' or 'contemporary,' 'conventional' or 'ruthless.' ...Don't waste time trying to make him think that materialism is true! Make him think it is strong or stark or courageous—that it is the philosophy of the future. That's the sort of thing he cares about."³
 - b. "If Christians abandon the idea of antithesis, they have nothing left to say. Biblical Christianity demands antithesis."⁴
 - c. "To the extent a believer gives up antithesis, he has moved over to the other side, even if he tries to defend orthodoxy."⁵
3. Satan is an outstanding war strategist.
 - a. E.g., C. S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*.

³ Uncle Screwtape, in C. S. Lewis [d. 1963], *Screwtape Letters* (1959).

⁴ Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*.

⁵ Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*.

Man and the Antithesis

1. Our whole lives are lived in the midst of antithetical warfare.
 - a. **1 Co 10:31** 31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
 - b. **Col 3:17** 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.
2. Men and women cannot declare neutrality. We all must choose a side in this great war.
 - a. **Luke 11:23** 23 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.
 - b. “Because there are only two kingdoms, there is no neutral ground. Every square inch of the universe is claimed by Messiah Jesus and counter-claimed by Satan.”
 - c. In New Zealand, it’s easier to forget the antithesis. That’s why it’s a popular place.
3. The antithesis is not a war between classes, ethnicities, nations, races, or the sexes.
 - a. **Revelation 5:9-10** 9 They sang a new song saying, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.
4. Commonality exists between believer and unbeliever. We fight over the same ground.
 - a. “The Christian affirms common ground. Our individual and cultural presuppositions do not keep us from communicating clearly and effectively with others morally different from us. We affirm that common ground exists between believer and unbeliever because both are creatures, created in God’s image, and are recipients of God’s general revelation, including his moral law.”⁶
5. Devotion to synthesis makes one popular. Devotion to antithesis makes one unpopular.
 - a. To live out the antithesis is one of the most difficult things we must do as believers.
 - b. “Live the antithesis. No neutrality. Don’t set aside Messiah in any philosophical debate.”⁷
 - c. New Zealand believers are not very good at living out the antithesis.
6. If you don’t like conflict, tough. Conflict is an essential aspect of our fallen world.
 - a. **Matthew 12:30** 30 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.
 - b. **Luke 12:51-53** 51 Do you think that I [Jesus] have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52 For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against

⁶ Alfred J. Poirier, “Conflicting Worldviews and the Defense of the Faith,” Rev. version (2003), 23-24.

⁷ Alliance Defending Freedom, Blackstone Fellowship.

mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.

7. Often we don't know who's on what side of the antithesis. But God knows.
 - a. **Matthew 13:28-30** 28 So the servants said to [the man], Then do you want us to go and gather them? 29 But he said, No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.
 - b. **Matthew 13:37-43** 37 [Jesus] answered, The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.
8. As part of the antithesis, God distinguishes believers from unbelievers.
 - a. **Genesis 18:25** 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?
 - b. **Exodus 8:22-23** 22 On that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am Yahweh in the midst of the earth. 23 Thus I will put a division between my people and your people.
 - c. **Exodus 9:4** 4 Yahweh will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die.
 - d. **Exodus 9:25-26** 25 The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field. 26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail.
 - e. **Exodus 11:6-7** 6 There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been nor ever will be again. 7 But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that Yahweh makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.
 - f. **Exodus 12:13** 13 The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.
 - g. **Malachi 3:16-18** 16 Those who feared Yahweh spoke with one another. Yahweh paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared Yahweh and esteemed his name. 17 They shall be mine, says Yahweh of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. 18 Then once more you shall see the distinction

between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

- h. **Matthew 3:12** 12 [Messiah's] winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.
- i. **Matthew 13:49–50** 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- j. **Luke 17:34-36** 34 I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. 35 There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left.

Believers and the Antithesis

1. Because of the antithesis, the nature of the Christian life is warfare.
 - a. **2 Timothy 4:7** I [Paul] have fought the good fight.
2. Young believers need to understand the sharp distinctions required by the antithesis.
 - a. Otherwise they will spend years, perhaps their lives, in a confused state of thinking.
3. The antithesis comes before our personal relationships, even our own families.
 - a. **Exodus 32:25-29** 25 When Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies), 26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on Yahweh's side? Come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. 27 And he said to them, Thus says Yahweh God of Israel, Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor. 28 And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell. 29 And Moses said, Today you have been ordained for the service of Yahweh, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.
4. We must realize we're not in a popularity contest. We're warriors of truth. This is war.
5. Because of the antithesis, believers must beware what they see and hear in the world.
6. Because of the antithesis, believer must beware what alliances they make.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 10:21** 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.
7. As part of the antithesis, God distinguishes between believers who succeed and believers who fail.
 - a. **Exodus 32:25-29** 25 When Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies), 26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, Who is on Yahweh's side? Come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. 27 And he said to them, Thus says Yahweh God of Israel, Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor. 28 And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell. 29 And Moses said, Today you have been ordained for the service of Yahweh, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.
 - b. Some believers act like soldiers. Others act like civilians.

The Church and the Antithesis

1. It is because of the antithesis that the Church must be distinct from the world.
 - a. Israel was meant to be distinct from the nations.
 - (1) **Exodus 33:15–17** 15 [Moses] said to [Yahweh], If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. 16 For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth? 17 And Yahweh said to Moses, This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.
 - b. When Israel lost her distinction, she failed.
 - c. The Church is meant to be distinct from the world.
 - d. When the Church loses her distinction, she fails.
 - (1) **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** 14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Messiah with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said, I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing. Then I will welcome you, 18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.
 - (2) **James 4:4** 4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
2. Woe to church leaders who confuse believers as to what is good and evil.
 - a. **Isaiah 5:20** 20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!
 - b. **2 Corinthians 6:14-16** 14 What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Messiah with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God.
3. Like Jesus and Paul, we must communicate the antithesis when sharing the gospel.
 - a. Jesus.
 - b. Paul.
 - (1) **Acts 26:16-18** 16 Rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, 17 delivering you from your people and from the nations, to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Paul's Antithetical Preaching in Acts 17

Greeks	Paul
Polytheism	Monotheism (Ac 17:24)
Gods dwell in man-made temples	God does not dwell in man-made temples (Ac 17:24)
Impersonal fatalism	Sovereignty of a personal God (Ac 17:26-31)
God is distant (Epicureans and Stoics)	God is near ([])
No bodily resurrection (Aeschylus)	Bodily resurrection (Ac 17:31)
Bodily resurrection bad	Bodily resurrection good
Soul not immortal	Soul immortal
History is cyclical and has no goal	History is linear and has a goal
No final judgment (Epicurus)	Final judgment ([])

End Times and the Antithesis

1. The rebellion of angels and men against God cannot and will not go on forever.
2. The outcome of the antithesis is not in doubt.
 - a. Jesus has already destroyed evil positionally. One day he will destroy evil practically.
 - b. **John 12:31** 31 Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.
 - c. **Hebrews 2:8** 8 In putting everything in subjection to [man], [God] left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to [man].
3. God's final judgment of angels and men is what ultimately resolves the antithesis.
 - a. **Matthew 25:31-32** 31 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
4. In the new heavens and earth, the antithesis will be no more.
 - a. **1 John 3:8** 8 The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.
 - b. **Revelation 21:3-4** 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Bibliography

Augustine. *The City of God*.

Lewis, C. S. *The Great Divorce*.

Poirier, Alfred J. “Conflicting Worldviews and the Defense of the Faith.” Rev. version (2003).

Schaeffer, Francis. *The God Who Is There*.

Schlossberg, Herbert. *Idols for Destruction*.

Notes