ADDENDUM TO SHOFAR
February 22, 2026

The Cosmic Battle between Good and Evil

The narrative of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is key in our synoptic gospels. It sets the stage for the final engagements in the enmity between God and Satan (that wily Serpent from the Garden of Eden). Here's a difficulty for us. For Jesus and the Jews of his time, this was not a metaphorical battle. It was an ongoing, no-holds-barred battle to the End. While Satan was broken at the incarnation, and the conclusion to the final battle made real on Golgotha, skirmishes would be ongoing until the End of Time itself.

Here, in our Contemporary West, that battle is more of a quaint metaphorical way of speaking. We do not see the world in the same way and in so doing we fail to appreciate the power of what the evangelists are telling us and why they wrote in the way they did.

The battle in the wilderness is a punch-up, not a gentlemanly exchange. When we read about the events in the wilderness we can fail to see just how much rests on its outcome.

This is why I have set out the Shofar in the way I have. Yes, it is a bit longer but the format of a pugilistic contest requires just a little more space than I normally use and for that I apologise.

I have added to this note, a couple of observations on the significance of the theology of a cosmic battle in our New Testament. It might help to provide something of a background.

Bishop Michael

Setting Captives Free

Jesus rejected Satan's temptations and their false promise of freedom. Throughout His ministry, He was constantly setting people free. In some cases, he was directly liberating people from Satan's bondage through exorcisms. In other cases, he brought deliverance from physical bondage

by healing the sick. In the culmination of his mission, Jesus brought us all freedom from sin and death through his death and Resurrection.

The Mission Continues Today

Jesus still wants to bring healing and deliverance to us today. Many people are weighted down in bondage and often don't realize it. Satan still sows deception in our hearts, telling us that God doesn't love us and that we can only find happiness on our own by rejecting God's plan. Satan still oppresses us with fear, guilt, self-loathing, depression—anything to help trap us in darkness and close us off from the love and happiness that God is trying to give us.

We are called to participate in Jesus' mission of deliverance, both to fight the temptations of evil in our own lives and then to help others find freedom and deliverance as well.

Our role in the Cosmic Battle

Of course, a life in Christ means so much more than simply resisting temptation or even making an individual choice for goodness. We are called to participate in Jesus' Mission to liberate those in bondage and establish the Kingdom of God, spreading the good news of liberation and God's love to everyone who is afflicted and suffering in darkness.

When Jesus established his Church and promised that the gates of Hell would not prevail against, he did not mean we would simply persevere in the face of evil. Gates are not an offensive weapon, but a defence: Jesus was saying that we would go on the offensive against evil and be victorious. We are called to make the Kingdom of God present wherever we are. Every time we reach out with love, pray with someone in their suffering, or bear witness to what Jesus has done in our lives, we can awaken faith in the hearts of others—and Satan loses his grip on people's lives.

Jesus defeated Satan, but the battle is played out in each of our hearts, and we can share in bringing that good news of deliverance to others, and thus we have the power of participating in Jesus' victory.

Jesus has revealed to us how the cosmic battle between good and evil ends, and so we should turn to him with confidence in our own struggles and as we help others.

Contending with Evil
Spiritual Defences in action:
The Cosmic Struggle in “Normal Life”

It’s easy to drift into the false notion of a “normal life” that sits safely in-between good and evil: we aren’t heroically virtuous, but we also don’t commit atrocities—most of us avoid both extremes and just live a normal life.

But in reality, the small choices we make ultimately transform our lives in major ways. Sin has a way of poisoning our lives gradually, changing the atmosphere bit by bit with each moral compromise until we feel hopeless.

And on the other hand, equally small choices to move toward God can open our lives unexpectedly to places we never would have imagined, giving us hope and happiness and peace that we hadn’t even realized we were missing and lifting burdens from us that we were carrying silently for years.

But there’s no neutral ground—we’re all in the middle of that cosmic battle, choosing between good and evil. This is why the spiritual defences are so significant.

A few minutes of connecting with God, a weekend visit to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, stopping to think about our legacy in a moment of choice, and other simple changes in routine can send us down a transformative path, keeping us healthy and freeing us from the burdens of sinful choices.

The struggle to replace bad habits with good ones doesn't happen all at once. But God’s love is always there to support us, calling us by name and offering us hope as we strive to follow the path to happiness.

Bishop Michael Hough