

8. From *the Stormy Sea to the Clouds of Heaven* (1Q 2020—Daniel)

Biblical Material: Daniel 7, 2 Thess. 2:1–12, Rom. 8:1, Mark 13:26, Luke 9:26, Luke 12:8, 1 Tim. 2:5.

Quotes

- God is more concerned about who you are than what you do. *Gary Gulbranson*
- Give God the margin of eternity to justify himself. *H. R. Haweis*
- Nothing hath separated us from God but our own will, or rather our own will is our separation from God. *William Law*
- To honor him whom we have made is far from honoring him that hath made us... *Michel Eyquem De Montaigne*
- Suddenly is the soul oned to God when it is truly peaced in itself: for in Him is found no wrath. *Julian of Norwich*

Questions

Why was it important for Daniel to receive this dream? What was so upsetting about it? How is the great controversy revealed in what Daniel saw? While the details of prophetic interpretation preoccupy some, what is the primary message here? Why does God permit these horrific events to occur? How is the devil unmasked?

Bible Summary

Daniel 7 records Daniel's dream of the four beasts. 2 Thess. 2:1–12 describes the advance of evil, especially towards the end. "So there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1 FBV). Mark 13:26 describes Jesus' second coming. Luke 9:26 adds that Jesus will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of him when he comes. Similarly in Luke 12:8 Jesus will acknowledge those who acknowledge him. Jesus is the one who shows us God (1 Tim. 2:5).

Comment

Now it is Daniel's turn to have a dream. This is actually back in time to Belshazzar's reign. It's interesting, knowing what will happen to Belshazzar, that God should send Daniel a dream at this time. It is clearly concerning future events, and very much to do with decisions and judgment (the court motif). In the light of the previous dream (Daniel 2) it is not too hard to see that the major empires are once again identified. Perhaps this is to encourage Daniel in a hard time as Belshazzar refuses to acknowledge the true God. However the end result is that Daniel is troubled, disturbed, and his face turns pale. He obviously recognized the implications of what his dream might mean for the people of God. The encouragement from the watcher is "But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever--yes, for ever and ever." (v. 18 NIV).

Daniel does not ask regarding the first three kingdoms. He can perhaps identify the parallels with the previous dream. But he does ask regarding the fourth kingdom, which is "different from all the others." Rome's primary difference is its morphing into a religio-political power rather than continuing as a pagan kingdom. It is this latter power that is "most terrifying," and its horn makes war on the saints. And it is this supplanting power that speaks against the Most High and seeks to change times and laws. In this clear parallel of the experience of Lucifer in wanting to be like the Most High we see the Great Controversy clearly revealed. When one

remembers the experience of Christians under persecution by the state or by fellow Christians, the devil's agenda is laid bare. It is hard to believe that believers were killed for simply preaching the truth, or for possessing a Bible, or for daring to challenge human authority, but this is the history under this power.

But the primary message is one of victory—that the issues in the Great Controversy will be illuminated and resolved, that the future will be one of God's eternal and beneficent kingdom. Do you find the following argument regarding God's actions (particularly in the Old Testament) convincing? Is this a good way of explaining God and the judgment?

“If God were really good, how could He do such a thing? How could He destroy these innocent people? This is barbaric.’ [People] take this record of God’s judgment as evidence that the God of the Bible isn’t really good at all, and therefore should not be believed in.

I approach it from a different direction. I think the preponderance of evidence from the same historical record—the Old Testament—is that God is good. He continually demonstrates not just his holiness, but also His patience and forbearance for those that consistently rebel against Him, though He has graciously cared for them.

This gives us good reason to trust Him. And if we have good reason to trust Him, then when we see things that seem to go against our sense of goodness and justice, it seems only fair to give the benefit of the doubt to God, who just might know something more than we know. When we were children, our own parents acted in ways we didn’t understand. We didn’t think their decisions were fair. Later we learned that, for the most part, they had insight and information unavailable to us that influenced their decisions. Many times we learned that they were acting in our best interests after all, though we didn’t see it at the time.

These are the kind of things we discover as we grow up. We learn that our parents were right most of the times we thought they were off base. The same kind of hindsight is true with God. God may know a few things we don’t know... Even if that wasn’t the case, as the Author of life God still has the right to take life according to His own judgment.” Gregory Koukl.

The record of history is hard to understand without the perspective of the great controversy. Only as we recognize that the devil is allowed to develop his agenda does it become clear that the current situation is temporary, and that “an enemy has done this.”

Ellen White Comments

To Daniel was given a vision of fierce beasts, representing the powers of the earth. But the ensign of the Messiah's kingdom is a lamb. While earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power, Christ is to banish every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion. His kingdom was to be established to uplift and ennoble fallen humanity. {4BC 1171.5}

As a people we do not understand as we should the great conflict going on between invisible agencies, the controversy between loyal and disloyal angels. Evil angels are constantly at work, planning their line of attack, controlling as commanders, kings, and rulers, the disloyal human forces. . . . I call upon the ministers of Christ to press home upon the understanding of all who come within the reach of their voice, the truth of the ministration of angels. Do not indulge in fanciful speculations. The Written Word is our only safety. We must pray as did Daniel, that we may be guarded by heavenly intelligences. As ministering spirits angels are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. Pray, my brethren, pray as you have never prayed before. We are not prepared for the Lord's coming. We need to make thorough work for eternity. {4BC 1173.7}