

Sabbath School Today

With the 1888 Message Dynamic

Daniel

Lesson 6: From Arrogance to Destruction

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:11, 12). “Ensample” is an old English word translated from the Greek word *typikos*, which means a pattern of warning; ruinous events which serve as admonitions or warnings to others. The message in Daniel chapter 5 is a warning to the world, to “believers” as well as non-believers. Arrogance or pride will bring the destruction of the individual as well as a nation. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).

The opening line of the lesson used the word “hubris” which means exaggerated pride and self-confidence. Hubris can be used when speaking of both people and nations. An example is found in Pharaoh’s declaration: “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice?” (Ex. 5:2). The same arrogant defiance of the God of heaven was recorded for us concerning Nimrod. In Genesis 10:8, 9 we read that he was “a mighty one in the earth; he was a mighty hunter before the LORD.” The Hebrew word for “mighty one” means “to raise oneself up in arrogance and stand in God’s face.”

The next verse tells us “the beginning of his kingdom was Babel” (Gen. 10:10). From its founding, Babylon was “against” everything that was godly. For nearly 1700 years, ancient Babylon had existed as a magnificent city on the Plain of Shinar, an example of what the mind and hands of man can accomplish when in rebellion against God. The kingdom established by Nimrod represented the complete development of Satan’s plans to overthrow the King of the universe and take His throne (see Isa. 14:13, 14).

At the time of our lesson study (538 B.C.), Babylon had received the witness of God’s love and mercy for 69 years through Daniel and his three companions, who had ministered to the king of Babylon in high government capacities. These faithful men instructed all who would listen of the coming Messiah who would deliver them from sin. Day by day through their righteous living, they taught faith in the living God of heaven. As God’s blessed servants, they revealed the “spirit of prophecy” through their God-given wisdom and abilities to interpret the “mysteries” God showed to the king. But they also preached the coming judgment and hour of God’s destruction upon the wicked nation. Babylon had no excuse to continue in rebellion against the God of heaven.

Twenty-five years before the events that took place the fateful night of Belshazzar’s bacchanalian feast, Nebuchadnezzar surrendered fully to God’s will for him. However Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson never learned his lesson. In fact, Belshazzar was not a particularly religious man. The arrogant and comfortable environment that he had been

raised in caused him to discount anything that did not exalt and praise him. He thought of himself as “god on earth” and sought to prove it by using the sacred vessels from God’s Temple in his drunken orgy. In doing so, Belshazzar filled his “cup of iniquity” to overflowing, and judgment was swiftly executed.

For two years prior to that night, there were “signs” of the impending fall of Babylon. In 539 B.C., the Medes and Persians joined forces and started their march toward Babylon, bent on conquest. Cyrus’s sacred white horse was drowned while attempting to cross a river and this event stopped his forward march for a period of time. When he arrived at the city, he had his men dig channels to divert the course of the river away from the gates under which the river flowed through the midst of the city. The work took nearly a year to complete. All who heeded the warning message sent by God through Jeremiah, left the city. They “came out of her” and were saved from destruction when Cyrus invaded the city the night God wrote His message upon the wall of the banquet hall.

We have been living in a suspended time frame, as God waits upon His people to flee the fallen theologies of the world. Since the Second Great Awakening, God has been working through His remnant people to bring the good news of salvation through Christ and His righteousness. The good news includes the glorious truth of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, that of necessity must be preceded by the cleansing of the hearts of His people. Since 1844 God has been calling people out of spiritual Babylon to join with His remnant church.

But God’s remnant has a spiritual problem. Just like ancient Babylon’s arrogance and self-sufficient attitude, Laodicea thinks that she is “rich and increased with goods” (Rev. 3:17). This “richness” does not mean material wealth. The Faithful Witness is pointing out our false assumption concerning spiritual blessings. We think we have “need of nothing” pertaining to spiritual things.

Voices from the power centers of the church counsel against the “1888 message” of overcoming sin before the second coming of Jesus, calling it is an impossibility, a theological fiction. These voices excoriate the idea of a “final generation” that will heed the counsel of the True Witness to “overcome even as I overcame” (see Rev. 3:21). Rejecting the “most precious message” that God sent through A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner [1], the church has succumbed to an erroneous view on justification and sanctification that will never prepare a people to overcome sin. The “popular” view focuses on human possibilities (or impossibilities) rather than on the power of the Holy Spirit working through a surrendered heart and mind.

“Our misunderstanding of the 1888 message has blinded us to the deficient and faulty theology of the Evangelical churches. Because of ‘preconceived opinions’ and ‘opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord’s message,’ a vacuum was created which we tried to fill with our methods and borrowed plans from popular churches. The result is, ‘Satan has succeeded in shutting away from our people in a great measure the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart.’ The

enemy has prevented us from ‘obtaining that efficiency which might have been [ours] in carrying the truth [of overcoming sin] to the world.’ [*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 234, 235]. Intensive professional research, Madison Avenue techniques [in advertising], church growth seminars, or any other man-made programs cannot replace the ‘power’ and ‘efficiency’ the Holy Spirit would bring God’s people.” [2]

“Our spiritual impotence can be traced to our history. The truths inherent in the 1888 message of Christ’s righteousness are not comprehended by us or by any segment of Christians who do not understand the two-apartment ministry of the heavenly High Priest. The ‘gospel’ proclaimed by the ‘little horn’ power virtually justifies sin and therefore logically upholds Satan’s rebellion. This is the secret of the lawlessness that pervades the modern world on all levels. ... As long as pride and self-seeking masquerade as devotion to Christ, there we have Baal-worship. It has penetrated all levels of the church body.” [3]

“The hope of redemption rests upon the shoulders of that final generation and that responsibility can only be met when that generation comes to sense the travail and distress it has caused but which in its immaturity has mercifully been hidden from it. We are that generation! We have not fathomed the pain which the Lamb has borne since the inception of sin.” [4]

For more than a century we have been earnestly praying for the latter rain, while we remain “dry as the hills of Gilboa.” God cannot send us the latter rain until we overcome our spiritual arrogance, and understand our responsibility in resisting the message and power God has already given to us.

—Ann Walper

Endnotes:

[1] See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 91, 92.

[2] D. K. Short, “Baal Worship and the Long Delay,” pp. 11, 12.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 14.

[4] D. K. Short, *Then Shall the Sanctuary Be Cleansed*, p. 98, CFI ed., 2018.

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HidQryp4zmc>

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