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DANIEL THE PROPHET

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Daniel and Principalities and Powers

(Concluded from last issue)

From the historical standpoint Daniel is the most interesting book in the Bible, for it introduces us to the courts of more Gentile monarchs and portrays political life in greater detail, than any other book. The curtain is raised, too, to give us glimpses of principalities and powers in the heavens, and from Daniel we learn much that would otherwise be baffling and mysterious concerning those invisible spiritual forces and their relationship to the kingdoms of men and to the people of God. Isaiah makes reference to two spheres of rule, a heavenly and an earthly, in Ch. 24:21 when he predicts the punishment of 'the host of the high ones that are on high and the kings of the earth upon the earth'. In his letter to the Ephesian Christians Paul tells them that the conflict in which they are engaged is 'not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places' (Eph. 6:12—R.V.) Other references in the same letter to those principalities and powers indicate that some are benign and on the side of God's people while others are malignant and antagonistic.

The evidence of our senses teaches us that there are but three elements or spheres of physical life, namely earth, sea and air. All three we believe to be inhabited. By comparing Scripture with Scripture, we find it difficult to avoid the inference that, over these three elements, authority, delegated or appropriated, is at present in the hands of different powers. The earth is under the dominion of man, for God made him to have dominion. By cultivating the earth man provides himself with food and clothing: by digging into its bowels he extracts precious metals and gems that enhance his wealth, adorn his person and equip him with useful vessels: and by domestication or hunting he subjugates earth's fauna to his authority. He cannot find a fixed dwelling on the sea nor can he build anything in the air except the unsubstantial, proverbial dream

castles that are figments of his imagination and immediately come toppling about his ears. But he has found a habitation on the earth. The sea is under the dominion of Christ. 'His way is in the sea', and for His chosen people, Israel, He made a way through the sea. As a Man on earth He walked on its waters, stilled the raging of its waves, and supplied His disciples, mostly men of the sea, with food and tribute money from its depths. The image of a fish, frequently seen in the inscriptions in the catacombs, was the symbol of the early Christians in days of dreadful persecution under man's rule on earth. The five letters of the Greek word for 'fish' *ixeus* were seen to contain the initials of some of our Lord's names and titles, Jesus, Son of God, Saviour. The air, peopled by invisible spiritual beings, is under the control of the devil who in Eph. 2:2 is called 'the prince of the power of the air'. Jesus Christ our Redeemer did not come to earth through the air, as He might have done, but was born in the womb of a virgin. When His work on earth was completed, He ascended 'through the heavens', returning to His place on high via the air. The conflict with Satan finished, He passed through the territory of His defeated foe, for at the Cross He disarmed principalities and powers, made a public example of them, and led them captive in His triumphal procession.

The Sovereignty of God

The book of Daniel clearly reveals that the unseen powers in the heavens have to do with powers on earth, that invisible, spiritual beings are concerned in the affairs of nations. But, in order that we might not be unduly perturbed because this is so, we are reminded again and again of the Sovereignty of God over all His creatures in every sphere. 'God is still on the throne'. The defeat of Judah and the capture of Judah's king, Jehoiakim, by the king of Babylon, were part of His permissive will and purpose (Dan. 1:2), for 'the Most High rules in the kingdom of men' (Dan. 2:25). It was God Who appointed those Gentile rulers to their position of despotic authority over the nations (Dan. 2:37; 5:18). 'The powers that be are ordained of God' (Rom. 13:1).

For this reason it behoves all who know their God and have access to His presence to pray for kings and all in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-2). God is sovereign in His appointment of rulers: He 'giveth it to *whomsoever He will*' (Dan. 4:25). He also controls their attitude, for He turns the king's heart '*whithersoever He will*' (Prov. 21:1); and He is behind all their activities, compelling them to '*do whatsoever His counsel determines beforehand*' (Acts 4:26-28).

'Supreme in everything, His almighty power is exercised in particular on behalf of His own, for in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose' (Rom. 8:28).

The Opposition of Satan

The presence of evil in a universe that came from the hand of a perfect Creator Who, viewing from high Heaven His workmanship, 'saw that it was very good', can only be explained by the existence and activity of a powerful foe. We exclaim, 'An enemy hath done this'. In Is. 14:4-19 the Babylonian despot, living in the 'golden city', appears as the tool as well as the human representative of the arch-enemy of God. Pride and ambition goaded the devil to rebellion and will be the cause of his final doom. The trail of the serpent can be traced through the Scriptures. Satan the Adversary reduced the fair, original creation to chaos, incited rational man made in God's image to transgress Heaven's command, continually accuses the upright in the presence of the Almighty, and is engaged in a ceaseless effort, to thwart the Divine purpose. The final issue does not stand in doubt. Satan will be consigned to his own place and there, in eternal perdition, deprived of all his power to do evil. One of the keys to the understanding of the book of Daniel is the recognition, from beginning to end, of the devil's futile attempts to frustrate the plan of God for His devoted servants, Daniel and his companions, in the land of their exile.

The Activity of Angels

Through His angels or messengers God is continually protecting and guiding His chosen people. The letter to the Hebrew

Christians tells us that those angelic beings are spirits in the service of God, commissioned 'to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation' (Heb. 1:14). Instances of such service are many: the feeding and strengthening of Elijah in his despondency, the protection of Elisha at Dothan, the preservation of the three youths in the furnace of fire and of Daniel in the lions' den, and the deliverance of Peter from prison and death, are among the most notable of such. For the furtherance of the counsels of Heaven God may give them temporary control over the forces of nature (Rev. 16:5; Dan. 7:2). Those celestial beings also have an interest in national and international affairs on earth, Israel's special guardian angel being 'Michael the archangel' (Dan. 10:13; 12:1; Jude 9). Innocent and obedient, they are endowed with powers of moral discernment and are called 'watchers' and 'holy ones' in Dan. 4:13, 23, able to judge the moral state of men and rulers as God sees them. One writer has called them 'the sleepless sentinels of heaven'. They find in all that God does on earth proofs of His omniscience and incomprehensible wisdom (Eph. 3:10), and form a heavenly court capable of making decisions and pronouncing verdicts in harmony with the will of God (Dan. 4:17). The final session of that celestial council, as far as judgment of earth's rulers is concerned, will take place just before the Son of Man comes to earth to establish His kingdom (Dan. 7:9, 26). Thereafter Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, will execute judgment and associate with Himself in judicial glory, not heavenly angels but earthly saints (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

The Antagonism of Wicked Spirits

The innumerable hosts of Satan are marshalled in battle array against the children of God on earth. The hosts of darkness are pitted against the children of light (Eph. 6:12). 'I will be like the Most High' was Satan's vaunted ambition and proud boast. His system is a system of counterfeits, as is clear from 2 Cor. 11:13-14, all opposed to the rule of God. After the Divine model he has evolved a gradation of ranks and powers. In answer to Daniel's prayer recorded in Chapter 9, an angelic messenger was immediately sent to reveal to him, for his encourage-

ment, the deliverance and blessings God purposed for His earthly people (Dan. 10:12). 'The prince of the kingdom of Persia',—not the earthly prince but the wicked spirit under Satanic control whose business was to further the interests of the Persian Empire—obstructed the Divine messenger in his mission, with the result that there was a delay of twenty-one days in the answer reaching Daniel (Dan. 10:13-14). Nowhere else do we have an explanation as to why we do not receive an immediate answer to some of our petitions. This Satanic activity, opposed to God, is doubtless responsible for national and international upheavals, and the rise and fall on earth of dictators who defy for a time the living God. Yet those who are called 'the salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world' can have the assurance at all times, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'

'The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never, forsake'.

'YE ARE . . . THAT YE MAY BE'

(1 Corinthians 5:7)

DR W. GRAHAM SCROGGIE

There is to be found in these words a threefold message: first, a warning against the subtle power of evil; second, a command to entirely break with evil; and, third, a motive for separation from evil. To each of these let us now turn our thoughts.

I. A warning against the subtle power of evil. 'Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?'

1. It is of the utmost importance to an understanding of the force of this warning that we know what are the use and meaning of leaven in Scripture, so let it be said at once that it is uniformly a symbol of evil. On the eve of the Passover all leaven was to be put away from the houses of the Israelites. It was prohibited