Understanding the Battle of the Unseen World, excursus on Daniel 10

Although Daniel had already experienced angelic appearances, this chapter gives an unusual insight into the unseen world around us. Without much explanation in the text we can still infer that there was a battle going on between good and evil spirit beings in relation to the nations of the world.

These verses have been the primary cause for conjecture about what has been termed “territorial spirits” and for the alleged importance in dealing with them in what has been called “spiritual warfare.” It is important that we understand the true nature of our spiritual conflict. Allegations from this chapter in Daniel touch many topics: angels, demons, and spiritual conflict. Never-the-less three truths address the major errors and misunderstandings about this battle of the unseen world.

1. Spirit beings, both good and evil, exist in an unseen world around us.

A materialistic culture denies an unseen world. A newer generation in the West accepts the idea of a spirit world, but does not distinguish between evil and good. Both are wrong.

a. Regarding their origin all spirit beings were part of the original, good creation of God (Gen 1:31). Evil spirit beings are probably angels who, like Satan, rebelled against God.

b. Good spirit beings are also called angels in the Bible. Those which are evil are also called demons and unclean (Mat 10:1) or evil (Lk 7:21) spirits.

c. Both good and evil spirit beings are personal beings. They possess a will, emotions, moral responsibility, intellect, and self-consciousness (cf 2 Sam 14:20; Job 38:7; 2 Tim 2:26). Spirit beings have no physical bodies (Lk 24:39; Eph 6:12), are without gender (Mk 12:25; cf Mat 19), and do not die (Lk 20:36; cf 1 Cor 15:54-56). They appear to have ranks (cf Eph 1:20-21; 6:12; Rom 8:38). Satan is the first among evil spirit beings (Mt 12:24; cf 25:41). Good spirit beings worship and serve God (Hebr 1:6-7); evil spirit beings are destructive and oppose God.

2. A battle is being fought in this unseen world affecting both heaven and earth.

Failing to accept the existence of an unseen world and failing to distinguish good from evil are both dangerous. We need to recognize that a battle is going on which affects the world.

a. It affects heaven to which Satan at the time of Job had access (Job 1:6) and from which he and his host will be cast out (Rev 12:6-9).

b. It affects the earth globally as seen in the example of Daniel 10:10-21, the role of Satan as a deceiver of nations (Rev 20:3), and the connection between idolatry and the worship of demons (1 Cor 10:19-21).

c. It affects individuals since Satan is an adversary seeking prey (1 Pet 5:8) and believers battle against evil spirit beings (Eph 6:10-20). Compare the Satanic attack on Job (Job 1-2).

d. As there was a beginning, so will there be an end to this spirit conflict. Satan lost his position in heaven, was cursed after man’s fall (Gen. 3:15), was effectively defeated by the death of Christ (John 12:31; 16:11), will suffer defeat during the tribulation (Rev 12:7-12), be imprisoned during the Millennium (Rev 20:1-3), and cast finally into the lake of fire with all his angels (Rev 20:10; Mt 25:41).

3. Scripture gives adequate explanation concerning our position in this spiritual battle.

Awareness of the unseen world and its battle has not delivered multitudes from their fears and oppression. Victory is available in Jesus Christ but even some Christians are unaware of their own position in this battle. They either wrongly estimate the danger, or they may fail to understand what they have been given to ensure victory in this conflict.

a. We should understand the extent of our danger. Satan is out to devour us (1 Pet 5:8) although the one who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:4). No temptation comes upon us for which God does not provide a way of escape (1 Cor 10:13) but we can willingly allow ourselves to be influenced by Satan (cf Acts 5:3-4). Our fallen sinful nature and its temptations are our greatest drive to sin (Gal 5:16-17; Jam 1:14) but Satan is the great tempter (Mt 4:3; cf 1 Cor 7:5 & 1 Th 3:5).

b. We should understand and fulfil our responsibilities. Draw near to God, resist Satan and he will flee (Jam 4:7; 1 Pet 5:9). Put on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:10). Pray (Eph 6:18-19). Be aware of Satan’s devises (2 Cor 2:11). Put to death sin in us (Col 3:5).

c. We should have confidence in the sufficiency of Christ and His Word. In Christ we have all spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3). By His Word we are equipped for every good deed (2 Tim 3:17). Know that Scripture nowhere says that children of God can be demon possessed, that we must bind evil spirits, or that we must determine the names of evil spirits or identify their dominions.

Knowing that there is an unseen world and a spiritual battle we should draw near to God and resist Satan. We do this first of all by coming to God through Jesus Christ. Only by faith in what Christ has done do we have the basis to draw near. We continue to draw close to God by being hearers and doers of the Word of God. We live truthfully, righteously and in faith. We rest in the peace and hope of our salvation. We pray. We put on the whole armor of God.

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