

DON'T FORGET GOD'S INDIGNATION AGAINST SIN

8 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had appeared to me previously. **2** Now when I received the vision I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam. And in the vision I saw myself standing beside the Ulai River. **3** I looked up, and there before me was a ram with two horns standing beside the river. The two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, and the longer one came up last. **4** I watched the ram charging westward and northward and southward. No beast could stand against him, neither was there any who could rescue out of his hand; he did as he pleased and magnified himself. **5** As I was considering this, suddenly a goat came from the west, crossing the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground—and the goat had a prominent horn between his eyes. **6** He came to the ram with the two horns, the one I had seen standing beside the river, and he charged at him with the fury of his power. **7** I saw him approach the ram, and he was enraged against him. He struck the ram and broke his two horns, and the ram had no strength to stand against him. [The goat] threw him down to the ground and trampled upon him; and there was none who was able to deliver the ram out of his hand. **8** Then the goat greatly magnified himself. But when he had become strong, the large horn was broken. In its place there came up four prominent [horns] facing toward the four winds of heaven. **9** And out of one of them there came a little horn that grew to become very great, exerting its power toward the south and toward the east and toward the glorious land. **10** It grew great, even [reaching] the host of heaven. Some of the host and of the stars it threw to the ground and trampled upon them. **11** Indeed, it magnified itself, even against the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was thrown down. **12** On account of transgression, the host was given over to [the horn] along with the daily sacrifice; it flung truth to the ground and it did as it pleased and succeeded. **13** Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one asked the first one who spoke, How long will it take for the vision [to be fulfilled]—the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression that brings desolation, so as to cause both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot? **14** And he said to me, It will take two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be cleansed.

15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I tried to understand it. And there standing before me was someone who looked like a man. **16** And I heard the voice of a man between [the banks of] the Ulai. He called out, Gabriel, cause this man to understand the vision. **17** So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came near I was terrified and I fell upon my face. But he said to me, Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end. **18** As he was speaking with me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground. But he touched me and made me stand upright. **19** Then he said, I am going to let you know what will occur at the end of the indignation, for [the vision] pertains to the appointed time of the end. **20** The ram that you saw—the one that had the two horns—represents the kings of Media and Persia. **21** The shaggy goat represents the king of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. **22** The [horn] that was broken and the four [horns] that stood up in its place represent four kingdoms that will arise from that nation, although they will not possess his power. **23** In the latter period of their reign, when the transgressors have

come to the full [extent of their sin], there shall arise a king with a cruel expression, one who is a master of intrigue. ²⁴He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastations and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. ²⁵And through his cunning he will cause deceit to succeed by his manipulation; he will magnify himself in his heart. He will destroy many when they feel secure; he will also stand up in opposition against the Prince of princes. But he will be broken, yet not by [human] hand. ²⁶The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given to you is true; but seal up the vision, because it pertains to the distant future. ²⁷I, Daniel, fainted, and was sick for several days. Then I got up and [once again] went about doing the king's business. I was perplexed by the vision, but there was no one who understood it. (Dan. 8:1-27)

Introduction

One day a Christian lady picked up her Bible and decided to venture beyond the well-known gospel narratives and the familiar Psalms. She determined to become better acquainted with God by gaining a broader knowledge of His Word. As she read through some of the judgments of God recorded in the Old Testament, and some of the words of God uttered through the prophets, she was aghast and exclaimed, "Is this **my** God? Does **my** God actually have such deep indignation against sin that He finally does enact such awful judgments against men?"

As she read through the books of the New Testament she began to discover passages she had not encountered before, and in other familiar passages she now saw elements she had overlooked before. For example, the message of John 3:16 is the good news that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish; but the implication of the verse is that those who are without Christ do, in fact, perish in their sins.

No doubt this Christian lady grew in her knowledge of God, she came to know Him in a deeper—and unexpected—way. Along side her love for God perhaps she began to develop a healthy fear of God as well.

Someone once observed that many people view God as being "too descent to send nice people like themselves to hell." Many people tend to view God as a great grandfather figure: a gracious and benevolent Spirit who indiscriminately bestows blessings upon people without getting too personal about their conduct.

Without doubt, the LORD does exhibit a great deal of patience and longsuffering towards men, and His heart's desire is for our redemption. But the LORD God also has a very deep and righteous indignation against sin, and in His appointed time He reveals that indignation in the form of judgment.

There came a time when the Jews of the Old Testament era encountered that indignation against sin; it took the form of the seventy-year Babylonian Captivity. But the tragic message of Daniel 8 is this: when the later generation of Jews forgot

the divine indignation that befell their forefathers, they themselves became liable to experience God's indignation against sin.

Let us now consider this very important topic: God's Indignation against Sin, and let us be careful that we do not forget His righteous indignation against sin.

I. Don't Forget God's Indignation against Sin, After He has Restored You (Dan. 8:19)

In verse 19 the angel informs Daniel that the vision he has just received concerns the events that will take place *“at the end (בְּאַחֲרֵית) of the indignation.”* The events related in the vision will occur at some time after the Babylonian Captivity, when the Jews have once more returned to the land of Canaan.

For the Old Testament Jews, the Babylonian Captivity was the experience of God's righteous indignation against sin:

Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of Jehovah, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. ¹⁵Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of Jehovah was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. ¹⁷He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁸He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of Jehovah's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. ¹⁹They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. ²⁰He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. (2 Chron. 36:14-20)

The experience of that indignation—on the part of those who survived—was a terribly bitter ordeal:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. ²There on the poplars we hung our harps, ³for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, “Sing for us one of the songs of Zion!” ⁴How can we sing the songs of Jehovah while we are in a foreign land? (Psl. 137:1-4)

During that period of captivity there were times when the Jews despaired of ever being restored:

You, O Jehovah, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation. ²⁰Why do you continue to forget us? Why do you forsake us so long? ²¹Restore us to yourself, O Jehovah, so that we may return; renew our days as of old, ²²unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure. (Lam. 5:19-22)

But once the captivity was over and they were restored, there arose the temptation to forget that painful encounter with God's righteous indignation. In his prayer, Ezra laments the fact that the people of Israel have turned back to their sinful ways and stand in danger of once again incurring God's righteous indignation, perhaps even in a far more severe form than previously:

What has happened to us is a result of our evil deeds and our great guilt, and yet, our God, you have punished us less than our sins have deserved and have given us a remnant like this. ¹⁴Shall we again break your commandments and join with the peoples who commit such detestable practices? Would you not be angry enough with us to destroy us, leaving us no remnant or survivor? (Ezra 9:13-14)

Consider this more contemporary example of someone forgetting God's indignation against sin and the painful consequences: Bob was finishing a ten-year prison term for embezzlement. He described the horror of prison life; never again did he want to go through that experience! But, he confessed, as his prison days were coming to an end and freedom loomed before him, he was once again tempted to take the route of fast and easy money by resorting to his old practice of embezzlement.

Let us not forget God's righteous indignation against sin, after He has restored us. Let us take to heart the counsel and warning the Lord Jesus gave to the man whom He healed at the Pool of Bethesda: *"Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, 'Look, you are healed; stop sinning, or something worse will happen to you'"* (Jn. 5:14.)

II. Don't Forget God's Indignation against Sin, Or Else You May Drift Back into Sin (Dan. 8:23)

In verse 23 we are informed that the villain revealed to Daniel in this vision will do his evil work *"when the transgressors have come to the full [extent of their sin.]"* In other words, the LORD will employ this villain and his destructive work against His people when Israel has drifted back into sin and has returned to a lifestyle of sin, disregarding the holy commandments of the LORD their God.

After the Jews returned from Babylon, more than ever before they would find themselves surrounded by a seductive and challenging environment. Little Palestine would become a pawn between her powerful neighbors, Egypt to the south and Syria to the north. Both of these neighboring nations, especially the rulers of Syria, were intent on spreading Greek culture and civilization, which was totally pagan and contrary to the law of the LORD. Judaism would find itself to be a minority alternative in the midst of a unified and pagan civilization (D.S. Russell, *Between the Testaments*, Fortress Press, Phila. 1960, p.14)

It was Alexander the Great—the Greek conqueror represented by the he-goat with the prominent horn (vs. 5)—who began this movement in an effort to unify the world under his control by means of a common culture: a blending of the east and west into a melting pot civilization known as the Hellenistic culture. After his death, his successors in Egypt and Syria continued to pursue this ideal.

The Jews felt the impact of this Hellenistic culture on their way of life. According to A.C. Purdy (quoted in *Between the Testaments*, p.19), "the challenge to Judaism here was not that of a rival religion but of a rival culture. It was the challenge of secularism. The religion of the Jews was yet to be directly attacked, but a definite and aggressive Hellenism had appeared among them."

What were some of the characteristics of this Hellenistic culture, and how was it propagated? There was the formation of gymnasiums, places where the Greek pre-occupation with the body and the cult of the body beautiful could be cultivated and displayed. There was the proliferation of the popular Olympic-type games; every city had a stadium where the populace went to cheer for their favorite athletic heroes. The theatre, too, played an important part in the spread of Hellenistic culture. It should be noted, too, that the religious rites and ceremonies, with which many of the games and performances were associated, would have an inevitable influence on the Jewish population and would tend to corrupt the minds of the youth, accompanied as they often were by a measure of immorality and vice (*Between the Testaments*, p.20.)

Furthermore, the theatre was not just a form of entertainment, it was also a means of communicating a world view and way of life radically different from that revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures (*Between the Testaments*, pp.19-20.) The entertainment media serves the same function in the modern world. Consider the candid statement of Sylvester Weaver, NBC programming president, explaining the goal and purpose of TV programming (quoted in *Entertainment Weekly Magazine*, February 19-26, 1999, p.32),"Entertainment was used to get the people to watch the medium ... but the end result would be that we would inform them, enrich them, enlighten them, to liberate them from tribal primitive belief patterns."

The influence of this Hellenistic culture was not limited to the social and cultural, by its very nature it created a very definite spiritual atmosphere. It presented a

very wide spectrum of elements packaged together: the astrology and occult mysticism from Babylon and Egypt, along with the humanistic philosophy and science of Greece (*Between the Testaments*, pp. 20,23; also, D.S. Russell, *Methods and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, p.18) The Egyptian and Syrian rulers followed a policy of toleration by which Judaism and the Hellenistic culture were allowed to exist side by side. But these were years of great peril for the Jewish faith, for this policy aimed at Hellenization through a gradual infiltration of Greek influence and a gradual assimilation to the Greek way of life (*Between the Testaments*, p.25.)

Indeed, this strategy was having its nefarious effect. Many cities of Palestine were won over to the Greek way of life Even in Jerusalem there were many who adopted the Greek way. A certain high priest changed his name from Joshua to Jason (the Greek equivalent of Joshua) and remodeled Jerusalem along Hellenistic lines (*Between the Testaments*, p.27.) To quote the Old Testament commentators, Keil & Delitzsch,

... by the wickedness of the profane and unpriestly conduct of this man [Jason] Greek customs and the adoption of pagan manners became so prevalent, that the priests no longer concerned themselves with the service of the altar, but, despising the temple and forgetting the sacrifice, they hurried off to witness the spectacles in the palaestra [the sports arena] (*Commentary on Daniel*, Keil and Delitzsch, p.306.)

Jason was eventually ousted from the priestly office by Menelaus, who obtained the office of high priest by offering a higher payment to the Syrian king. The followers of Menelaus all the more promoted the secular and pagan Greek way of life (*Between the Testaments*, p.27.)

There is a lesson to be learned from this period of Israel's history: if we forget God's indignation against sin we are very likely to drift back into sin and even apostasy. We would do well to seriously consider the findings of two Christian researchers, published in their 1984 book entitled, *Vital Signs*. Some of their findings and observations are as follows:

... numerous indicators suggest that rather than adhering to a Christian philosophy of life that is occasionally tarnished by lapses into infidelity, many Christians are profoundly secularized, and only occasionally do they respond to conditions and situations in a Christian manner. Recent research shows that many Christians are especially vulnerable to the worldly philosophies of materialism, humanism, and hedonism. (*Vital Signs*, George Barna and William Paul McKay, Crossway Books, Westchester IL, 1984, p.36)

A recent national survey discovered that no fewer than seven out of ten Christians are prone to hedonistic attitudes about life. The study found, for example, strong support among Christians for the 1960's notion that an

individual is free to do whatever pleases him, as long as it does not hurt others. Two out of five Christians maintain that such thinking is proper, thus effectively rejecting the unconditional code of ethics and morality taught in the Bible. A similar proportion of born-again people deny the possibility that pain or suffering could be a means of becoming a better, more mature individual. That, of course, refutes the scriptural teaching that pain and suffering are a means to perfect our faith. As a final example, three out of ten Christians agree that “nothing in life is more important than having fun and being happy.” ... the Word of God clearly teaches that the highest values are those of praising God, obeying his commands, and seeking his Kingdom (*Vital Signs*, p. 141.)

Regarding materialism, the statistics are nearly identical. Two out of three Christians express such love for money, possessions, and other material objects that their Christianity cannot be said to rule their hearts. For instance, more than half of the Christian public believes that they “never have enough money to buy what they need”—not what the “want,” but what they “need.” One out of four believers claim that “the more things you have, the more successful you’ve been.” Not only are these beliefs counter to those expressed in Scripture, but the fact that the proportion of Christians who affirm these values is equivalent to the proportion of non-Christians who hold similar views indicates how meaningless Christianity has been in the lives of millions of professed believers (*Vital Signs*, pp. 141-142.)

... seven out of ten Christians support at least some of the principles central to the humanist perspective. Attitudes about abortion provide such a clue. The fact that 40 percent of the born-again public believes that there is no right or wrong position on this matter intimates their frivolous, clouded understanding of the sanctity of human life in the eyes of God, and the responsibility that we have to honor God through life. Similarly, 42 percent of the Christians interviewed said that without the government’s laws, there would be no real guidelines for people to follow in daily life. When close to half of the Christian body overlook the Bible as an authoritative guideline for society, the restricted relevance of faith and spiritual commitment in peoples’ lives becomes clear (*Vital Signs*, p. 142.)

Let us not forget God’s righteous indignation against sin, so as to drift back into it: *"I will listen to what God Jehovah will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints—but let them not return to folly"* (Psl. 85:8.)

III. Don’t Forget God’s Indignation against Sin, Or that Indignation Will be Directed against You (Dan. 8:12)

Verse 12 indicates that the devastation and desecration perpetrated by this villain known as the *"little horn"* was the consequence of the transgression of

Israel: "*On account [בְּפֶשַׁע] of transgression, the host [i.e.; the community of the people of God] was given over to [the horn] along with the daily sacrifice.*"

Who was this "*little horn*" and what did he do? His name was Antiochus Epiphanes, a king of Syria, and very committed to uniting his kingdom by means of Hellenistic culture. He is the king who replaced Jason the high priest with Menelaus when the latter offered the higher bid for the office. Upon learning that Jason was seeking to reclaim the office of high priest, and having just suffered a bitter and humiliating defeat in Egypt, Antiochus returned to Syria via Israel intent on taking vengeance on the Jews. He attacked Jerusalem, drove out Jason, and restored Menelaus. His soldiers were let loose and massacred many of the people. At this time the temple was desecrated and plundered (*Between the Testaments*, p.28.)

Even the secular Jews were shocked by this act of sacrilege and offered resistance to Antiochus. Confronted by such resistance, Antiochus determined to wipe out the Jews' religion altogether. All Jewish sacrifices were forbidden. The sacrament of circumcision was prohibited. The Sabbath and feast days could no longer be observed. The Scriptures were confiscated and destroyed. Jews were forced to eat swine's flesh and sacrifice to pagan gods at altars erected throughout the land. The crowning deed of infamy was the erecting of an altar to Zeus within the temple court, (this is what the Scripture refers to as "*the abomination [that causes] desolation.*") Agents of the Syrian government patrolled Palestine enforcing the new laws (*Between the Testaments*, pp.28-29.)

Daniel 11:36, speaking of these events, refers to this period as "*the indignation*"—God's indignation against the sins of those identified as His people: "*The king [Antiochus Epiphanes] will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the indignation has been accomplished, for what has been determined will take place.*"

If we as individual Christians, and as the church collectively, forget God's righteous indignation against sin, and continue to drift into sin and apostasy, that indignation will be directed against us. If we neglect the worship and the ordinances of the LORD, there may come a day when that worship will be taken away from us. If we neglect the Scriptures, there may come a day when the Scriptures will be taken away from us. If we compromise or neglect a life of devotion to Christ, there may come a day when such a life will be forbidden.

The words of the hymn writer, Albert Midlane, provide a very appropriate prayer:

Revive Your work, O Lord, Your mighty arm make bare;
Speak with the voice that wakes the dead, and make Your people hear.

Revive Your work, O Lord, disturb this sleep of death;
Quicken the smouldering embers now by Your almighty breath.

Revive Your work, O Lord, create soul-thirst for Thee;
And hungering for the Bread of Life, O may our spirits be.

Revive Your work, O Lord, exalt Your precious Name;
And, by the Holy Spirit, our love for You and Yours inflame.

Revive Your work, O Lord, give Pentecostal showers:
The glory shall be all Your own, the blessing, Lord, be ours.