

4.5 The Judgment of Evil

A summary of the 5th Lecture by J N Darby on the Present Hope of the Church – Geneva 1840 - entitled The Progress of Evil on the Earth

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Evil increases, especially in Christendom

The Wheat and the Tares

The Apostasy

The Beasts or Gentile Empires

The Rejection of Christ

The Lord coming to Judge

Little Result from Preaching the Gospel

Signs of the Times

Darby's Conclusion

The Progress of Evil on the Earth

We must expect evil to increase in the world, particularly in Christendom, both secularly and religiously. However, evil does not come under judgment until the return of Christ at His Appearing. The knowledge of God will then fill the earth. How? By the judgment of God, which must begin at the house of God.

As evil increases, Christians see the proximity of judgment, piety increases and Christians withdraw from evil. They preach the gospel, but there is little result.

Evil increases, especially in Christendom

The notion that things will continually improve is totally contrary to what we are taught in scripture. We are deluded if we think that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord before He exercises judgment. Instead of hoping that good will continue to progress in the world and the church, we must expect evil increase. We are to expect increasing evil until it becomes so flagrant that it will be necessary for the Lord to judge it. Sadly, this is the received wisdom in much of Christendom at large and in secular society.¹

¹ Darby wrote in the 19th century – he saw the trend. Now we in the 21st century see the prevalent religious view that we should labour to build the kingdom of God here. Apart from being futile, it sets aside what Christ has done. It is depicted in that rousing, popular (at least in Britain) but doctrinally perverse song by William Blake, 'Jerusalem'.

This is the character which this wickedness will take, as an external, secular power:

1. Evil will go on increasing until the end.
2. Satan will urge it on until the Lord destroys his power.
3. The apostasy will take place in Christendom.
4. The Antichrist will fall and be ruined.

The Wheat and the Tares

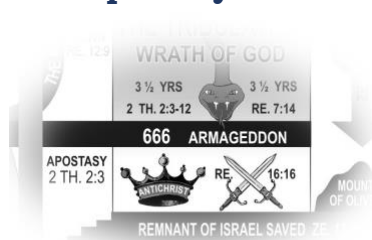
We should draw on the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24-30). Satan had put evil in the field where the good seed of the word had been sown. This will remain there and ripen. Christians will not enjoy the result of its removal, because the evil is to remain until the day of judgment: 'Let both grow together until the harvest.' The harvest is at the end of this age; that is, of the dispensation closed by the coming of Christ.

The tares are evil things such as heresy or the corruption of the truth. The enemy sows these after Jesus Christ had sown the good seed. But the Lord says it should remain until the harvest. The evil which Satan has produced by a corrupted religion will exist until the end. Our efforts ought to be directed – not to pluck out the tares but to gather in the children of God – to assemble the co-heirs of Jesus Christ.

It is worth remarking that the tares were already sown in the days of the apostles; and in one sense it is a happy thing for us since we have both the warning and the evidence in scripture.

Now, in God's dealings, we have to do with grace and not with judgment. It is not for us to judge the world.

The Apostasy



Apostasy will be fully developed in the 'last time'; when the Antichrist also will have been revealed. (See 1 John 2:18). This development will be after the departure of the Church and the restraint of the Holy Spirit.

God says:

- *'The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*

In secular society progress has been regarded in the throwing aside of moral values promoting 'alternative lifestyles, indiscriminate abortion, sexual perversion to the point where Christians can be criminalised for doing or teaching what is right, and much of the public church supports it.

- *speaking lies in hypocrisy'(1 Timothy 4:1).*
- *'This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come'(2 Timothy 3:1-5).*

In Timothy. *'Men shall be lovers of their own selves,'* etc. These are not pagans; they are nominal Christians. It is written about them, *'Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. ... They shall wax worse and worse.'* (2 Timothy 3:5,13)

'For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.' Compare these words with Acts 20:29-31: *'I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.'* 1 Peter 4:17. This state of things began during the lifetime of the apostles.

Jude's epistle is a treatise on the apostasy. We get three sorts of apostasy brought together upon which last judgment will fall. We are told of those who have *'crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ'* (v.4). These have brought in (v.11):

- Natural apostasy - the character of Cain – hatred and unrighteousness.
- Ecclesiastical apostasy - e.g. Balaam – teaching wrong things for reward.
- Open revolt - e.g. Korah, who set himself up against the rights of the priesthood (Aaron) and of royalty (Moses).

The great whore (the ecclesiastical system) will rule the beast whose self-will and blaspheming character will be fully manifested in the last apostasy. Meanwhile, Christians desire the destruction of the whore's influence. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 it says, *'That day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God.'*

All this must happen before the day of the Lord comes.

Darby points out that it is evil – not the gospel - that will unite the characters of wickedness which have appeared from the beginning:

1. Man has always wanted to have his own will.
2. He has exalted himself against God.
3. He has put himself under the guidance of Satan.

The Beasts or Gentile Empires

There are four successive beasts in Daniel 7.



1. The empire of Babylon (lion with eagle's wings).



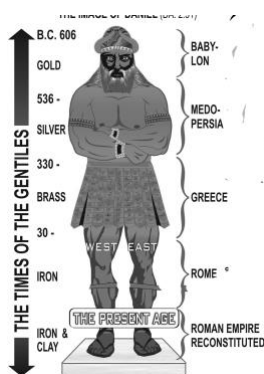
2. The empire of the Persians (bear).



3. The empire of the Greeks, or Alexander in particular (leopard - split into four heads).



4. The Roman Empire (a dreadful and terrible beast with marks altogether peculiar to itself).



Following the destruction of the last king of the Jews (Zedekiah in BC599), earthly dominion passed to the Gentiles in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. He began by establishing a false religion by force. He made a statue that all the world was to worship, and he became lifted up in heart and ravaged the world to satisfy his will. So, he was made to become like a beast for seven years.

The Rejection of Christ

The chief priests, who were in God's view, the representatives of religion upon earth, and Pontius Pilate, the representative of earthly power, joined in league together to reject and put to death the Son of God. Thus, the fourth monarchy became guilty of rejecting the Messiah.

The Jews are set aside. If God permits the Jews to return to their country for a short time, it is that His Son might appear at the re-commencement of the fourth monarchy.

But as to that which concerns the church on earth, we have seen it marred by the seed of the wicked one, and the apostasy which resulted from it; (Dan. 7:9,11), 'I beheld till the thrones were cast down and the Ancient of days did sit.... I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld, even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning'. The Roman Empire has continued; it has even become 'Christian'.

The Lord coming to Judge

Daniel 7:13-14: *'I saw ... one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.'*

The kingdom is given to the Son of man when the fourth beast is destroyed. The judgment and destruction of the fourth monarchy have not yet taken place, as we know from Daniel 2:34-35: *'Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.... and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.'*

It is *after* the total destruction of the statue that the stone *begins* to grow; which signifies that the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, which is to fill the whole earth, will not begin to spread until after the fourth beast has been judged and destroyed.

'The beast that thou sawest was, and is not' (Revelation 7:8): is the Roman Empire.² As an empire, it no longer exists. However, it will come out of the pit, with a diabolical character; it will be a full expression of the power of Satan. This king will assume all the rights and privileges of Christ, arrogating them to himself: *'I will ascend into heaven'* – what Christ only has done; *'I will exalt myself above the stars of God.'* (Isaiah 14:13-14). Even the Jewish nation will receive him who comes in his own name.

Little Result from Preaching the Gospel

The church's task was to proclaim the glory of Christ everywhere. Many evangelical Christians, therefore, hope that, through better evangelical endeavour, the gospel will spread itself all over the world during this dispensation. However, in these times, we can only expect poor results. There will be blessing, but there will be those who slip away

God told Noah that He was going to destroy the world. Did this prevent his preaching to his fellow mortals? This animated him, so that he might gain those who had ears to hear. And the result – eight, just his family.

Yet we preach the gospel – the only means of causing men to escape the righteous judgments which threaten them. God gives, at the same time, the power to the testimony that would separate the good from that which is under

² One cannot escape thinking of the liberal, Godless view of the European Union. Satan will take control of this institution.

judgment. I believe this to be God's usual mode of procedure.

When we see evil increasing, and God drawing away believers from that evil, it may be taken as a sign that the judgment of God is nigh.

Signs of the Times

There are two signs of the proximity of judgment:

1. Piety increases
2. Christians withdraw from evil

In the word of God, we see that the present economy will have an end. Evil will progress to a greater and greater height until the wicked one is destroyed by the coming of Christ.

Let us conclude with the warning which the Saviour gives us: *'Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.'* (Romans 11:22.)

Darby's Conclusion

'Has the church kept itself in the goodness of God? Christendom has become completely corrupted; the dispensation of the Gentiles has been found unfaithful, with no hope of restoration. As the Jewish dispensation was cut off, the Christian dispensation will be cut off too. May God give us the grace to continue steadfast in our hope, and to rest upon His faithfulness.'