

STUDY 5

The Battle for Worship¹

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This paper continues from the papers presented before and draws from them in the discussion on ‘The Battle for Worship’. We have seen the nature of the priesthood and we can only understand our priesthood in the context of the priesthood of Christ, our Great High Priest. We have also considered all that is implied from that office and, most significantly, the high priesthood of Christ is ‘the powerful reality which secures the community by its propitiatory and intercessory aspects and which leads, energises and directs the community in its worship’.² We have also noted the designation of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King and have drawn ‘the link between Christ as the last Adam and all that the first Adam was created to be’.³ It is from this understanding of Adam as priest and leader of the creation in worship that we begin this paper and see the conflict that goes on.

We need to point out before we start that it is not just Adam’s conflict. It is also not just the conflict that Jesus underwent and we then assume that the whole matter is now quite removed from us. Our discussion involves the continuing conflict in which we are all presently involved.

ADAM’S COMMISSION AND FAILURE

As we have noted in the last session, Adam was created in the image of God and, as the representation of God in the created universe, he was blessed by God to command the creation in the grateful response to the Creator God, i.e. in worship, and in the ‘extension of the boundaries of Eden’.⁴ Adam’s brief was to ‘cultivate . . . and keep’ Eden (Gen. 2:15). Superficially, we may infer that he was destined for an agricultural lifestyle. However, Beale argues that the words ‘cultivate and keep’ may be translated as ‘serve and guard’, and this has reference to the temple worship. He says:

The two Hebrew words for ‘cultivate and keep’ (respectively, ‘*abad* and *shamar*’) can easily be, and usually are, translated ‘serve and guard.’ When these two words occur together later in the OT,

¹ In the book, *Created for Worship: From Genesis to Revelation to You* by Noel Due (Mentor, Fearn, 2005), the first chapter is titled ‘The Battle for Worship’ and I have drawn much from the material in that chapter.

² Quote from outline in notes handed to presenters.

³ Notes to presenters.

⁴ Notes to presenters.

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without exception they have this meaning and refer either to Israelites ‘serving and guarding/obeying’ God’s word (about 10 times) or, more often to priests who ‘serve’ God in the temple and ‘guard’ the temple from unclean things entering it (Num 3:7–8; 8:25–26; 18:5–6; 1 Chr 23:32; Ezek 44:14).⁵

However, instead of serving and guarding Eden in the worship of the Creator God and having dominion ‘over every living thing that moves upon the earth’, Adam paid due honour to the serpent and allowed the serpent to dominate him. He succumbed to the deceit and plunged humanity into a life of disobedience. Instead of worshipping the Creator, he ‘exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature’ (Rom. 1:25, RSV). This then has become the bias in humanity from which it does not have the ability to recover. The primeval history in Genesis is an account of that deterioration. Yet with the new beginning in Abraham, the history of Israel waxed and waned, and eventually finished with a similar sad ending. The early church was beset with heresies of every description and this trend continues to be repeated throughout subsequent centuries. A familiar pattern is evident. After the Spirit has revived the people of God, the next generation then distils its experiences into a code which is then assumed to be the ultimate truth. This only serves to perpetuate a lie because it has exchanged the living relationship with the Creator God for a set of codified principles with which humanity thinks that dominion can then be exerted over the created world. That is not the way things should be. Rather this dominion or custodianship over the created world is in participation with, and in dependence on, the Creator God.

In a recent book by Michael Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*,⁶ his thesis is that the turbulence in Europe over the past two centuries is due largely to two principal factors. One is secular humanism with its assumption in the innate goodness of humanity and the other is the Protestant assumption of a literal heaven on earth. Both assumptions are fallacious as the former denies the Fall and the latter looks for a ‘structural temple in the new heaven’.⁷ Both look to the achievement of humanity in the fulfilment of the purpose of God. This may not sound evil, but evil is anything which denies all that God is and is doing.

CAN ONE DRAW OUT LEVIATHAN WITH A FISH HOOK?

The problem of evil is always with us. There is an interesting rhetorical question posed by Job: ‘Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook . . .?’ (Job 41:1, RSV). Job did not answer this directly. Leviathan was a fearsome sea monster (dragon) in old Canaanite mythology. He is often referred to as the evil one, with remarkable powers and unassailable. Well, how does one pin him down? Is it by using a bait on a fishhook?⁸ Isaiah affirmed that God would eventually vanquish him (Isa. 27:1). So in

⁵ G. K. Beale, ‘Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation’, in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, March 2005, vol. 48, no. 1, p. 7.

⁶ M. Burleigh, *Earthly Powers: The Clash of Religion and Politics in Europe, from the French Revolution to the Great War*, Harper Collins, New York, 2005.

⁷ By this I mean a literal fulfilment of God’s purpose in the present realm.

⁸ There has been much written by the church fathers on the deception of Satan basing it on this verse.

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this last section of his book, Job, having gone on to acknowledge the unassailability of the evil one, made this acknowledgment of God: ‘that your own right hand can give you victory’ (Job 40:14). He further went on to say:

² I know that thou canst do every *thing*, and *that* no thought can be withholden from thee. ³Who *is* he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. ⁴ Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. ⁵ I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. ⁶ Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:2–6, AV).

I have no doubt that indeed in this paper, I am talking about things ‘that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not’. But the last remark by Job sums up the stance we should take: ‘I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes’. The relevance of this last statement by Job is that we will not be able to draw out Leviathan with a fish hook. God’s own right hand will bring about the victory. We need to recognise our total dependence on Him and the first step is the putting away of self in repentance.

THE ONENESS OF HUMANITY WITH THE GOD-MAN

Before we go on to discuss the temptation of Jesus in the battle for worship, there is one point we need to make and that is the oneness of humanity with the God–Man, Jesus Christ. This is nowhere better expounded than in the thoughts of Paul in Romans 5:12–21 when he talks about the first and last Adam (man):

¹⁸ Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous (Rom. 5:18–19, RSV).

This is not some kind of convoluted theology, but it must certainly be the core of Paul’s thought, because without this sense of the oneness of humanity the whole of the argument of the gospel will not make sense. We would then be thrown back onto our own resources with perhaps some assistance from a remote god as in popular religion. The incarnation of the Son of God in the person of Jesus as the God–Man and His crucifixion on the cross effected the restoration for humanity. The true God and the true man both unite in the person of Jesus Christ. It is through this uniqueness of the person of Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, that the blessings of God come to humanity and through the same unique Jesus Christ, the response from humanity returns to God.

This is not a gospel where the process is external to us, but a gospel of identification with Christ and therefore one of co-crucifixion as Paul says:

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20, RSV).

However, the whole idea is controversial and this interpretation is best avoided.

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It is because of our identification with Christ that the battle for worship takes on an even greater significance for us.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry was His temptation in the wilderness. This event took place straight after His baptism when the voice from heaven had said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased' (Matt. 3:17, RSV). This combines the proclamation of kingship (Ps. 2:7) and servanthood (Isa. 42:1). There is more that needs to be drawn out from this event. Christ is identified with humanity in solidarity. In the anointing, He is clearly the Prophet, Priest and King, as we have seen in the previous papers.⁹ And it is in His ordained office and in solidarity with humanity that we can fully appreciate His temptation.

The temptation of Jesus has often been seen from the 'hero' point of view—i.e. Jesus was a great man and He was strong enough to withstand the temptations of Satan, and because of His victory He is able to help us in our need. Well that is all true, but it is often seen from a point of view that satisfies our longing for a hero figure, very much like seeing our sporting heroes battling it out for the gold medals. I am sure many of us can identify with that attitude sometime.

One underlying framework that we need to establish is the nature of the humanity of Jesus. We have affirmed many times that 'the Word was made flesh' (John 1:14, AV). 'What kind of flesh?' we need to ask. Is it flesh that is incapable of sinning? Or, is it flesh like ours? It is not flesh that cannot be stained with sin, but 'he himself likewise partook of the same nature' (Heb. 2:14)—i.e. He took on the same flesh as ours. At the same time, the writer to the Hebrews is keen to emphasise the fact that Jesus was without sin even though He took on the same flesh as ours. The New Testament is clear that Jesus is identified with sinful humanity. Isaiah says, 'he was numbered with the transgressors' (Isa. 53:12). Paul made the point of this total identification with humanity by referring to Jesus as the 'second man [Adam]'. Paul could write in this way because the oneness of humanity in the incarnate Son of God was made possible by this act of God when 'the Word became flesh'.

This being so, then we must see the baptism of Jesus Christ as a baptism on our behalf. His death is also a death on our behalf, not as a mere substitute, but we died with Him as humanity was incorporated in Him through the cross. The temptation of Jesus is also a temptation on our behalf. It is His victory over Satan and it is also our victory when we are in Him. The oneness of humanity in Christ is the fulcrum for our understanding of these truths.

But there is more. The victory of Jesus over Satan in His temptation is also restorative. In that victory, He restores to us (humanity) what was lost in Adam. The serpent approached our first parents in the garden and Adam should have seen through that deception and not doubted the word of God. He succumbed and plunged the rest of humanity into sin. Jesus, as the second Adam, responded with the word of God, never doubting what was said and its full impact upon evil. He (Jesus) knew the

⁹ This is also dealt with in the 1st chapter of the book, *Created for Worship*, by Noel Due.

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glory He had with the Father before the world began (John 17:5). He wasn't going to exchange that for anything else, no matter how attractive the offer from Satan may be. He was resolute in honouring the Father and responded with these words from Deuteronomy, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve' (Matt. 4:10). And in this victory over Satan, He now leads the whole of humanity in the worship of God. He is the leader of our worship, a point made more explicit in the letter to the Hebrews and we will see that later in this school.

The response by Jesus to the temptation by Satan in quoting from Deuteronomy is not some kind of incantation to be used as the need arises. His use of the word expresses 'his *active obedience* to that word. It is this active obedience which gives him the power to resist the evil one and which enables him to prevail.'¹⁰

He now asks that we rest upon His victory and trust in Him. We are no match for the wiles of the evil one. It is only in Christ that we can have the victory and that starts with faith in Him. Therefore the words of Job in dealing with the problem of evil, 'Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes' (Job 42:6, AV).

THE CONTINUING BATTLE AGAINST THE EVIL ONE IN REVELATION 12–13

The battle of the Kingdom involves primarily the King, i.e. Jesus Christ. We read in Revelation 12:1–9 regarding the dragon and his battle against Christ:

His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born (v. 4, NIV).

In the life of Christ, the recorded temptations were but part of the many that Satan raged against Him. In Revelation 12–13, we have the description of 'an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads' (12:3, NIV). This is Satan himself. Michael and his angels have defeated him. There are two other beasts described, the first and the second.

The first beast 'had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name' (13:1, NIV). He 'seemed to have had a fatal wound on one of the heads, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast' (13:3, NIV). With that seeming fatal wound, the first beast mimics Christ.

Then there is the second beast. 'He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon' (13:11, NIV). 'And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men' (13:13, NIV). In this we see the counterfeit spirit. The dragon, the first beast and the second beast, making up the counterfeit trinity, continue in their attacks on the people of God.

We, as the people of God, are in Christ, and because of our union with Christ and Satan's inability to defeat Christ, he makes war on us, the people of God.

¹⁰ Noel Due, *Created for Worship*, p. 20.

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Furthermore, he knows that he has been defeated and has only a limited time to continue his attacks on the church:

Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus (Rev. 12:17).

⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain . . .¹⁴ and by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make an image for the beast which was wounded by the sword and yet lived (Rev. 13:7–8, 14, RSV).

We need to realise that the war and the deception by the evil one upon the church and the people of God is a very real one, i.e. all of us are included in this deception. We also do not rationalise this deception by the evil one in terms of principles or philosophy. No doubt that would give us a sense of confidence that we have a handle on the problem, but it is a false confidence. In fact, it only goes to accentuate the deception.

THE LIFE OF DEPENDENCE

We conclude by returning to the words of Job:

²I know that thou canst do every *thing*, and *that* no thought can be withholden from thee. ³Who *is* he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. ⁴Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. ⁵I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. ⁶Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:2–6, AV).

This battle is beyond us and our comprehension. It demands our ‘active obedience’ to the word in repentance, and a life of dependence on the second Adam who is victorious over evil.