

Cups and Swords

The Flaming Sword

Genesis 3:23-24

“Therefore, the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Am I just focusing on a flaming sword? The answer is yes and no. I wanted to begin this series with the idea that God has chosen to use cups and swords to make a point. The fact that they are used throughout the Bible means something. I suppose that Dr. Seuss used the words up and down. Do they mean something? It's just that in key places the cup and sword appear figuratively and literally.

Here in Genesis 3 we see the first mention of a sword. I find it curious because there was no need for swords at that time. God had provided all that Adam and Eve needed. They were garden farmers or caretakers in Eden. Certainly, animals were there, but the Bible gives us the impression that killing, eating flesh, and war did not exist at that time. I don't want to make rabbit trails on meanings and assumptions. All we have is this flaming sword.

There is an Babylonian account of creation. It's called the Enuma Elish. There are some similarities between this account of creation and the Biblical one. There is the flood. There is also reference to a flaming sword. This sword was a protector. The Hebrew words used to describe this sword in the bible are judgment, protector, or consuming, and burning. In terms of keeping us out of Eden or heaven what stands in our way? It's hell, fire, damnation, judgment and so on. This flaming sword makes sense.

I find it interesting that in Numbers 22 (we will do that one) Balaam encounters an angel with a sword barring his path. Goliath and his sword bar the path of the Israelites. An angel with a drawn sword barred the Israelites from crossing into the promised land. The idea of a sword getting between us and a path is common in the Bible. I suppose we could say that Moses encountered a burning bush right before he was to enter conflict with Egypt. It seems a stretch, but I think it means something.

The ancients believed in Gods deeply. It's in all the writings of the past. Our present writings seem to have conflict and wars, but God is absent. Nuclear fire is in our way to peace. Armies and religion are in the way of peace. To say we have no barriers to the promised land is just not true. We probably would not describe them as flaming swords or angels, but we all know what is in the way to peace.

What's it all mean?

It's interesting stuff. I heard a pastor mention cups and swords and it got me thinking. What if they are connected in the Bible? What if they are connected to our present day? Let's just think abstractly about things. Has there ever been peace? With Isis and political correctness, we have no peace. They thought that Napoleon was the anti-Christ to bring down society. They thought it was Stalin, Hitler, or today we think it's Donald Trump. Seriously?

We have gravity. My goodness, we can't even escape this earth. The space shuttles? Just ask the Columbia crew. Space is toxic to us. So many things would go wrong to live up there. Coming back to earth is just as bad. It's like we can't get out or back in without facing burning. We still have wars. That does amaze me. We have religious strife. It seems the only way to peace is through the very things we hate like war, murder, judgment, and fighting.

The reason God put the Sword before Eden was to bar us entry. They say that Jesus died so that we could be forgiven the sin that threw us out. All we have to do is believe in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. That seems like a tall order. To many that is an impossible flaming sword order. The sword seems ridiculous. It being on fire seems ridiculous. Believing in Jesus seems ridiculous. Is finding a path to peace just ridiculous?

In all the sword/angel incidents in the Bible, there is faith required. Joshua required faith to take down Jericho. Balaam needed faith to see past the talking donkey. Moses needed faith to trust in the Lord. So, did David to beat the giant. I love this idea. What blocks our way to peace? In this world it just might be seeing beyond the ridiculous. Like having faith in an unseen God. There is little of that anymore. In our lives, it's us fighting depression, addictions, and ourselves. We can do many things but we tend to get in the way. We each have a flaming sword in our lives. What bars your way to peace?