

Why is God So Quiet?

June 25, 2005

Recap from two weeks ago.

1. Silence does not mean absence – the promises of God make it very plain that we have a God
 - a. that always cares
 - b. that is always watching.
 - c. that is always doing what is in our best interest.
2. Silence checks our trust level – silence helps us to develop a “even though” type of faith, rather than an “only if” type of faith.

I want to extend onto both of the points that we made last time.

3. Silence does not mean nothing is happening

This is where Seventh-day Adventism has an advantage. The concept of the Great Controversy is quite unique to our theological understanding. But it provides us with a perspective and an understanding that there is a battle going on between the forces of good and the forces of evil.

That from that battle there is collateral damage, but that we can have confidence in a God that is always in control.

One of the best places in the bible to go get an understanding of how this works is in Daniel 10.

To understand what is happening in Daniel 10 we need to have an understanding of what is happening in Daniel 8 and 9.

In Daniel 8 Daniel has a vision

- he sees a ram with two horns with one horn higher than the other
- he sees a goat with a great horn that is so swift it doesn't touch the ground
- he sees a little horn that waxes exceeding great even to the hosts of heaven
- he hears in verse 14 “Unto 2,300 days then shall the sanctuary be cleansed”

Gabriel is sent to give him an understanding of what is going on.

He is clearly told that:

- the ram with two horns is Mede Persia
- the he goat with the great horn is Greece
- the little horn power would be fierce and destruction and would war against God's people

This understanding makes him sick, but he does not yet have full understanding. He understands what is to happen, but he doesn't understand when. And he has to wait a further 13 years before he gets further insight.

The delay should comfort our own experience.

He fasts and prays to get an understanding of the timing, and the angel Gabriel is sent to give him understanding. He has been studying the 70 year prophecy of Jeremiah.

He talks about a portion of time that is cut off from the 2,300 days – 70 weeks, and introduces new information about what will happen in that time frame.

Meanwhile, while all this is going on, Cyrus, the King of Persia has taken over. One of the first things that Cyrus does is to issue a decree that the Jews can return to Jerusalem (the year is 538 BC). About 50,000 of the exiles in Babylon take advantage of the opportunity to return.

Unfortunately Daniel is 90 years old and hasn't got the strength to make the trip. In Daniel 1:21 we find that Daniel retired from public service in the first year of Cyrus – his last business in official office would have been to convince him to issue the decree to allow the exiles to go back to Jerusalem

When they finally get back to Jerusalem filled with hope and expectation, they are alarmed on a number of levels:

- the condition of the city is bad
- the spiritual condition of the people there is even worse.

News gets back to Daniel about the condition of his country and we find his reaction in Daniel 10.

The structure of Daniel 10 is very similar to Daniel 9.

In both chapters:

- Daniel starts out not understanding what is going on
- Daniel prays earnestly for understanding
- The angel Gabriel is sent to give him understanding.

In Chapter 10 Daniel sets himself to a period of mourning, prayer and fasting – 3 weeks.

At the end of the three weeks he sees a vision of Jesus.

Then the angel Gabriel comes to explain what is going on.

This is where the curtain of the Great Controversy is pulled back and we get an insight into what goes on in the battle of good and evil. Let's slow down and look carefully at verses 10 – 14.

Verse 10:

That's a good posture to start wrestling with the Lord.

Any revelation of God in our experience should have this impact on us. And we know that Daniel is a man of God in the habit of praying three times a day – it was only in very recent history that he has been cast in the lions den for it.

But this is a time of special prayer.

Verse 11:

“Oh, Daniel, man greatly beloved.”

Did Daniel feel beloved before these words were spoken:

Verse 2 – mourning three full weeks, because:

- he felt he did not understand the purposes of God
- he felt that God had forgotten about his people after he received reports back from Jeruslaem

Verse 8 – his comeliness (or glory, my honour, my goodness, my efforts) turned into corruption (was utterly destroyed)

But, the first word the angel says is “You are greatly beloved.”

As the Great Controversy rages and things happen in our own experience and in our world and in our church, rest in the knowledge and understanding that as

- sorrowful as you are
- as much as you feel you do not understand it
- as much as your own feeling of having salvation merit has been destroyed by a revelation of God

You are greatly beloved!

Verse 12:

Your words are heard. Your petitions to heaven are heard.

- Silence does not mean abandonment
- Silence does not mean a lack of activity
- Silence does not mean a lack of interest

“The same compassionate Saviour lives today, and He is as willing to listen to the prayer of faith as when He walked visibly among men...It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask.”

Great Controversy 525

Verse 13:

There are four characters at work in this verse. Let's sort them all out.

Me = Angel Gabriel

Prince of the Kingdom of Persia = the prince of this world is Satan (three times in the book of John)

Kings of Persia = Cyrus and Darius (by Cyrus makes the decree)

Michael = Jesus Christ Himself. (mentioned in the bible 5 times)

Gabriel, in response to Daniel's pray, on the first day it was prayed, went to Cyrus. He contended with Cyrus trying to convince him to support the return of the Jewish exiles to Jerusalem. But Satan was there working against the purpose of God in the mind of Cyrus to stop the purposes of God happening. The battleground in Cyrus' mind waged for three weeks until the mighty power of Jesus Christ Himself, before whom Satan cannot stand came to the aid of Gabriel so that the purposes of God would stand.

And Daniel thought God was silent for three weeks.

Like almost no other place in scripture the veil is drawn back.

Why did it take three weeks for Cyrus to be convinced?

We see some tension in the scriptures between:

1. the certainty of God's purpose – God will bring an end
2. the apparent silence of God.

That tension is created by the love of God:

1. that has to allow free will.
2. Has to allow the universe to clearly witness the outcome of the government of Satan.
3. That has to allow people to make a decision, having provided the best opportunity to do so

- NB. Not necessarily the easiest opportunity, but the best.

The whole bible is really a glimpse of God's perfect plan in the first two chapters – followed by the tension of sinners given an opportunity to exercise their free will, followed by the guarantee of the restoration of God's perfect plan in the last two chapters.

Unfortunately, we live in the middle chapters.

And God is active, God is busy, God is working – SILENCE DOES NOT MEAN INACTIVITY.

Three other quick examples:

- 1. Mary and Martha and the "healing of Lazarus"**
- 2. The three Hebrew worthies – That is not what we prayed for!**
- 3. Jairus's daughter – Mark 5:33**

Keep a journal to see where you have come from
Practice spiritual record keeping

4. Silence forces us to get real – and in getting real we grow

No longer are we trying to gloss over the truth of our condition – we can get authentic

We have an opportunity to ask ourselves – now what is really going on here?

1. *Law of sowing and reaping. cf Galatians 6:7*

I learned this lesson in Grade 5 - Story of the 16 dictionary pages.

The silence of God may be put in place to teach us that we cannot just keep sinning and thinking that it is not going to have an impact on us.

“We must know our real condition, or we shall not feel our need of Christ's help. We must understand our danger, or we shall not flee to the refuge. We must feel the pain of our wounds, or we should not desire healing.”
Christ Object Lessons 158

2. *Law of chastening – Hebrews 12:5-7*

Note: David's sin. **2 Samuel 12:13-14** The normal result would mean death for David. But God said he wouldn't die, but his little child would. David prayed and fasted for seven days, but God didn't answer.

It may be that God is silent toward you because of His chastisement. We must ask God to show us what we did wrong and how to make it right.

Pray with David **Psalms 139:23,24** “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

3. *Sometimes the greater the hurt, the greater the healing.*

When you get a splinter in your finger, the process of extraction can be excruciating
When you hit your thumb with a hammer, and all the blood builds up under the finger nail
When you dislocate a joint and you have to knock it back in place
I have heard that if Steven Sparavec manipulates your back there is pain to endure to get to the joy of healing

You know I have often envied those that have been rescued dramatically from a life of sin. The depth of the pain experienced through that pain makes the healing feel so much better, and the passion for Christ all that much stronger.

“God speaks to His people in blessings bestowed; and when these are not appreciated, He speaks to them in blessings removed, that they may be led to see their sins, and return to Him with all the heart.

Patriarchs and Prophets 470

4. Faith is built on the experience of the past

Consistently you see in the bible God referring to Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God is saying to his people “Look at your history and see my leading.”

But you look at that history, and you see God promising to make a great nation.

Abraham is 100, and Sarah 90 and they have had no kids.

Finally, Isaac is born, he takes a wife, Rebekah, she is barren, and Jacob and Esau are born miracle babies. Jacob works fourteen years for his wife Rachel, only to find that she is also barren.

Lord, you are creating a great nation here – that is not the way to go about it! These are faith building events

5. Faith and trust develop with practice

Before Vanessa and I had children we were perfect parents.

- “You know that really should be giving positive reinforcement”
- “You know why do they react when that child whinges, they should just ignore it.”
- “That kid needs a smack”

Does being a good parent come by reading books about parenting. NO

Does developing a strong, faith based relationship with God come by reading about it. No, it comes by testing it.

JOHN 7:17

What comes first?

- Having an perfect understanding of God’s teaching and dealings
- Or, practicing faith and trust.

Growth occurs with exercise.

Conclusion:

There is one person that knows more about the silence of God than any of us.

In Isaiah 63:8,9

All the things they feel, I feel.

Prior to Gethsemane, God the Father and God the Son had a perfect love relationship
At Gethsemane the sins of the world are placed on Jesus, and God is repulsed by His son.

At the point of time that Jesus needed his Father most, He could not be comforted by Him.

On the cross you yelled, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."

In my experience it is helpful for me to know that

"If things are silent at the moment we have a Saviour that knows what that feels like."

In Revelation 12:11

"Overcame him by

- the blood of the Lamb (look to calvary to understand the depth of love for you)
- the word of their testimony" (look to the past to see the leading of God in your past)

Who are they overcoming? The accuser of the brethren.

The accuser of the brethren says God has forgotten about you,
God does not love you,
You have placed yourself outside God's reach

But the cross says NO

NO, I have a Saviour that has invested His own blood in me

NO, I can look at his leading in the past and go forward in confidence.

- if I don't have my own experience yet, I have a book full of stories that give me confidence in the love that God has for me.

The last two chapters in this bible are coming soon.

We cannot afford to lose faith now.

May God bless you now as you struggle with His silence, knowing that there will come a time real soon when you will be shouting praises into His loving face.