

The Holy War Study Guide – Week 13

Diabolonian Insurgence in a Weakened Mansoul

What primary Bible passages come to your mind as you read this assignment?

To what degree does the story accurately reflect Bible teaching?

To illustrate spiritual truths, Bunyan protracts Immanuel's unwillingness to hear the Mansoul's pleas for redress. What appears to us to be full repentance, must yet still be a regard for iniquity in their hearts, since Immanuel refuses to hear (Psalm 66:18).

The ensuing developments recorded in this week's reading chronicle communication between the Diabolonians (representing our flesh) and the rulers of darkness. The communication is initiated by the Diabolonians, who have eagerly and aggressively looked for ways to make Mansoul fall further into sin, ultimately hoping to see the city yield once more to Diabolus' control. For those who may have read C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*, one can find significant parallels between these communiqués written by Bunyan and those penned by Lewis nearly 300 years later. Both use the medium of correspondence and counsel to provide Biblical insight into the devices of Satan, and a close reading of this assignment can remind the believer of the spiritually hostile enemies found within him in his flesh and from outside him in the person of the Devil. He can also be scripturally informed of the tactics of the flesh and the wiles of the Devil.

Because of the spiritually-non-neutral context in which Christians live, believers are admonished by Christ to "be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16). The apostle Paul later charges believers to be unusually alert to those who subvert the work of God in His followers. In that context, he urges believers to be prepared for spiritual defense by being "wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil":

¹⁷Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

¹⁸ For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

*¹⁹ For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you **to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil** (Romans 16:17-19, NASB).*

Paul sets a good example of balance for believers by being knowledgeable of Satan's devices and letting that knowledge inform his obedience to God (2 Corinthians 2:10-11).

The Diabolonians' Delight in the Plight of Mansoul and Conspire Against Them

One of the striking observations that is increasingly apparent is the ecstatic joy evident in the Diabolonians and the rulers of darkness over Mansoul's decline and vulnerability. What is truly "bad" spiritual news for Mansoul, is "good news" for its spiritual enemies. It will be good for us to observe and dwell on the perverted sense of goodness displayed by Mansoul's enemies and the great cooperation displayed between the flesh and the Devil.

Defections and deterioration ("declining") within Mansoul greatly encourages our enemies and stiffens their resolve. They are not content to see Mansoul simply backslidden, they want to see it capitulate totally. In fact, their hope is strengthened by what they know often proves true – often enough that it seems to have the strength of law (cf. Mt. 12:43-45) – that one that comes under Diabolus' sway a second time is irrecoverable to Immanuel.

Another of the observations that surfaces is that while the wiles of evil are multiple, they enter Mansoul through common gates and strategies. It may help us to recall scenes from early in *The Holy War* – the scenes that depicted Mansoul as impregnable unless she invited an enemy in. Though the Diabolonians are now already in, the same process of internal consent is still necessary for the Diabolonians to grow in strength and influence. They only increase at the voluntary decrease of the Mansoulans.

What are some of the varied strategies by which Mansoul's enemies hope to strengthen themselves (these surface in various proposals in their councils and correspondence)?

- By having Diabolonians posture themselves as servants to some of the leading Mansoulans, hoping to influence them covertly (proposed by Lord Lasciviousness)
- Mischief, Lasciviousness, and Murder are chief collaborators.
- By Diabolonians aligning themselves as closely as possible to the intentions of the rulers of darkness
- By persuading the Mansoulans to live vain and loose lives
- By tempting them to doubt and despair of their having ever truly received saving mercy (its connection to assurance of salvation becomes increasingly apparent as the army of 20,000-30,000 doubters is raised)

"When the enemy has so far prevailed by temptation, that sin has been entertained in the soul, as lascivious and covetousness, then is the time to pour into the soul, a crowd of distressing doubts respecting our own salvation; and this is the natural and usual consequence of sin indulged" (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 328).

- By blowing them up with pride and self-conceit

- By keeping their designs as secret as possible from the Mansouliaus
- By disguising their devious attempts in cloaks of apparent good

“How deceitful is sin! How seldom does it own its true name! It deceives the soul by plausible appearances, and is too often entertained to our unspeakable injury. Had these villains owned their true names, who would have received them?”
 (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 315).

“When covetousness prevails in the mind, and lasciviousness corrupts the will, how great is the mischief that must ensue! The former prevails unperceived under the idea of prudent thrift, and the latter acquires dominion under the notion of harmless mirth. Let heads of families be on their guard against the one, and young people especially against the other. Covetousness is spiritual idolatry, and infinitely hateful to God. Lasciviousness is a sin that, in a peculiar manner, defiles the soul, and grieves the Holy Spirit” (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 317).

Diabolus resided at Hell-gate-hill, a place whose proximity to Mansoul is not stated, but that is clearly accessible without too many pains. A character by the name of Cerberus is identified as the keeper of the gate. In Greek mythology, an unsightly character known as Cerberus, was the legendary three-headed watchdog that guarded the entrance to *Hades*. Sometimes he also sported the tail of a serpent. Bunyan borrows this familiar imagery and employs it to good use.

Lent – Because of the contemporary connection of the observance of the season of Lent, Bunyan’s allusion to Lent may be initially surprising. Bunyan himself, as his allegory *The Pilgrim’s Progress* proves, was not papist or a sympathizer with the doctrinal error of Rome. (Even in this reading, he puts the words “By St. Mary” into the mouth of Cerberus, the guardian of Hell-gate-hill.) However, not all practices associated with Rome were considered unbiblical or unprofitable by the early or later Reformers.

The season of Lent had a very natural historical development, though it often provided a fertile soil in which inaccurate or deliberately false understandings of sin and Christ’s forgiveness flourished. Literally, means "springtime," and it is suggestive of a reawakening time in the spiritual life.

Early in the history of the developing church, some church leaders instituted Lent as a time preparatory for those being baptized at Easter—the most popularly chosen time for baptisms because of the significance of the baptism picture – dying, being buried with Christ, and being raised to walk in newness of life.

Gradually the season was expanded to last longer and longer, and shortly after the church became a legal entity within the Roman Empire, the Lenten season expanded officially to 40 days. Forty was selected because of how frequently the number 40 appears in Scripture in connection with the people of God.

Those involved in the Lenten season also expanded. Not long after the church became the official religion of the Roman Empire at the end of the 4th century, Lent became a

confessional season for all who communicated in the official church – not simply for those preparing for baptism. It also was a time that those who had fallen out of the graces of the church could be restored.

At the beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday, “believers” are supposed to mark their foreheads with ashes to demonstrate the spirit of repentance often seen in the Old Testament, when one demonstrated sorrow by wearing sackcloth and ashes.

The Timing of the Assault

There are seasons when our souls are naturally off-guard and our level of diligence and watchfulness is low. The enemies of Mansoul single out a market day or a night following market day as the times most appropriate for a successful assault. Times when believers are most associated with the world can create opportunities for attack.

“Learn reason from the devil. Nature and reason should teach men to be doubly on their guard when much engaged in the world—on market-days; ‘men should be always in arms on those days.’ Would to God this hint were duly regarded in the country on market-days, and in large cities always, where every day in the week is market-day!” (*The Holy War*, Illustrated with notes by George Burder, Reiner edition, 325).

The Character of Diabolus Manifested Again

Voracious appetite – seeking whom he may devour

The reading ends with sobering reminders of the state into which the Mansoulians had come. Their soiled white garments now looked no different than the garments of foreigners, the momentum toward Immanuel had not only been halted but was now gathering a head of steam in their sin, they were often seen in pleasant company with Diabolonians, and tellingly, “there was no great difference now betwixt the Mansoulians and Diabolonians; both seemed to be Masters of Mansoul.” Oh how true is the statement we have often heard:

Sin often takes us further than we want to go,
Leaves us longer than we want to stay, and
Costs us more than we want to pay.

Vocabulary:

Wanton – wasting or wasteful

Coranto – a lively tune to dance by

Handy-gripes – pre-disposed to gripe