

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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## How The Cosmic Struggle Relates To Your Personal Life

by Dan Trygg

“Thus says the Lord Yahweh, ‘You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. <sup>13</sup> You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering... <sup>14</sup> You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. <sup>15</sup> You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you. <sup>16</sup> By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. <sup>17</sup> Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground.’”

Ezekiel 28:12-17; cf. Isaiah 14:12-14

“And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, <sup>8</sup> and they were not strong enough... <sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. <sup>10</sup> Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. <sup>11</sup> And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. <sup>12</sup> ...Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.’”

Revelations 12:7-12

**There has been a rebellion in heaven.** The schemes of the enemy mastermind to usurp the loyalties of other spiritual beings by inflating his own image, and by denigrating the character of the Creator, have been exposed in the heavenlies. One third of the angels have been enticed by the subtle political networking of this deceiver (Rev. 12:4). They have given their loyalty to him, believing that to serve him was more beneficial than their service to the Creator.

**God, instead of crushing their rebellion, has chosen to allow them to continue, for the present. Why?** Because He Himself designed both angels, and later humanity, to have the capacity of free choice. **A demonstration of ruthless power may quash the rebellion, but it would also forever destroy the free exercise of choice.** The specter of intimidation would forever hang over the creation. It would be eternally stunted, restrained and enslaved by fear. Instead of being the loving Father, Yahweh would always be perceived as the ever-present, all knowing Big Brother, the God of wrath who will jealously punish every errant thought.

True enough, **the sin of Satan, as also the sin of humankind, had dramatically, irreversibly altered the dynamics of the created realm. To answer it with force and violence would only irretrievably set the stain of sin's presence into the fabric of the universe.** To attempt to eradicate it would require the total erasure of everything and everyone, ...guilty *and* innocent..., so that there would be no mind, no consciousness, to remember that sin had *ever* happened before. Not only would this be unjust, it would not really be a solution to the problem, for there would be no guarantee that with a new generation of free wills there would not also be the possibility of another rebellion.

**No, the only hope for free will to continue to truly exist, and for righteousness to ultimately prevail, would be to allow sin and selfishness to show their colors and to bear their fruit, ...and to allow God's true character to be revealed by His actions.** Only then, when the fruit and character of *both* sides become clearly, plainly, unquestionably known, could a clear free choice *for* God be a possibility. Only in this way could the genius, beauty and wonder of the freedom of choice once again be unhindered to be expressed with creativity, diversity, and zeal. **The Creator, in His great wisdom, has allowed the evil of sin and selfishness to continue, within certain limits and restraints (cf. Job 1 & 2), so that a monumental lesson of eternal importance could be established.** Only by *observing* and *comparing* the hideous, destructive results of rebellion with the reach and results of the patient, kind, sacrificial, steadfast love of God's heart could a choice be made that would be a freely-taken step *over* and *beyond* sin to affirm the desire and commitment to continue with the Creator.

**The coming of Jesus to our planet was God's best, deepest and most dramatic expression of His loving character and His wisdom** (Jn. 1:1-3,14; 3:16; Rom. 5:6-8). As the enemy attempted to destroy Jesus, God used Satan's murderous scheme to bring into being the liberating grace that is the hope of the universe (2 Cor. 5:14-19).

**We are born into a broken world, a world despoiled, scarred and inhabited by evil, but one which also conveys to us many messages of the Creator's character, as well** (Rom. 1:18-20; Acts 14:16,17). We carry within us both the marks of the image of God that is our potential, *and* the infection of sin's deceitful self-seeking and willfulness which has plagued the universe for millennia. For us, the dilemma of coming to know sin and God is not a proposition set on some sterile, abstract stage, where we can make observations from a safe distance. **The realities of good and**

evil are in our *experience*, within us and around us, from our first waking moments. We do not just *observe* sin, we *experience* it. In the same way, we will not simply *observe* God and grace, we will *experience* them, as well.

The initial problem, however, is beginning to *accurately discern* from the *jumble* of messages and experiences in life what is what. **The enemy wants to keep us under his control, and to keep us from God, so he will attempt to distract us, seduce us, get us stuck in various traps, oppress us, beat us down, and feed us disinformation about who God is and what He is like.** The Creator/Redeemer also attempts to communicate with us in a variety of ways. He attempts to keep us looking for truth, surrounds us with testimonies of His goodness and His love for us. He attempts to woo us and draw us to Him, and He seeks to expose to us the lies and traps of the enemy.

**Discipleship begins after we have decided to identify with Jesus as our Lord.** At this point, we have already concluded, at least in some measure, that we need and want God. Although we have made a clear step toward Him, there remains all of the disinformation and ignorance about God, about life, and about ourselves that keeps us from being all we can be, and hinders us from experiencing all that God has for us in this life. **The process of discipleship is about renewing the mind, correcting and filling in the gaps of our understanding, and encouraging risk and growth in order to become all that we can potentially be,** both for the Kingdom of God and for ourselves. To be a disciple is to be an active follower, not just to have our names listed on a membership roll somewhere. Discipleship is about following Jesus' instruction and example, learning to trust and obey God in everything. It means developing a relationship with God that is intimate and real, and responding to the things He says to us.

**These changes don't just happen, they require attentiveness, conscious thought, and definite choices.** The first converts at Pentecost "*devoted themselves* to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42). The words translated as "devoted to" means "to persevere toward, or to continue unremittently in". There was *work* involved, a *sustained effort* toward sorting out truth from error. It was not just a process of learning, but also one requiring action and experimentation. **Disciples are more than just students, they learn by doing,** by putting the Word of God *into practice* (Jn. 8:31,32), *and by responding to the whispers of the Holy Spirit* (Gal. 5:16-25). As they *take risks in obedience*, they begin to discern and differentiate what is of God from what is "old programming" or other "voices" that are not consistent with His leading. **For the disciple, "business as usual" is not going to be acceptable anymore.** We must *choose* to make a definite departure from the self-seeking direction of the culture's propaganda machine, and even from familiar patterns of thinking and living that have become second nature to us.

**The Holy Spirit is our guide and counselor in all of this** (Jn. 14:16,17,26; 16:13). He uses many resources, but we don't always catch on right away how He communicates with us. *One* of these resources is other people. In Matt. 28:18-20, Jesus exhorts *us* to "make disciples". This means ***we are to take responsibility to help one another in this process of following Jesus.*** We can share our insights and experiences with each other to encourage one another. We can instruct one another from the Scriptures, and we can speak and express the truth to one another in love (Eph. 4:11-16). This will help us detect the false messages we have imbibed, and sort them out from the life-giving truth of God.

**Too often people are basically alone in their pilgrimage.** Often, no one has offered to them the simple explanation that I related above concerning both what kind of possibilities there are, or what obstacles they might face. Many don't even know that there is anything more to being a Christian than going to church on Sunday morning, or they don't have much of a clue as to *what* they might do differently, even if they wanted to. **People have questions that remain unanswered, and struggles that they bear alone, largely because they are not connected with others who could help.** What we call "ministry" (the Greek simply means "service") is not some mysterious, complicated thing. It is spending time with people with the purpose of helping each other grow. One of our goals is to encourage those with whom we fellowship to begin to become actively involved in agitating and encouraging others toward growth in simple, practical ways (Heb. 10:24,25). We try to "de-mystify" discipleship so that people can see that it can be a normal, manageable part of their lives. **Discipleship is very much a relational, "nudging along" process** that is often very different for each individual. It is clear, however, that God has given us the responsibility of looking out for one another, and helping one another grow in Christ. As we serve one another out of the graciousness that comes from our walk with God, we are on display before not only the world, but also the angels (Eph. 3:8-10). **As we love and walk uprightly, we ourselves become part of the cosmic display that gives testimony for God, His character and His wisdom. The lives and futures of many others depend on our growth, faithfulness and obedience to God.**

It is so important to keep in mind the last two verses of our selection from Revelations 12 above. **Satan has been thrown down to the earth, and he is angry!** He is doing everything he can to lash out at people. He wants to steal from us, kill us, and destroy any potential we might have for the Kingdom of God. **We can overcome him, if we can get our minds straight, and keep from being seduced or bullied by lies of the enemy.** We are living on a battlefield, and it is best not to ignore it! **We need to find out which side we are on, and get armed and prepared for battle.** This is *not* a joke, or simply a literary device. This is *real*, and the enemy is not nice. **If we will submit to God, and draw near to Him, He will draw near to us** (Jas. 4:7,8). **With Him, we will ultimately prevail!**