

LESSON FOUR: WILL GOD'S PLANS PREVAIL?

Statement...Where is God when we hurt? What good is he if he can't stop suffering and protect us? In our suffering, we think that we want answers. What most people want is justice: a world where virtue is rewarded/vice punished; where the innocent don't suffer but the wicked do. Beyond our little worlds/lifespans, is there still hope, still a divine plan in place? Is God in control or are we moving toward chaos? Eventually, in the long run, the big picture, God is in control. Day in/day out, he LIMITS HIS CONTROL to protect our free will.

SIGN OF OUR TIMES...in this unstable world, it feels like we are standing on a HIGH HILL, staring at the horizon, wondering what'll happen next. Are these the best of times or the worst of times? If there is chaos AROUND US, there is usually chaos WITHIN US. Something has happened to the human heart. We don't trust anyone or anything.

SHOULDN'T GOD PROTECT US...coping with fear/anxiety, many people feel as if God has deserted them. Shouldn't God protect us, spare us from suffering? Shouldn't he stop accidents, cure cancer, prevent rapes, or slow down the flow of drugs? Yes, he should PROTECT US if he were in the PROTECTION BUSINESS, but God is the SALVATION BUSINESS. We may blame God for this messy world but instead of asking, WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN, we ought to ask WHY DO GOD'S PEOPLE SIN SO MUCH?

GOD'S PLANS NOT THWARTED...God's eternal plan is for good; his purposes aren't thwarted by human sin or evil. God takes the bad stuff the world dishes out, uses it for greater good. If God doesn't INTERVENE, prevent suffering, it isn't a sign of his absence but of his patience. For now, God doesn't rule this world any more than in Jesus' day. That didn't stop Jesus from talking about GOD'S GREAT DAY. Something grand, incredible, and impossible to describe will occur. God will overcome this world in all tragic state. In the end, it will be okay; if it is not okay, it's not the end. What God began, he will one day finish. We'd love to see even a fraction of this happen in our lifetime. God has his own DAYTIMER, and his plans aren't subject to preview. Whenever the end comes, it won't be because of GOD'S ABSENCE but because GOD IS VERY PRESENT.