

ANGELOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY PERSPECTIVE IN DANIEL'S BOOK

Bogdan Negrea

Ioan Iurcea, *Îngeri și Eshatologie/Învierea în Daniel 10-12* [Angels and Eschatology/Resurrection in the Book of Daniel 10-12] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2018), 468 p.

Aspects related to angelology, along with the entire endeavour to define this area of reference of the Biblical space, make for an inexhaustible source of values and guidelines for exegetic analysis. Angels are spoken of in an apprehensive, sometimes shuddering way throughout the realm of theology. There are general analyses describing angels' orders, hierarchies, and their impact on our lives. Saint Dionysius the Areopagite makes sure to provide us with concrete explanations regarding the role and manifestation of angels in our lives. *The Celestial Hierarchy* constitutes a guide that analyses angels and their activities. If we were to speak of an unwritten history of angels, with the aid of Saint Dionysius, we find *in tempora* clues as to the reality of their existence.

Undertaking this endeavour of identifying angelological aspects from an isagogic, hermeneutic and exegetic perspective, Ioan Iurcea highlights the relationship between existentialism, mission, impact and eschatology within the sphere of angelology, with a particular focus on two chapters in the book of Prophet Daniel. Being aware that the said biblical excerpt is as bountiful as it is difficult to analyse, the author aims to place in the reciprocity of light two independent themes: Angels and Eschatology.

Thus, along the 466 pages, we are invited to read an overflowing exegetic excursus into the realm of the Old Testament, the passages of reference in the book of Daniel being meticulously specified. The book's five chapters testify to the author's effort, dedication and courage in tackling the prophetic text in detail. Daniel 10-12 constitutes a special section of the Bible. If in the reader's eyes, Daniel 10-11 represents a historical and prophetic excursus into the revelation of those elements that would

occupy Daniel during his activity, Daniel 12 is a preamble to the teachings about the resurrection of the dead and about the Antichrist.

In the first part of his book, the author stresses the complexity involved in tackling the chosen theme. Providing a nuanced perspective on the importance of reference works and research methods in the initial section of the book, following a short introduction, the author summarises the 'current stage of the research', giving credit to specialised literature, both Romanian and foreign, while also outlining the directions of applied research.

The second chapter is intended to introduce the reader to a stage of preparation. Terminological delimitations are a must for specialised works in the biblical realm. The reader needs to bear in mind that certain terminological structures are both leitmotifs and pillars of the work. Thus, the notions of angel, eschatology, and resurrection are but three of the core constitutive components of the message that Fr. Iurcea's book seeks to capture. The author's approach is highly commendable, as it seeks to render not so much the resonance of the above-mentioned terms, but also their historical and semantic structure. To the people of Israel, angels have been a necessity for the growth of the people, eschatology obscurity, and resurrection a flicker of hope, never fully defined in the world of the Old Testament. Thus, the words that make up the epicentre of the terminological delimitations throughout the book are not particular to the latter, but to the history of the chosen people. Aware of the need for terminological delimitation, the author dedicates nearly a fourth of the book to meet this necessity.

In a natural unfolding of content, the author tackles isagogic, exegetic and theological aspects of Daniel 10-12 within three chapters (3, 4 and 5). The said chapters stand in complete harmony, the author attempting to provide a preview of all the angelological and eschatological teachings found in the book of Daniel.

As part of his isagogic enterprise (chapter 3), Ioan Iurcea includes a description of the historical side of the book of Prophet Daniel. Touching on several particularities regarding the paternity of the book, its genre, and the theology it expresses, the author capitalises on the information describing the historical side of the text and places them in the light of a contextualisation that is extremely beneficial to the initiation of the entire exegetic process of the chapters under discussion (Daniel 10-12).

The exegetic approach (chapter 4), which is the very title of the excerpt from the book, constitutes the amplest part of the work. The author seeks to define *Angels and Their Mission* (pp. 197-257), as well as *The General Resurrection* (pp. 346-386),

bringing the two discussions together through the presentation of certain *Eschatological Conflicts* (pp. 258-345), as he calls them. Using various interpretive sources, and collections of commentaries, among other things, Ioan Iurcea manages to gather and filter the existing information in a purely exegetic manner, *for the good purpose of building up*. The scriptural text is focused on the building of Daniel's apperceptive qualities. Visions and talking with angels were not common in the Old Testament but were a mark of particularity, a sign that one has been chosen, a clue that pointed to the righteousness among men and to God's way of working with them. Remember the righteousness found by God in Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and in Jacob, Job and in the other prophets through whom God made His presence felt in the world in an ever-so-slightly mediated manner. Furthermore, Daniel is characterised as such by the very angel of God, who tells him: 'Daniel, you who are greatly valued by God... stand up... do not be afraid, for since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble ourself before your God, your words were heard and I have come because of your words' (Dn 10:11-12). The characterisation in question does nothing other than exemplify the doubt that should exist as to the concreteness of Prophet Daniel's words. Whether we choose to speak of angelology or eschatology, one of the supporting texts should be Daniel 10-12, as it comprises clear indications as to God's plans and His interventions in the world.

The final chapter (5), dedicated to theology, represents the sum of these topics derived from the text that lies at the foundation of the approach to the themes of eschatology and angelology in the present book. The author delimits a core idea that he develops in completely different directions while preserving it in essence. God's manifestation in the world, His presence in the history of mankind, constitutes the core of the theology highlighted in Daniel 10-12. Whether we speak of biblical characters, of angels and their role, or we use metaphorical language or try and get a feel of eternity through eschatology, God is always present, always revealing His plan. Thus, on an enigmatic note, we can speak of the end while accepting that God is the endless End. And whoever ends in Him ends in peace and quiet, the fruits of one's efforts.

Providing a retrospective view of the topics tackled in the book, the author concludes his work by emphasising the fact that, in the turmoil of the revelations and their clarification by the angel, Daniel has one sole mission, that of implementing allegory in revealing that which he received from God. In other words, given the immeasurability of that which he received, the only way to share it with others is through allegory, in an attempt to break it down into stages.