

The Holy War Study Guide – Week 3

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

To what degree does the story accurately reflect Bible teaching?

Diabolus gained his access to Mansoul through the Ear-gate, the “chief gate of the corporation,” demonstrating the weakness of man’s defenses. However, in this lesson, we see all of heaven moved and energized as the news of Diabolus’ takeover and subsequent domination of Mansoul publicly reaches the ears of Shaddai.

The chapter also provides a refreshing change of perspective. We finally get to hear from God. For two chapters, we have been inundated primarily with Diabolus’ perspective and that of the fallen townsmen. They have impugned Shaddai’s character, and even seem to regard Him as helpless and ignorant: Where is He? Why has He not intervened? Is He even aware the town has fallen? How will He respond? For all of the big talk in Mansoul, the succinct description of its character as “once famous, but now perishing” helps us to recover a much-needed Divine viewpoint.

How does Shaddai and His court respond to the public report of Mansoul’s fall?

Though the report came publicly and appeared to be news in Shaddai’s country, the news was not new to Shaddai and His Son. What Bible doctrine does Bunyan attempt to capture with the following teaching?

“only the King and His Son foresaw all this long before, yea, and sufficiently provided for the relief of Mansoul, though they told not everybody thereof”

“when the King and His Son were . . . consulted about what they had designed before”

What lessons might we deduce from Shaddai’s response to Mansoul’s sin?

How does Bunyan portray the eternal counsel between Shaddai and His Son, Immanuel as being sealed?

What is the plan of Shaddai and Immanuel to deliver Mansoul?

Whom does the Lord Chief Secretary represent?

Early in the chapter, Shaddai's court had been filled with lamentation and disappointment over Mansoul's rebellion. The attitude of the heavenly court, however, is transformed by learning some of the details of Shaddai's plan. The heavenly courtiers are astounded at the wisdom of Shaddai's "glorious design." What evidence does Bunyan give of their heavenly exuberance?

After we have gazed for a time into Shaddai's court, we are directed again to the truly diabolical cunning occurring in the castle of Diabolus. Upon learning that Shaddai knows of Diabolus' successful overthrow of Mansoul, Diabolus reveals his insecurity. Wanting to do all he can to even further insure that the townsmen stay loyal to him, he contrives a four-fold strategy (only three of the strategies are specifically identified in the story, though the fourth seems to be marked adequately enough):

- Stratagem #1 - That any accurate conveyance of Shaddai's good intentions to rescue Mansoul is to be strictly prohibited from entering the townsmen's ears
 - What does this stratagem say about Diabolus' pretense of providing the townsmen of Mansoul with liberty?

- Stratagem # 2 - That a new covenant—very much like the old one Diabolus made with them—be extracted from the town.
 - Bunyan draws from Isaiah's prophecy for some of the language used to describe Diabolus' thoughts. Interestingly the description captures the sentiments of the scoffers who are providing leadership in Judah. They say,

*We have made a covenant with death,
And with Sheol we have made a pact.
The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by,*

For we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception. (Isaiah 28:15)

Interestingly, Isaiah's description of their rebellion immediately precedes a pronouncement of coming Messianic ministry (28:16).

- Diabolus also plots to soil the townsmen further, employing Mr. Filth to corrupt them with "odious and atheistical pamphlets, and filthy ballads and romances full of ribaldry" (Bunyan's marginal note).
- Diabolus' Goals
 - To make Mansoul weaker and more unable to respond positively to Shaddai's overtures to them
 - To make Mansoul worse; so that by making them worse, Shaddai might venture to make their punishment and estrangement from Him permanent as He had already done with Diabolus
- Stratagem #3 - That a distortion of Shaddai's recovery intentions be circulated so as to prejudice or predispose the people to misinterpret Shaddai's words
 - Diabolus would have the people believe that Shaddai's purposes were exclusively damnatory and judgmental with no prospect of mercy from Him
 - Diabolus circulated this lie first so that when truth were known, the "lie might swallow the truth"
 - Diabolus also aimed by this lie to deepen their allegiance to him
 - Diabolus purposed that this lie would compel the townsmen to close the Ear-gate to Shaddai
- Stratagem #4 - That he equip the populace with such battle skills and armory as to minimize or quench the appeal of Shaddai
 - Notice how closely Diabolus' armor approximates the Christian's armor. Diabolus' hope is to master the whole being of the townsmen and involve every part of them in resisting Shaddai.
 - Helmet of Hope of Doing Well
 - Breastplate of Iron-heartedness
 - Sword of the Tongue
 - Shield of Unbelief
 - Spirit of Dumbness and Prayerlessness