

Bob Dylan – Cat's in the well

A short analysis by Kees de Graaf

Here is another thought of mine on 'Cat's in the well'. What at first glance looks like a simple song turns out to be a masterpiece when you take a close look at the meaning of the lyrics. The theme of the song is apocalyptic. As in some mythological and Biblical visions animals are personified - cats, wolves, horses, bulls, dogs pass by and play their part in the final drama of the end times, just before the curtain closes and the final battle is fought. You can feel the suspense, the cat's in the well, there is just no escape, the wolf drags his tail over the ground, and waits till the cat moves which may happen now at any moment. Obviously with no other purpose then to kill her as soon as she makes a move. The final battle is on.

The situation in this world is described. On the one hand there is peace just before the war starts, the gentle lady is asleep (I Thes. 5:3), but it's just like the silence in the wind before the hurricane begins. On the other hand grief is showing it's face, the world is slaughtered. More blood was shed in the 20th century than in all previous centuries together.

Also in this age abundance for the rich western powers - horses going bumpety bump means that these powers have built up a large arsenal of lethal weapons (the horse is the ancient 'battle weapon' military power was expressed in the number of horses a nation can avail itself of). Abundance in food for the West too: the barn is full of the bull, there is meat enough for the rich.

Poverty for many others on an individual level. All is requisitioned for the the big final war. Pappa reads of the threatening war in the newspaper while his hair is falling out for sorrow because there is no money left even to buy shoes for his daughters.

There is abundance of food however on the tables where the last dinner is served just before the dogs -the unholy people- go to war. This reflects an ancient custom when an abundant feast meal was served just before the soldiers went to battle. The drinks are ready and the servants are at the door. Everything is ready for the final battle. The leaves start to fall, autumn time for world's history has come, when the leaves have all fallen the end is there. Again Dylan may had in mind Revelations.20:8, the battle of Gog and Magog. May the Lord have mercy on us indeed when this war begins!!

Kees de Graaf