

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Spiritual Battles and Prophecy - Daniel 10

A good teacher will organise his lessons so that there is a degree of repetition and yet further progression in learning. That is exactly what God does with Daniel. Over the years, He has given him teaching about the future. At first, it was a general picture outlining the kingdoms of the world when Jerusalem would be under Gentile dominion (chapters 2-7). He then proceeded to give Daniel more details concerning His people Israel in a time to come (chapter 9). Now, we find a prelude to even more detail about the future of Israel that is outlined in chapter 11. In our present chapter, we find two things: God's messengers are presented to Daniel and an insight is given into heavenly battles that affect earthly events.

The first verse gives us the background of the vision. "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision."

The third year of Cyrus' rule as king over Babylon was 536 BC. Cyrus had issued his decree allowing the Jews to return to their land and to rebuild their temple in 538 BC. Some of them had departed for Jerusalem that same year under Zerubbabel's leadership. Daniel would have been in his 80s in 536 BC. This may have been the reason he remained in Babylon. He actually retired from public office in the first year of Cyrus (538 BC).

The message revealed to Daniel came from God. The matter to which verse 1 refers is described as a certainty although it would involve great conflict (which is the true meaning of "the time appointed was long"). Unlike the previous dreams, this message was given to him by word of mouth and Daniel understood what was meant.

In verses 2 and 3 we have Daniel's personal preparations: "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled."

In chapter 9 we found Daniel had discovered that Jerusalem would be desolate for seventy years before the Jews returned. This revelation took place a couple of years before the present situation. Knowing this, he had confessed Israel's sins along with his own. Then the angel Gabriel outlined the meaning of the seventy sevens determined for the Israelites and their city. This 490 years was explained in the last talk, but included the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the time when Christ would be killed, the destruction of a future temple at Jerusalem and a period of limited judgment to come.

In verse 2 of this chapter, we find that Daniel has been mourning for three literal weeks. He was really earnest in wanting to know the detailed meaning of those things revealed to him. It reminds us of the apostle Paul who wanted fellow believers to:

- be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding in order that their lives would please the Lord;
- increase in the knowledge of God; and
- be strengthened, enduring, longsuffering and joyful.

Daniel's diet had been limited during that time. He had eaten no pleasant food and no meat. He had drunk no wine. We live in a day where there is a falling away from the truth. Even Christians are being deceived by a departure from the word of God. Those who see this happening need to have this attitude of Daniel. Even knowing the future, he could still lament the difficulties that his people would go through. How often do we lament the present apathy among Christians? How often are we found fasting and praying about the situation? We know that God will always have a faithful remnant. Let's pray that it may be a huge one!

Furthermore, Daniel's mourning shows us that a man who identifies himself with the people of God in this way, also touches the heart of God Himself. By doing so, the Lord is pleased to reveal Himself to Daniel and to teach him. Christian, remember the words of the Lord Jesus: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that

loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

We then come to **Daniel's vision of the man by the River Hiddekel in verses 4 to 9**: "And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground."

We don't know why Daniel had gone to the River Hiddekel (believed to be the River Tigris) but he would have needed to cross it in order to get to Shushan which he was known to visit (8:2). We also know that the Jewish Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread fell from the fourteenth day through to the twenty-first day of the first month, so he may have gone to a gathering of the captives in order to have some form of remembrance of these. This idea may be supported by Psalm 137:1 which reads: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." It was three days afterwards that God gave Daniel a vision that he alone saw (verses 5-6). Interestingly, Hiddekel means "fast-flowing" and was one of the tributaries of the river that passed through Eden, the Garden of Delights. Therefore, we may take it that God's purposes are fast-flowing and, although the meanings of the prophecies were delayed in the eyes of men, God's word will come to pass quickly as far as He is concerned.

Unlike the images in other visions, the "certain man" whom Daniel saw in this vision was able to move and speak. Daniel could feel His touch. This would make Him a high-ranking messenger of God. He may have been the Son of God Himself, but in the form of an archangel. Later in the chapter we read of Michael, the chief of princes. There the word "princes" stands for the angels (good or bad) of different countries. Michael himself was the angel with special responsibility for the nation of Israel. Some commentators, however, do not believe this "certain man" to be the Son of God because He needed the help of Michael (see verse 13). But, if He were acting in angelic form, then He would have restricted Himself to angelic powers just as He felt fatigue, sorrow and pain when in the form of a man on earth. The similarities between this living image and the one Ezekiel and the Apostle John saw argue for his being divine (cf. Ezekiel 1:26-28; Revelation 1:13-17; 2:18). In both these scriptures the prophets fell on their faces. In the case of John, he fell at His feet as dead. It was like this with Daniel. He was drained of strength and dropped to the ground. Furthermore, his own beauty or excellency was turned to destruction. How this reminds us of Job when he was confronted with the glory of the LORD, his Creator. He said, "Behold, I am vile!" (Job 40:4). So as I proceed, I shall seek to apply the vision of the "certain man" to the Son of God appearing as the angel of the Lord.

The linen dress in which the Messenger appeared reminds us of the pre-eminence and priestly character of our Lord. It was men of high rank (Genesis 41:42) or the priests (Leviticus 6:10) that wore linen garments. The Lord Jesus Christ is both king and priest.

Pure gold, which is the case here, usually speaks of holiness. Exodus 28:36 reads: "And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD." Then again, the holy city of Revelation 21 was described as being "pure gold". The Son of God is "the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:2-3).

"Uphaz" was a place well known for its mining of gold. It is thought to be Ophir as listed by the translators of the Syriac version of the Old Testament in Jeremiah 10:9. The location of Ophir is also uncertain, but it is believed to have been located in south west Arabia in what is now known as Yemen. Ophir means "fruitful" reminding us that the Lord Jesus is the True Vine of John 15 and that the Spirit of God dwelt in Him (Galatians 5:22-23).

His body was like the beryl. "Beryl" means "to break or subdue". It reveals the Lord Jesus as the One who is able to put down every principality and power. This, in turn, reminds us of the victory procession recorded in Colossians 2:15: "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

His face was likened to lightning. Such was the greatness of His glory. It reminds us that the appearance of Christ on the mount of transfiguration was like lightning expressing the glory of the Lord as King. His eyes were lamps of fire speaking of His testing discernment, namely, that of a judge. His arms and feet being like polished brass speak of His service and walk being marked by righteousness that endured the testing fire of God's judgment. He is "Jesus Christ the righteous!"

Finally, the voice of His words being like the "voice of a multitude" expresses the power of His word (Compare Psalm 29). Hence, it represents the power of the truth.

Daniel's companions sensed that something remarkable was happening. They shook with fear and quickly hid themselves. We have seen how Daniel must have dropped to the ground because he is found face-down in a "deep sleep" or, better, a "dazed state".

It is then that **Daniel is reassured and the overall subject of the revelation is made known** (verses 10-14): "And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days."

The "man" touched Daniel in a similar way to our Lord laying His right hand on John in Revelation 1:17. The word "set" has the idea of "shaking gently" and Daniel found himself on all fours. The angelic being spoke using the Hebrew name "Daniel" immediately informing us that the message would apply to Israel in particular. He then described Daniel as a man "greatly beloved". God had set His heart upon Daniel. The prophet gave Him great delight. Then Daniel is commanded to understand the words of the Lord's Messenger. He is also ordered to stand up at the point where he was. The "Man" informed Daniel that He had been sent to him personally showing that there was a measure of intimacy between them. Daniel stood up still shuddering.

The Angel of the Lord, realising how Daniel felt, told him not to be afraid. He went on to inform the prophet that God had heard his first prayer for understanding and that what was to follow came in answer to that petition. The Messenger noted that Daniel had humbled himself in order to learn the mind of God. May we, as Christians, do the same!

The verse is also encouraging to us as Christians because it shows that there may be delays in our prayers being answered because of hindrances from Satanic forces. In this case, the prince of the kingdom of Persia had been instrumental in delaying the will of God. Here "prince" refers to an angel with the responsibility for the kingdom of Persia. He was a bad or fallen angel; hence, his great power. He had hindered the progress of Daniel's Messenger for the three weeks that Daniel had been fasting and praying. We know from verse 20 that the delay had been caused by a battle taking place in the heavens.

The unseen struggle between the holy angels and the fallen angels parallels the political and social conditions of the nations of the world. There is angelic influence for good and for evil. From this we can see that Satan and his forces seek only to bring down God's counsels and purposes relative to mankind in general. The apostle Paul refers to this continuing battle in Ephesians 6:10-12: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places".

Today, Christ sits at the right hand of God. He is: "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come..." (Ephesians 1:21). Praise the Lord! We are on the victory side! Well might we sing that little chorus:

*On the victory side!
On the victory side!
No foe can harm me, no fear alarm me,
On the victory side!
On the victory side!
On the victory side!
On the victory side!
With Christ within, the fight we'll win.
On the victory side!*

The Messenger who spoke to Daniel had performed some duty in Persia that involved the kings or rulers of that land. However, having been commanded by God to visit Daniel, He was unable to leave because of the power of the bad angel who exercised strong influence over Persia. The archangel Michael, a chief of princes (or angels), visited the appointed Messenger and helped Him prevail there with the kings of Persia. He seems to have taken His place as a substitute while Daniel was visited. The plural "kings" of Persia, suggests that the all rulers of the Persian Empire would be amenable to the purposes of God regarding the restoration of Israel.

So the "certain Man" had come to explain to Daniel what would happen to the Jews in the end of the days, that is, in the distant future.

Verses 15-17 tell of **Daniel's continuing weakness**: "And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me."

Upon hearing the messenger's explanation for the delay, Daniel bows his head and is speechless. When the Lord reveals such things to us from His word are we deeply affected by them or do we simply file them away as we do other knowledge?

The One who had the appearance of a man then touched his lips and enabled him to speak. Daniel addresses Him as his ruler or master using the word 'adon'. This word is used by David in Psalm 110:1 where he writes: "The LORD (Yahweh) said unto my Lord ('adon'), Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." David was speaking of Christ! Daniel explained that the vision had caused him overwhelming anxiety and had robbed him of his strength. He went on to say that he was a bondman of this "lord" and was not worthy to speak with Him in this way. Furthermore, he lacked the strength to do anything and the breath to say anything.

It was then that **the Messenger touched Daniel again in order to strengthen him (verses 18-19)**. We read: "Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me."

In his book on Daniel, Harry Bell writes: "So in verse 10 God touched him and made him stand, in verse 16 He touched him and made him speak, in verse 18 He touched him and made him strong. Beloved, Daniel faced with these wonders of prophecy felt overwhelmed, helpless, it brought him low, but in the light of all that prophetic truth God touched him and made him stand, speak and made him strong." Often, we may feel the same way, but the Lord is pleased to bless us.

The Messenger repeated the complimentary description "O man, greatly beloved" which reassured Daniel. He also encouraged the prophet not to fear, to feel at peace and to be strong. How these words remind us of the exhortations of Paul to fellow believers:

- "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).
- "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10).
- "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1).

The aged prophet (compare 2 Corinthians 12:7-10) was strengthened and asked the Messenger to continue.

It is at this point, **the Messenger gives an explanation of His activities**: "Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince. Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him" (10:20-11:1).

The messenger informed Daniel that He needed to return to resume fighting against the demon who was influencing Persia (verse 13). When that rebel had been dealt with then the bad angel of the Grecian Empire would follow. On the one hand, this showed that the Persian Empire would fall to the Greek and, on the other, that there are always heavenly conflicts to gain the controlling power over earthly governments.

The "scripture" or "writing of truth" not only refers to all the recorded revelation of God to men up to that time, but that which has been recorded in the heavens. So the two chapters that follow contain details that, like the heavenly warfare spoken of, had been previously outside of human knowledge.

The messenger then declares that only Michael shows himself strong in dealing with these things. He works with the Son of God. You may say that this degrades the Person of the Son. After all, He is all-powerful and can put down all opposition at will. Yet, the Son of God is pleased to work with men who love God. For example, in Mark 16:20 we read: "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." There is a sense in which the Lord needs the help of no-one, yet in His eternal purposes, He is pleased to serve God alongside people like us. Why shouldn't this be the case with those angelic beings who obey the living God?

Another reason that the archangel Michael stands with Christ in these matters is that he is responsible for the overall care of God's people Israel. Note the words spoken to Daniel, "...Michael your prince." The word "your" is plural referring to all the people of Israel - not just Daniel. This is made clear in Daniel 12:1 where we find: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people..." The power of this angel is amazing because in a future day, acting in the protection of Israel, he will take on the devil himself. Revelation 12:7 states: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven."

What a champion Michael is for Israel! How much more of a champion is Christ for us!

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