

Spiritual Warfare 101

Daniel 10:1-9

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter Daniel receives vision number four about Israel's future.

In the last chapter Daniel began an extended time of fasting and praying. Why? In the study of the Scriptures (Jeremiah) Daniel learned that God was going to restore His people to their land and embark on a mission to restore and rebuild the Jewish Temple. Daniel prays that God's people would repent from their sins and embark on the courageous journey of restoration.

Once we know God's will and God's plan we are invited to make the journey to the place we belong. In these chapters we are reminded that there are invisible, supernatural, spiritual beings that oppose and resist God and God's people.

In this chapter we are given a glimpse into the unseen world. We begin to understand the reality of a supernatural conflict in the invisible realm. A war is taking place. The combatants are the forces of God and His agents and the forces of Satan and his evil agents. The prize: the souls of men.

The chapter begins with a vexation of heart; Daniel is deeply troubled (vv.1-4). It continues with an angelic visitation (vv.5-21). Once again the angel comes to instruct Daniel about God's plans for Israel's future (v.14). The angel is hindered; obstructed by supernatural creatures; a being referred to as a Prince of Persia and later the Prince of Greece. But God has sent a helper to turn the tide in favor of Daniel and his people. The angel Michael appears in verse 13 and later in verse 21.

The Prophet's Distress (vv.1-4)

Daniel 10:1 (NKJV) In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision.

The fourth vision takes place in the third year of the reign of Cyrus. Each of the four visions are dated; and the visions are in groups of two: the first and third years of Belshazzar and the first and third years of Cyrus (scholars seem to think the first year of Darius the Mede and the first year of Cyrus are the same; with both titles applying to one man or Darius being appointed by Cyrus upon his ascendancy to the Persian throne). The third year of the ascendancy of Cyrus is 536/535 B.C. Why are these dates so important? Because we are able to discern some stable chronology of the unfolding visions. It also helps us understand that Daniel is indeed very old (vintage). Daniel is nearing the end of his pilgrimage and ministry on the earth. Why does Daniel insert his Babylonian name? Perhaps he wants the reader to be secure in the knowledge that this is the same Daniel who had the previous visions. Seventy years have passed. Seventy years of captivity. Daniel is in his mid-eighties and by God's grace he is alive and still in service

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to his beloved Lord. We might also remember that this about the time that Daniel will face his ordeal in the lions' den (see chapter 6:6-28).

We also understand that shortly after Cyrus conquers Babylon and solidifies his rule; he issues a decree for all Jews who wished to—to return to the Jewish homeland. Almost 50,000 took advantage of that offer and left under the leadership of Zerubbabel. When Daniel receives this vision the Jewish exiles were already there—and had begun the very hard task of rebuilding homes, cultivating business, tending farms and making plans for the Temple. As a court official he likely had access to the reports of the progress (see Ezra chapter 4:1-24).

The vision is both extraordinary and true (*emet*); (v.1). Our translation reflects the KJV understanding that the message was for the distant future (here “the appointed time was long”). It seems to concern a great war—and the translation of the Hebrew word *saba*—*army; war; warfare or service*—has caused other translators to translate this; “a great conflict (NASB) or it concerned a great conflict—(NRSV). The Hebrew text literally and simply reads “and a great war” or “conflict” with the verb to be supplied. The phrase could be a reference to an earthly conflict or it could be a reference and a description of a spiritual war between the forces of God and the forces of Satan (see *The New American Commentary; Vol. 18; Stephen R. Miller; p.277*).

Both interpretations serve the context since this chapter and the next chapter describe conflict; wars in both the invisible world and the visible world.

Daniel writes literally ‘he understood the message and understanding came to him in the vision’. Again it seems this understanding came to him as a result of prayer (v.12) and that the prophet was once again praying for the plight of his people. Remember in the previous three visions Daniel learned a great deal about the unfolding kingdoms. Babylon would give way to Persia. God’s people would return and be restored to the land. By now a series of returns were already authorized for the Jewish people. Daniel’s age and condition and service probably all played a factor in Daniel’s reluctant decision to remain in the place of captivity.

2In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.

In those days is a reference back to the third year of Cyrus (536/535 B.C.). I want to draw your attention to that word *mourning*. It is a participle in the Hebrew language with the force of “in a continual state of mourning” or a “state of mourning” (*abal*). Elsewhere in the Scriptures the word was used to describe the deep emotion grief over the loss of a loved one (Genesis 37:34); over sin (Ezra 10:6) and over a catastrophe—or a calamity—same word (Ezekiel 7:12).

We are not told why Daniel is mourning. Daniel may have known about the hardship and opposition the Jews faced as they attempted to return home. Years later Nehemiah uses the same word to describe the condition of the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem and Judea (see Nehemiah 1:4).

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If I were to venture a guess I suspect Daniel's mourning has something to do with the physical and spiritual condition of the captives; and God's plan. I would also suggest that the timing of the mourning, prayer and fasting has something to do with his motivation (this is the time of the Jewish Passover—see v.4).

For Daniel his deep grief involves prayer (v.12) and fasting (v.3).

3I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

Daniel is in his third week of a limited fast. In the Hebrew language there is a conjunction between the two clauses that could be translated “even”—which indicates what was eliminated from Daniel's diet; no meat, or wine. It would appear this is a semi-fast that limits his intake to vegetables. This is not simply keeping Kosher—but restricting his diet in a substantial way. Is this bread and water only? We are not told. We are told that Daniel forgoes the usual regime of personal hygiene—no lotions—no fragrant perfumes or oils for body or hair. The Jewish people and ancient peoples would often anoint their bodies with oils and perfumes to sooth and refresh the skin and protect against the harsh heat in desert climates.

The Biblical Law required fasting only on the Day of Atonement in order to mourn over sins (see Leviticus 16:29-31).

In the Bible we see several characters who fast for a number of different reasons; Moses, David, Esther, Daniel and Paul. And of course Jesus.

What is the purpose of fasting? We deny ourselves something physical in order to embrace something spiritual. We decline to eat in order to pray. We deny the flesh in order to feed the spirit.

Let's connect the dots. Daniel is in mourning. Daniel is fasting.

4Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is, the Tigris,

Daniel finds himself by the banks of the Tigris river. The date: Nisan (the first month); day twenty-four (March/April). Daniel's fast had begun three weeks earlier; that is the fast began on the third day of Nisan. Passover was celebrated on the fourteenth day of Nisan. The Passover is followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread which lasts seven days (Exodus 12:14-18).

Let's continue to connect the dots; Daniel is in great grief, Daniel is fasting, it is the time of the Passover Feast.

What were Daniel's concerns?

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Could it be that one of the factors that prompts Daniel's prayer and fast has something to do with Daniel's people and God's plan? The Passover is celebrated on the fourteenth Day of Nisan followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover celebrates the people's deliverance from Egypt and may have played some role in the present Exodus that was taking place in Daniel's final days. Daniel is by *hiddaquel (Tigris)*. *Is he really there? I think so.* For some reason Daniel is not in Babylon. Some suggest Daniel was away on important business. Others suggest Daniel has taken time away to another place where he will not be interrupted but can focus on his prayers and the fast. The headwaters of the Tigris is hundreds of miles to the North of Babylon and flowed through Babylonia to the Persian Gulf.

The Angel's Description (vv.5-6)

5I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz!

The word 'behold' translates the Hebrew *hinneh—behold look—and seems to* compound the elements of wonder, surprise and excitement. This is no ordinary human being. This is a supernatural being, a heavenly being. The expression "I lifted by eyes" means I looked up—which means that the being was above Daniel.

The being has the appearance of a human being and is dressed in the garment most worn by priests and sometimes angels (*baddim*). It's hard to know if Daniel is more drawn to the composition of the garment or the color of the garment (we are left with the impression the garment is blast white). Saints and angelic beings are described as having white linen robes (see Revelation 3:5; 6:11; 7:9, 13).

Bible teachers often let their imaginations run wild—in the description of this gold belt. Archer envisions chain-links or hinged panels; or gold thread embroidery. Baptists see a cowboy belt with a massive buckle (just kidding). Others see in this costume the vision of wealth, power, royalty, majesty, suggesting a judge or a king.

6His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

The description is —breathtaking. The word translated beryl is the Hebrew word *tarsis—chrysolite—it* occurs several times in the Old Testament and denotes time kind of precious stone—a gold colored precious stone—the exact mineral or gem is unclear. Credible Biblical scholars have translated this word; chrysolite, beryl, topaz—a flashing stone (faceted?); Driver says it is topaz of the moderns; Pliny translates the word a transparent stone with the refulgence of gold' or some yellow colored stone; a heavenly body glowing like golden fire! The face of this being

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is like the flashes of lightening; eyes like flaming torches; arms and legs like burnished bronze (that is hot molten metal in a fire). When he speaks it is like the voice of a multitude (imagine the roar of a crowd that make hearing impossible).

Who is the mysterious man in linen?

Many Bible teachers compare the vision of Daniel with the vision John sees in the Book of Revelation (see 1:13-14).

The majority of Bible scholars identify the man as an angelic being sent to deliver the message. Their strongest argument is the angelic being is resisted and restrained by another supernatural being (a satanic being).

We peek at verse 13; “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.”

The question of course is—is the being pictured in verse 6 the same being talking in verse 13?

If this is in fact a pre-incarnate manifestation of Jesus Christ—it would be impossible for any demon or all demons to withstand Jesus. Jesus exercises complete and total authority and control over all the powers of darkness (see Matthew 16:23).

Others see this being as the interpreting angel (Gabriel); but this seems highly unlikely since when Daniel saw Gabriel—earlier (9:21) Daniel was overcome with fear and had to be revived three times.

The Prophet’s Consolation (vv.7-9)

7And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

Daniel is not alone. Other human beings are with him on the shores of the Tigris. The people who are with Daniel sense an overwhelming—terrifying—supernatural presence. The presence caused them to run for their lives. The Hebrew is emphatic; “I saw, I Daniel, I alone”.

In the New Testament on the road to Damascus Paul receives a vision from the resurrected Jesus. “The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one” (Acts 9:7).

8Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength.

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Daniel is left alone (save for the angel). The presence of the Heavenly being leaves Daniel drained of all strength.

Spiritual warfare is not for the faint of heart. Spiritual warfare takes a terrifying toll on the mind and the body.

9Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

The being speaks, Daniel hears the sound and slips into a state of unconsciousness. This is a severe reaction.

What are we to think? Is the Heavenly Being described in verses 4-6 the same being described in verses 10-14?

Whatever the answer there are supernatural forces, cosmic beings in heavenly places in an intractable war. There is a battle being waged for the souls of human beings.

When Abraham had a vision of the Lord he “fell on his face” (Genesis 17:3). When Joshua saw the Lord “Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?” (Joshua 5:14).

1 Chronicles 21:16 “David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and seven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.” The apostle John, upon seeing Christ in his glory, “fell at his feet as though dead” (Revelation 1:17).

Conclusion

Once again we find Daniel in the thick of things. Daniel’s ministry includes the study of prophecy the practice of prayer; the ministry of intercession and of course the experience of opposition.