

“Angelic Battles”
Daniel 10:1-11:1
May 1, 2016

INTRODUCTION:

Today’s chapter begins the final section of Daniel, a section which records the last vision Daniel saw. Daniel 10 is the introduction to this vision, and Daniel 11 is the vision itself. Upon reading Daniel 10, it’s easy to understand why many preachers cover only the first six chapters of Daniel when doing a series on this book. This chapter gives us far more questions than answers as it takes us into this strange world of angelic battles. What is clear, though, is that there is a reality that is beyond what we can see with our physical eyes, a reality that takes place in a spiritual realm but one that has dramatic effects upon our everyday lives.

Do you remember that scene at the end of the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, when the wizard is behind the curtain pulling all those levers and making his appearance seem frightful to Dorothy and her companions? Eventually, the curtain falls away and they see that he is just an ordinary old man. This passage is just the opposite of that. Here we see the curtain opening that separates heaven from earth, and we see powerful and frightful things happening, events that affect what is happening on the earth. Further, we see that all this began because one man started praying. So let’s look further at this passage in an attempt to understand and apply it to ourselves. I propose we do so by asking three simple questions.

I. What’s Going On Here?

Let me begin simply by explaining what I think is happening in this chapter, starting with the things that are clear and then moving to the things that are not so clear. It is clear that this entire chapter is an introduction to the vision recorded in chapter 11. Daniel tells us here how he came to have this vision. It is also clear that the vision came in response to Daniel’s three week period of prayer and fasting. Daniel tells us that he was praying and fasting because he was in a period of mourning. He doesn’t tell us why he was mourning, but he does leave some clues about that. We learn in the opening verse that this all happened in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia. That is significant because we learn in the book of Ezra that it was Cyrus who issued the decree allowing the Jews in exile to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls and the temple. That occurred in the first year of Cyrus, and it is now two years later. We don’t know why Daniel didn’t return. Perhaps it was because of the infirmities associated with age. Daniel was well into his 80’s by this time. Or perhaps he just believed that God was calling him to stay in the work to

which he had been called for his entire life, that of a politician in the courts of Babylon and then Persia. I think it likely that his mourning was due to reports he had heard from Jerusalem, reports that things were not going well there, as reported in the book of Ezra.

As Daniel is praying, he sees a vision that was so frightening that it causes him to faint and plant his face on the ground. He was not alone when he saw the vision, but his companions didn't see what he saw. But the mere sensing of this presence caused them to flee in terror. Daniel describes the man he saw in the vision, and it is a description that elsewhere in the Bible is used to describe God when he appears to humans.

This is where the questions start to come in understanding this passage. We read in verse 10 that a hand touches Daniel to revive him after he had fainted. The person attached to this hand then explains that he had been sent to Daniel the very first day that he began praying, some three weeks prior to this. He then goes on to explain that his delay was caused by opposition he encountered from a being he refers to as **“the prince of the kingdom of Persia”** (v. 13). The opposition was significant enough that he could not prevail until Michael came to his aid.

The biggest questions about this passage concern the identification of these figures. Let's start with the being described as the prince of the kingdom of Persia. Since the title of “prince” is applied in verse 13 to the angel Michael, I think we are on solid ground to understand this prince of Persia to be an angelic being. But since he is fighting against God's angel, it is clear that he is a fallen angel serving Satan instead of God. This is a demon. And since he is called the prince of Persia, and since another figure emerges in verse 20 called the prince of Greece, it would seem that these demons have assignments corresponding to certain geographical areas and political entities.

How about the person speaking to Daniel? The problem with his identity is that he seems to be the same person as the one Daniel initially saw that caused him to faint, which I noted earlier seems clearly to be a description of God. But that seems impossible when we read that this figure was unable to defeat the prince of the kingdom of Persia, even after three weeks of fighting. Clearly, God could defeat all the demons in the universe with one word from his mouth. So if this person speaking to Daniel is the same as the first person Daniel saw, then clearly it is not God, despite the fact that the vision is a common one of God. But I think a second possibility is more likely. I think these are two different beings. There is the one Daniel saw in his vision, and then the second one who came to comfort him, and this second one was an angelic being.

So what we have here is a description of a conflict in a spiritual realm that has results on earth. I have known of people who have used this chapter as a basis for their complete understanding of our work as Christians. Peter Wagner wrote a book in 1993 titled *Breaking Strongholds in Your City: How to Use Spiritual Mapping to Make Your Prayers More Strategic, Effective and Targeted*. He recommends identifying the specific demons over a city and then engaging them directly and by name in our prayers. I think such an approach goes beyond the Scriptures. While the Bible, both here and elsewhere, affirms demonic activity and the relationship between demons and specific geographical locations, the Bible nowhere tells us to engage these demons in our prayers. Daniel didn't do so even in this passage. We are, however, to fight, and that brings us to our next two questions.

II. What Does It Mean about Who We Fight?

It is clear, both from this passage and elsewhere in the Bible, that our fight is against the demonic. Paul said it clearly in Ephesians 6: **“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”** (v. 12). Holy wars have a prominent place in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and the New. Paul's language here in Ephesians 6 reflects a big difference between the holy war of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the holy war was fought against any flesh and blood regarded as enemies of Israel and therefore of Israel's God. The holy war continues in the New Testament, but with different opponents.

This change becomes clear at the outset of Jesus' ministry. John the Baptist understood the ministry of Jesus as that of bringing judgment upon Israel's enemies, the burning of chaff with unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:12). He was expecting a warrior Messiah. When John was in prison, he began to have doubts about Jesus because he wasn't seeing this warrior God he was expecting to see. Instead of burning and judgment, he was hearing of healings, exorcisms and preaching of good news. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the Messiah, and Jesus told them to go tell John what they observed, that Jesus was healing, casting out demons and preaching good news. It was as if Jesus were telling John, “I am indeed the warrior Messiah, but I am taking the fight now to the source, fighting Satan himself. I am ransacking his kingdom by stealing the citizens of that kingdom that is destroying so many and making them citizens of my kingdom of peace and joy.”

It is clear throughout the New Testament that we are called to join Jesus in this fight against Satan. But let's press on to be a little more specific. What does this tell us about who we actually fight, or perhaps more accurately, the

fronts upon which we fight? I believe there are at least three. First, we fight the evil mindset of practical atheism that has our culture in its grip. This mindset is one that is encouraged by the demonic. It would have us believe that the precious babies born to us are not miraculous gifts from God, but nothing more than the result of millions of years of evolutionary progress. It would tell us that there is no God who should have authority over us, leaving everyone to do whatever they want to do. The rule from the 60's sexual revolution prevails—"If it feels good, do it," a rule that if followed leads to shame and destruction. Why is it the case today that the simple assertion that sexual expression should be limited to a committed marriage between a man and woman, a position transcending many cultures and religions for thousands of years, why should that assertion now be labelled as hate language? It is because we are fighting against demonic forces that want to destroy all that is good. We fight them simply by holding to the truth no matter the cost to us.

A second front in our fight against the demonic is that of fighting to steal the citizens of Satan's kingdom, a fight accomplished through evangelism. Paul's explanation for people who don't believe in Jesus is instructive. **"The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ"** (2 Cor. 4:4). In Paul's view, unbelievers are victims of Satan's efforts to destroy everything he can that is associated with God. This should give us compassion for unbelievers as we engage in the work of evangelism.

A third enemy we fight is our own sinful nature. We must not grow weary in the fight Paul speaks of in Romans 7. **"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing"** (Rom. 7:18-19).

III. What Does It Mean about How We Fight?

The weapons we use in this fight are made clear to us throughout the Scriptures, and they are all very familiar to us. The first one is prayer. That's what Daniel was doing in this passage that led to this whole discussion. This is the last we are going to hear of Daniel in the pages of the Bible. He is now an old man, and with his age has come the wisdom of knowing what is really important. Daniel believed that prayer makes a difference. Mary Queen of Scots is reported to have said once that she feared the prayers of John Knox more than she feared an invading army. I have known other Christians who have learned of the importance of prayer. Some learn it only when their strength fades to the point that they are prevented from doing much else in serving the Lord. But in giving themselves to prayer, they discover its immense power.

Consider the significance of prayer in the work of evangelism. If in fact unbelievers have their eyes blinded by Satan, then it's not a matter of how eloquent or clever you can be in sharing the gospel with them. If the obstacle preventing your wandering child from coming to faith is something that is happening in the spiritual world, then the only thing you can do to touch that is to pray. And prayer does that very thing. Think of prayer like the smart bombs that the Americans used so effectively in the Iraqi war. These bombs work by someone holding a laser beam on the target. Such a beam can be directed from many miles away, and the bomb will lock on to that beam and go right to where it is pointed. That's what prayer does. If you have a friend or loved one you are praying for, ask God to help you know how to pray and then pray faithfully for that person.

A second weapon we have available to us is the word of the gospel. When Jesus was responding to John the Baptist, he told John to look as proof that he was the Messiah that the good news was being preached to the poor. We fight by preaching this good news, first to ourselves and then to others. The good news is that God has loved us poor sinners even when we were his enemies. Since his love for us is not dependent on what we deserve, it can be solid and enduring. Do you believe that an angel could say of you what this angel said of Daniel? In verse 19, he reported of God's attitude toward Daniel and said, **"O man greatly loved."** The word there is a form of the verb that is used in the tenth commandment for coveting. Daniel is coveted by God. The good news of the gospel is that all we must do is receive this love and stop trying to earn it.

A third weapon is deeds of love. We join Jesus in ransacking the kingdom of Satan by simple acts of love. Taking a meal to a church member in temporary need, helping a neighbor carry something heavy, inviting someone to your house and showing hospitality, and numerous other acts of love, are powerful weapons that destroy the kingdom of Satan. Such deeds send the strong message that hate and destruction will not last, but love will.

CONCLUSION:

The curtain has been drawn back for us here to show that events on the earth are intertwined with events in heavenly places. Abraham Kuyper said it like this.

If once the curtain were pulled back, and the spiritual world behind it came to view, it would expose to our spiritual vision a struggle so intense, so convulsive, sweeping everything within its range, that the fiercest battle ever fought on earth would seem, by comparison, a mere game. Not here, but up there—that is where the real conflict is waged. Our earthly struggle drowns in its backlash.