

AN INVISIBLE WAR

Theme: Before revealing the last of the four visions of Daniel, God reveals the spiritual forces that wage war behind the scenes of earthly political events.

The last three chapters of Daniel contain the story of one, final vision--the final of the four visions that Daniel had received personally. It is the most detailed description of prophecy in all of the book--and indeed, is the most detailed record of prehistory in all the Bible. It is similar to portions of the Book of Revelation in that it provides encouragement to the suffering people of God concerning how the tough times that are ahead nevertheless remain in God's sovereign control. The difference between Revelation and Daniel is one of emphasis--Revelation being given to encourage the suffering believers during the church age, and Daniel being given to encourage the suffering Jewish people regarding the times of the seventy-weeks described in chapter 9.

This chapter reveals the fact that, behind the scenes of world events--and of the political changes we behold on an earthly level--an unseen spiritual war of cosmic proportions is being waged. We can know nothing of this unseen war apart from what the Bible teaches us. But the Bible gives us several hints of the spiritual activities behind it in such passages as Job 1:6-12, 2:1-6; 2 Chronicles 18:18-22; Zechariah 3:1-2; Ephesians 6:10-20; and Revelation 12:7-12.

Before the details of this final great vision are given to Daniel, he is granted a glimpse of the conflict in the heavenly realms--and of how this conflict relates to God's unfolding plan for His chosen people. We should be careful not make more of this passage than it allows us to. After all, we are given only a very limited amount of information about the activities in the spiritual realms in it. But it should most definitely serve as a reminder to us that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12); and that "though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE VISION (10:1-4).

This vision was given in the third year of the reign of King Cyrus of Persia (536 B.C.) Daniel himself would be about eighty-three to eighty-five years old at the time. Daniel gave his Babylonian name for identity's sake, and perhaps to affirm his authority as a head of state. He affirms that the message was true. Some translations have it that "the appointed time was long"; others have it that the message was "one of great conflict". In any case, Daniel says that he had understanding of the vision told us in Chapters 11-12; and the story of how he came to understand is explained in this chapter.

Note that the vision came at a time after Daniel had been fasting for three weeks. It was during the month of Nisan; and this would place his fasting at the time of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12). But the Passover was not the reason for his fast. His reason is given in verse 12--that is, so that he might understand what had already been told him, and that he might be humbled before God. Note also that he received this vision as he stood before the Tigris River. It came after the people of Israel had been released to return to their homeland; but apparently Daniel had chosen to remain in the Median-Persian realm.

II. THE COMMUNICATOR OF THE VISION (10:5-6).

While at the river, Daniel beheld a vision of a majestic being. The description is very similar to that which the apostle John received of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:12-16. But Daniel

probably was not seeing a pre-incarnate vision of the Lord. This particular being was "sent" (v. 11), was able to be "withstood", and to need "help" (v. 13). It is most likely, then, an angelic being; such the angel Gabriel whom Daniel met in chapter 9:20-21. The being in Chapter 10, however, is not named.

III. THE RECIPIENT OF THE VISION (10:7-9).

Apparently, only Daniel saw the vision. The men who were with him did not see it; but they clearly reacted to it in fear. Some have suggested that they were merely reacting to Daniel's expression in fear; but this really wouldn't explain the terror that fell on them so greatly that they fled to hide (v. 7). This limited awareness of the vision is similar to what happened to the men with Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9:7. The result was that Daniel was left alone with this great being; and he was completely undone by the experience. Yet, though he was physically weakened, and though he was apparently in a faint, he was able to hear what was said. As we will see, Daniel required help before he could receive any more of the vision. Note, though, that twice in this chapter--in spite of his weakness--he is told that he is greatly loved by God (vv. 11, 19).

IV. THE CONFLICT BEHIND THE VISION (10:10-14).

A hand touched him and enabled him to rise to his hands and knees. Then it would seem that it was the angelic being who told him to stand in order to be spoken to. Daniel had to be encouraged to not fear; no doubt because of the awesome presence of this angelic being. The angel explained that he sought to come from the first day Daniel's words were heard (that is, three weeks prior); but that he had been opposed by "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" (apparently an angelic being who stood for Persia; and apparently against God's angels). Michael--the angel who stood over Israel (see 12:1)--came to this angel's aid so that the message could be delivered.

V. THE STRENGTH NEEDED FOR THE VISION (10:15-19).

Daniel, at these words, turned his face to the ground. Apparently, his heart was humbled and felt that he could not hear more. (We should remember that whenever someone boasts casually of encounters with angels or makes claims to have been given glorious visions. To Daniel, it was a deeply traumatic experience that caused him to tremble at the very core of his being!) At another touch, Daniel was encouraged that he was loved, and was given the strength not to be fearful and to hear.

VI. THE VALUE OF THE VISION (10:20-11:1).

The angelic being explained asked Daniel, "Do you know why I have come?" Apparently, it was becoming clear. It involved the things noted in "the Scripture of Truth"--things that Daniel had already been concentrating on in Chapter 9. The angel let Daniel know that his (that is, the angel's) own time was short; because the battle was raging on and he had to return to it. The prince of Persia, with whom he had been battling, was waiting; and the prince of Greece was about to come (these 'princes' apparently being angelic authorities over nations). He clarified that he had been doing battle alongside Michael. Clearly, this was a very important message if combat action had to cease in order to bring it to Daniel.

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So, just think of it! During the whole time of Daniel's three-week prayer, a battle was going on in the heavenly realms that prevented his receiving the message earlier. But perhaps Daniel's earnest prayers--without his being aware of it--were instrumental in helping the angelic messenger gain the victory. Perhaps that is part of why he was a man "greatly beloved". And now, the angel had come to deliver the message and tell him about what would happen to Daniel's people in latter days. This underscores to us how important this message was! Wicked angelic forces even fought to hinder it from being delivered to Daniel (v. 13)--and then, through Daniel, to us. We should study the vision given to us in Chapters 11-12 with the utmost awe and reverence! To some degree, angelic armies battled to insure that it would be brought to us!