The Book of Daniel

Chapter 10

Ministry Reading -- June 26, 2013

Opening Reading -- Daniel 10:1-21

Daniel 10:1-21

In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. And the thing is true, but the appointed time of trial is long. And he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into my mouth. Neither did I anoint myself at all, until three full weeks were fulfilled. And on the four and twentieth day of the first month, I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel. And I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, and his loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz. And his body was like a chrysolite, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as torches of fire, and his arms and his feet as the look of burnished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, and the men that were with me saw not the vision, but a great quaking fell on them, and they fled to hide themselves. And I was left alone, and I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me, and my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. And I heard the voice of his words, and when I heard the voice of his words, I fell into a deep stupor on my face, and my face to the ground. And behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees, and the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, man greatly

beloved, understand the words which I speak unto thee, and stand upright, for unto thee am I now sent. And as he spoke this word unto me, I stood trembling. And he said unto me, Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come because of thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days. And behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there with the kings of Persia. And I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people at the end of the days, for the vision is yet for many days. And as he was speaking with me according to these words, I set my face to the ground, and became dumb. And behold, one after the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips, and I opened my mouth, and spoke, and said unto him that stood before me, My lord, by reason of the vision, my pains are turned upon me, and I retain no strength. And how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? For as for me, straightway there remaineth no strength in me, neither is there any breath left in me. Then there touched me again one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and he said, Fear not, man greatly beloved, peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And as he was speaking with me, I was strengthened, and I said, Let my lord speak, for thou hast strengthened me. And he said, Knowest thou wherefore I am come unto thee? And now I return to fight with the prince of Persia. And when I go forth, behold, the prince of Greece shall come. However, I will declare unto thee that which is set down in the scripture of truth. And there is not one that showeth himself strong with me against these, but Michael your prince.

Chronological Context: Cyrus and the Decree of Ezra

Turning to Ezra 1:1, we find a seminal event connected with the prophecy of the previous chapter. In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, Jehovah stirred up the

spirit of Cyrus to make a proclamation throughout his kingdom, saying, 'All the kingdoms of the earth has Jehovah the God of heavens given to me, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.'

> **Ezra 1:1**
> *In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia. And he made a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has Jehovah the God of heavens given to me, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.*

In terms of chronology, this is significant. The decree to rebuild Jerusalem went forth in the first year of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1), yet our chapter opens in the third year of Cyrus (Daniel 10:1). Daniel was still in Babylon, two years after the decree had gone out for the people to return and rebuild.

Daniel in Babylon: Service Under God's Direction

Does it strike us as incongruous that Daniel should remain in Babylon while Jerusalem was being rebuilt? We know enough of Daniel's character to dismiss any thought of indifference or selfishness. His affections were clearly for Jerusalem and the temple -- for God's favored land and holy mountain. He would have gone in an instant, had the Lord directed him. Yet circumstances kept him in Babylon, and those circumstances were under the Lord's direction. It may be that the king could not spare him -- that Daniel's administrative responsibilities required him to remain. Whatever the reason, Daniel accepted it. If that was what the Lord had for him, Daniel was content.

The lesson is a practical one for ourselves. Just because another believer has been called to a particular service does not mean that every other believer shares that

calling. The Lord works with us individually. There was nothing amiss with those who went with Ezra to rebuild Jerusalem, and there was nothing amiss with faithful Daniel who remained where the Lord would have him be. We must be careful not to mistake another's calling for our own, nor to evaluate our service by comparison with others. It is the Lord who directs each one's steps, and we want to be engaged in that service which He has assigned to us.

Overview: Chapters 10-12 as One Prophecy

Chapters 10, 11, and 12 form a single, unified prophecy with distinct emphases. Chapter 10 serves as a prelude -- the setting before the prophecy itself. Chapter 11 gives the substance of the prophecy, tracing the history of the Gentile powers that bear upon Israel. Chapter 12 focuses on the condition of the remnant during the last period of Gentile power. The chapter divisions, it should be remembered, are not inspired; they were not given by God. Chapters 10, 11, and 12 together constitute one vision, one prophecy.

The River Hiddekel and the Vision of the Glorious Man

The river Hiddekel of verse 4 is mentioned in Genesis 2 among the four rivers going out of Eden. We know it historically as the Tigris, which can still be found on a map today.

The description of the figure in verses 5-9 -- clothed in linen, with pure gold of Uphaz girding his loins, a body like chrysolite, a face as lightning, eyes as torches of fire, arms and feet like burnished brass, and a voice like a multitude -- is considerably more elaborate than any angelic description elsewhere in Scripture. This has led many to conclude that this is the Son of Man himself appearing to Daniel. However, when we reach verse 13, we find that the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood this messenger for twenty-one days. No power can withstand God; so the figure speaking from verse 10 onward cannot be the

Son of Man himself. The breakpoint appears to come at verse 10 with the touching of a hand, suggesting a transition from the majestic figure of verses 5-9 to an angelic messenger.

Whether or not the initial figure was the Son of Man, the elaborate description conveys the moral fitness of this messenger to bear his message. He was suited -- morally and in his person -- to carry the word of God to Daniel.

Daniel's Fasting and Preparation

Verse 3 recalls the very beginning of the book, where Daniel and his three companions refused the king's meat and subsisted on pulse -- grains and vegetables. Here again, Daniel denied himself pleasant bread, flesh, and wine for three full weeks. Neither did he anoint himself -- meaning he abstained from the ordinary acts of washing and applying fragrant oil, the customary form of personal care in that day.

Fasting, when practiced rightly, is not an attempt to accomplish something with God or to render oneself more holy. It is the outward expression of an inward condition -- a time of mourning in which there is no desire to gratify the flesh in any way. Prayer and fasting are often linked in Scripture, and fittingly so: both flow from a heart that is absorbed in seeking God and unwilling to let the flesh interrupt. Daniel's self-denial was evidence of an inward state prepared to receive what God would reveal.

A Parallel in the New Testament: Acts 9

The scene of verse 7 -- where Daniel alone received the vision while those with him, though seeing nothing, were overwhelmed with a great quaking and fled -- has a striking parallel in Acts 9. When the Lord appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus, his companions stood speechless, hearing a sound but beholding no

one. The revelation was for Saul alone, though the company around him was not unaffected by what was taking place.

> **Acts 9:3,7**
> *But as he was journeying it came to pass that he drew near to Damascus, and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven... But the men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but beholding no one.*

This bears upon a question sometimes raised about the Lord's return: if He descends with a great shout, why would not everyone hear it equally? Such questions misapprehend the nature of God's sovereign action. The laws of physics are not immutable constraints upon God; they are upheld by the word of His power and may be overridden at His will.

The Deep Stupor and the Strengthening of Daniel

When Daniel heard the voice of the glorious figure's words, he fell into a deep stupor with his face to the ground. A hand set him on his knees and the palms of his hands -- on all fours, as we might say. He was told to stand upright, and he stood trembling. The expression 'man greatly beloved' -- spoken both in verse 11 and verse 19 -- is a remarkable address, and Daniel receives it with complete humility.

Verse 8 is notable: Daniel says both that 'there remained no strength in me' and 'I retained no strength' -- the statement is repeated, as if for emphasis. As great and as spiritual a man as Daniel was, the things of God are greater and higher than any man can sustain in their full force. The Apostle Paul, when caught up to the third heaven, could not tell whether he was in the body or out of it (2 Corinthians 12:2). The Apostle John, when he saw the glorified Lord in Revelation 1:17, fell at His feet as dead. God desires that we should be strong -- but always in full and conscious dependence upon Himself.

Prayer Answered from the First Day

Verse 12 contains a great encouragement: 'From the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard.' Daniel had been mourning and fasting for three full weeks -- yet he had been heard from the very first day. The answer was delayed not because the prayer went unheard, but because of spiritual conflict along the way.

We ought not to conclude, when we pray for something and see no immediate result, that the Lord has not heard us. His ways are not our ways, and He may be pleased to answer in His own time, for reasons entirely hidden from us. The Lord's word to us on this is not 'ask once and wait quietly' but 'be asking, be seeking, be knocking' -- all active, continuing states. Daniel did not give up after seven days, or fourteen. He persevered until the angel came. That is what God honors: faith that endures to the end of the difficulty.

The Prince of the Kingdom of Persia and Spiritual Warfare

The prince of the kingdom of Persia who withstood the angel for twenty-one days is not a reference to Cyrus, the human king. He is, from the context, one of the fallen angels -- a spiritual power in the service of Satan, set over the kingdom of Persia in a manner analogous to how Michael is set over Israel. This opens the subject that Paul addresses in Ephesians 6:

> **Ephesians 6:10-12**
> *For the rest, brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength. Put on the full panoply of God, that ye may be able to stand against the artifices of the devil. Because our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies.*

These are not merely poetic words. They describe something very real, of which Daniel 10 gives us a concrete illustration. An angel sent from God to minister to Daniel was resisted by a spiritual power of wickedness for the entire three weeks of Daniel's mourning. Michael -- one of the chief princes -- had to come and assist before that messenger could break through.

Two things stand out. First, Daniel's three weeks of fasting and prayer were not wasted. The battle was going on the whole time he was on his knees, and his perseverance mattered. Second, Satan organizes his servants in a structure that imitates, as far as he is able, the order that God has established among His angels. He has princes set over kingdoms; he works with method and hierarchy. The application to us is not merely intellectual. When we pray for a soul's salvation, we may see that soul show genuine conviction -- and then see it pushed aside. Satan goes about as a roaring lion; he is the enemy of souls, and he actively seeks to prevent God's will from being carried out. He cannot ultimately succeed -- God alone is omnipotent -- but the battles of Ephesians 6 are real, and Daniel 10 shows us what they look like.

Michael the Archangel

Michael is called in verse 13 'one of the chief princes,' and in Daniel 12:1 'the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people.' We commonly call him an archangel -- an angel of elevated rank. Yet despite this position, Jude 9 provides a striking check against any thought of independent authority:

> **Jude 9**
> *But Michael the archangel, when disputing with the devil he reasoned about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a railing judgment against him, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.*

Michael did not presume upon his elevated rank. He referred everything to the Lord. No good angel acts independently; indeed, it is precisely the defining

characteristic of the devil and his fallen angels that they do act independently. That is the root of their character, and the precise difference between them and the holy angels who serve God.

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Lord willing.