

## The Incredible Realities of spiritual Warfare

### Daniel 10:1-21

**Introduction:** 1) Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), the brilliant journalist, theologian, and Prime Minister of the Netherlands writes, “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 drones in its backlash.” (Quoted in Ferguson, *Daniel*, 199).

2) Such a bold and striking claim finds biblical warrant when we come to Daniel 10 and the beginning of the end of this incredible book. Daniel 10-12 constitutes the finale of this prophetic gem. Chapter 10 is the prelude to the detailed vision of chapter 11. Chapter 12 provides the filling confusion to both the vision and the book. Chapter 10 pulls back the spiritual curtain and gives us a brief glimpse into a world of spiritual warfare that is very real, though it rages unseen to the physical eye.

3) I confess to being convicted, even haunted, by this chapter. If the words of this chapter are true, and I believe they are, why do I not pray more? Why do I not

pray with more passion and earnestness? Our prayers provide “spiritual reinforcement” for the battles that take place “against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). Our prayers are weapons of warfare that provide ammunition for angels as they engage the demonic forces of evil in spiritual combat. Our prayers matter. They make a difference in this unseen but certain world of the spiritual.

4) I will walk us through this text making four major observations about certain truths concerning the realities of spiritual warfare. God does not reveal to us everything our curious minds would like to know. However, He does reveal to us everything we need to know.

**I. Spiritual Warfare involves divine action 10:1**

- The year is c. 536 B. C., “In the third year of Cyrus King of Persia;” that is the third year following his conquest and victory over Babylon and Belshazzar as recorded in Daniel 5. This places it two years after the vision of chapter nine.
- It is helpful to remember then Darius the Mede (Dan. 9:1) and Cyrus King of Persia (Daniel 10:1) are likely the same person. The one man is simply acknowledged and recognized in different but complementary ways. Darius is probably a dynastic title while Cyrus was his proper name. Interestingly,

Darius means “he possesses” or “rich and kingly.” This fits with the idea that it was a title (see Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 174-75). Daniel provides once more a very clear and specific historical marker for what takes place.

### 1) God reveals His word (Divine Sovereignty)

The initiative for the vision of this chapter, as with all true visions, is divine, it is with the Lord. “A word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar.” And, because the word came from God, it “was true.”

Verse one then adds the interesting comment, “and it was a great conflict.”

This refers to the content of the vision and the spiritual warfare that was involved in Daniel receiving an answer to his prayer. The NIV actually translates it, “it concerned a great war.” It involves the stress and suffering Daniel will experience in receiving the vision. It “includes the severe suffering for the people of God (e.g., 11:29-35; see also 12:1)” (Davis, *Daniel*, BST, 140). God takes the initiative to reveal Himself and His word to His “greatly loved servant” (v. 11, 19). It is a painful but necessary word.

### 2) Man seeks to understand (Human Responsibility)

- God took the initiative to give Daniel the vision. Still, Daniel had to respond to what he was given. He did exactly that. The text tells us, “He understood the message and had understanding of the vision.”

Verse 12 informs us that his understanding came in response to his steadfast, passionate and humble prayers to God. He set his heart to understand and God honored him with understanding. Jeremiah 29:13 wonderfully reminds us, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Daniel sought the Lord and the Lord answered.

- Our God is there and He is not silent. I am so thankful that we serve and worship a talking God!

## **II. Spiritual Warfare received reinforcements by prayer and fasting**

### **10:2-3, 12**

If we were asked to describe the prophet and statesman named Daniel, I think that would be easy. Daniel was a man of prayer. He prayed in chapter 2 that he might be able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. We know he prayed three times a day in chapter 6 and was thrown into the lion’s den for it. He prayed for understanding of a vision in 8:15. We have his awesome prayer of confession and intercession in chapter 9. Now we see him in fervent prayer once again in chapter 10. Daniel knew we serve a God who listens to the prayers of His beloved children. Once more we find the man of God on his knees pleading with the heavenly Father.

1) God sees our mourning over our sin 10:2-3

“In those days” is clarified by verse four. It was around the time of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. However, Ezra 1:1-4 provides additional insight. Cyrus has issued a decree allowing the Jews to return home to Israel and Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the number who returned was small, and opposition arose almost immediately to the rebuilding programs. Daniel was not there, having remained in Babylon (perhaps because of old age or to assist through support, encouragement and prayer), but he had received reports from the homeland. His heart was heavy and so he went into mourning for three weeks (v.3). He also chose not to anoint himself with body oils that would soothe and refresh his skin. Whether he did this publicly or privately we do not know. What we do know is God heard his prayers and saw his humiliation.

2) God hears our prayers when they come from a humble heart 10:12

Verse 12 is fascinating on a number of levels. At this point let me note that God heard Daniel’s prayer the moment he prayed. He sent an answer immediately. Why? Because Daniel had humbled himself before His God. He knew God was in control. He also knew he had nowhere else to turn. He knew that God was sovereign but he also knew prayer makes a difference. He might

not be able to explain the mysterious dance of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, but he knew it was real.

- Corrie Ten Boom said, “We never know how God will answer our prayers, but we can expect that He will get us involved in His plan for the answer. If we are true intercessors, we must be ready to take part in God’s work on behalf of the people for whom we pray.” (EGT, 224).
- And, Dee Duke adds, “Almost everyone believes that prayer is important. But there is a difference between believing that prayer is important and believing it is essential. “Essential” means there are things that will not happen without prayer.” (EGT, 225). Daniel believed prayer was essential. He was convinced that certain things would not happen if he was not on his knees in humble intercession before his God.

### **III. Spiritual warfare can be overwhelming in its realities 10:4-17**

Several years ago it was popular to talk about “territorial spirits,” demons assigned to particular regions, governments and institutions. Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary wrote a book entitled *Engaging the Enemy: How to Fight and Defeat Territorial Spirits*. While some have run the risk of preoccupation and speculation with angels and demons, we play the fool if we make light of or ignore this spiritual reality. Daniel 10 makes clear that: 1) angels and demons

exist, 2) angels and demons engage one another in spiritual combat, 3) certain demons, and probably certain angels, are given particular geographical and governmental assignments, and 4) our prayers in some genuine measure enter into and effect the battles being fought. John Piper would agree with my theological assessment and summarizes it quite well: “So then, I would conclude that there are high-ranking demonic powers over various regimes and dominions and governments and realms of the world; and that they work to create as much evil and corruption and spiritual darkness as they can. They strive to interrupt Christian missions and ministry as much as they can.” (“Angels and Prayer,” 1-12-92).

1) The glory of God can drain us of strength 10:4-9

- It is 10 days after Passover, the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month of the new year (Boice, *Daniel*, 104). Daniel is standing alone the river bank of the Tigris, approximately 20 miles from the capital city of Babylon (v.4).
- Suddenly he looked up and saw a majestic figure who is described in detail in verses 5-6. He looked like a man but he is clearly more than a man. Many students believe he is an angel. This is understandable and the more popular opinion. However, the description of this person is very similar to that of the exalted and glorified Lord Jesus in Revelation 1:12-16. I am convinced that this is a Christophany, a preincarnate

appearance of the Son of God (cf. 3:25). I also believe the person we see here is to be distinguished from the angel of verse 10. My friend Bryan Chappell agrees with my assessment that this is the Son of God and provides a very helpful word of commentary:

“Who is being described? Clearly this is the Christ, the anointed Son of Man, who represents the glory and purposes of God. There are many intentional reflections between the chief figures in these chapter of Daniel and Revelation. The men described in both are clothed in white robes—priestly garb; both have a gold belt—kingly apparel. Both have blazing eyes, both have bronze skin, both have roaring voices—all supernatural traits. In Revelation, the one described holds seven stars in his hand and his face blazes like the sun. Perhaps that explains why the appearance of the man in linen to Daniel makes the prophet faint dead away and causes his friend to run away. The one who comes as a spokesman for God is most readily understood as the Son of God, the Second Person of the Godhead who made the heavens and earth.” (*The Gospel According to Daniel*, 171-72).

The vision of the glorified Christ in verses 5-6 is overwhelming to Daniel and those who were with him. Now, it appears Daniel saw the vision but his companions only heard it. Still, just hearing it was enough



to “scare them to death” and cause them to run and hide (v.7). Daniel was left alone and he was undone by the vision (v. 8). He was wiped out and drained physically of all his strength.

Hearing the words of the vision finished him off. It basically knocked him out cold as he “fell on his face in deep sleep with his face to the ground” (v. 9; cf. 8:18). Like Isaiah (Isa. 6), the vision was more than he could handle. He was overwhelmed. Undone. Wiped Out. Comatose!

Lig Duncan is right, “in the Bible, intimacy with God always leaves its mark....Presence with God always leaves its mark” (“The Vision of the Man,” 3-15-98).

## 2) Spiritual conflict can take our breath away 10:10-17

Daniel is awakened by the touch of a hand (v. 10). I believe this is an angel and a different person from the one described in verses 5-6 who is the Son of God. The touch, initially, is not helpful! It sets him “trembling on his hands and knees.” But, Daniel then receives words of encouragement and insight. He is encouraged as he is told he is a “man greatly loved” by God (v.11, also v.19), and that he should stand up because the angel was sent to him. Well, that causes him to start trembling again (v.11). Poor fellow! The angel encourages him to not be afraid, because from the very first day he began to

pray he was commissioned to come with an answer to Daniel's prayer. God saw his humble heart, heard his words of mourning and intercession, and dispatched his servant angel with an answer (v.12). However, a problem arose which delayed the angel's arrival with an answer. A demon, called "the prince of Persia" (v.13), got in the way and delayed the answer's arrival for 21 days. Only when "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me," could the angel break free from "the kings of Persia" (note the plural). This angel, possibly Gabriel (cf. 8:15-16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26-27), had been "ganged up on" by a number of demons and needed the aid of the archangel Michael (Jude 9), Israel's protector and prince (10:21), to continue on his way with an answer to Daniel's prayer. Stephen Miller notes for us, "Michael is introduced in this verse and is also mentioned in Dan. 10:21; 12:1; Jude 9; and Rev. 12:7 in Scripture. In Jude 9 He is called the "archangel," which means "first (chief) angel." Michael has been assigned by God as Israel's prince (cf. 10:21); he is "great" in power and protects the Jewish people (cf. 12:1). The implications of these statements are clear. Israel has a mighty angelic supporter in the heavenly realm. Therefore, regardless of Israel's political, military, and economic weaknesses, its existence is assured because no earthly power can resist their great prince" (*Daniel*, NAC, 285).

With the aid of Michael, and also the continued prayers of Daniel, the angel has arrived “to make you [Daniel] understand what is to happen to your people [Israel] in the latter days [events that precede and include the coming of God’s Kingdom].” The angel’s message is clearly going to be eschatological, it is “for days yet to come” (v.14).

Once more Daniel gets more than he can handle as verse 15 makes clear. The angel spoke, Daniel goes down, and now he is “mute.” He can’t even respond to what he has heard. Then in verse 16, he is assisted by the angel who touches his lips to open his mouth and enables him to speak. Daniel can talk, but nothing more. Pain has come over him, strength has left him, and he can barely breathe (“no breath is left in me”, v.17). He has said all that he can. He has nothing left. Dale Davis says it well, “One might wonder if this helpless, sleeping, shaking, speechless, breathless man will ever be in shape to receive the angel’s vision” (*Daniel*, BST, 144).

#### **IV. Spiritual Warfare should result in spiritual refreshing 10:18-21**

- When it comes to Spiritual Warfare and the discipline of prayer Chuck Swindoll makes five insightful observations:
  - 1) Believer’s prayers are immediately heard by God.
  - 2) Demonic forces can delay answers to prayer.

3) Wrestling in prayer is exhausting work.

4) Following wearisome times in prayer, strength returns in extra measure.

5) Overcoming demonic forces is not a once-and-for-all matter (*Daniel: God's Pattern for the Future*, 98-101)

- Spiritual warfare is not for the weak of heart and the weak in faith. You will be out of your league and well below the cut off line. Even spiritual giants like Daniel can be overcome and overwhelmed. They can literally be knocked off their feet and knocked unconscious. They can be drained of all strength and left without a breath. Their life can feel like it is ebbing away because in their own strength, they are no match for this spiritual arena. And yet, because they are greatly loved of God, help is sent and their energy renewed. God may knock them down for his sanctifying work but he promises he will lift them back up (James 4:6, 10).

1) We should receive peace, strength and encouragement 10:18-19

- For the third time Daniel is touched by this heavenly visitor (vs. 10, 16, 18). The angel's touch strengthens him, restoring his vitality (v.18). He is told a second time he is the object of God's great love (vs. 11, 19; cf. 9:23). The angel then delivers to Daniel a 4-fold message in verse 19: 1) Fear not, 2) Peace be with you, 3) Be strong and 4) Be of good courage (cf. Josh. 1:9).

- Daniel was strengthened (3 times in vs. 18-19), and he invites the angelic messenger to speak because he has received the spiritual energy necessary to receive and understand his message.
- Strong words of divine revelation (like chapter 11) require spiritual vitality to receive and embrace them. Daniel got what he needed. He is now ready to hear them. Question: Are you ready to hear what God has to say to you no matter what? No matter what the message might be?

## 2) We should receive insight of both earthly and heavenly truth

10:20-21

- The angel asks Daniel a rhetorical question: “Do you know why I have come to you?” The answer had already been given, at least in part, in verses 12 and 14. Parenthetically, the angel informs Daniel that he has to return to fight against the King of Persia. The Persian Empire lasted from 539-331 B.C. After he battles the Persian demons, he will then engage the evil, spiritual forces of Greece. That empire would have its heyday from 331- 63 B.C. Like Persia, evil powers would be working for Greece in the unseen world, engaging the good forces (angels) of God in a battle for the kingdoms of this world, and the souls of men.

- Before he leaves for a second deployment, the angel informs Daniel that he will tell him “what is inscribed in the book of truth” (v. 21). What an apt description for God’s written revelation. Specifically, as chapter eleven makes clear, the revelation details God’s plan for Israel and the kingdoms of this world. Before he leaves, he provides one final word: as I go to fight on Israel’s behalf, only “Michael, your prince,” is with me. Why? It was not because no one else was available. God has an untold number of angels to do his bidding. No, the reason is because no one else was needed. Gabriel and Michael would be more than sufficient to carry out God’s plans and purposes.

**Conclusion: How does this text point to Christ?**

John Piper, in commenting on Daniel 10 says, “Take the supernatural seriously and realize that we are in a warfare that cannot and should not be domesticated by reinterpreting everything in the biblical worldview so that it fits nicely with secular, naturalistic ways of thinking about the world. Be ready for the extraordinary as well as the ordinary ways that evil spirits work. Don’t be presumptuous, as though demons were weak; and don’t be anxious, as though they were stronger than Jesus.” (Angels and Prayer, 1-12-92).

John Piper is right. No follower of Jesus should be anxious about demons. A vision of the glorified Son of God is more than sufficient to sustain us no matter what we may encounter. A vision of the exalted Messiah will give us strength to endure the darkest night or trial.

The vision of Daniel 10:5-6 finds its New Testament counterpart in Rev. 1:12-16. Both are wonderful and faithful portraits of King Jesus. He is our faithful priest clothed in linen with a belt of fine gold around his waist (10:5). He is our glorious sovereign Lord shining brightly with omniscient eyes burning like flaming torches (10:6). He is an omnipotent Savior with arms and legs like polished bronze. And because of His awesome power and might, his words, when spoken, are like the roar of thousands and thousands (10:6).

This is the God who strips us of our strength that He may become our strength. This is the God who knocks us down that He may raise us up with renewed strength, peace and courage (v. 19). Our God often knocks us down to show us who we are without Him. And, our God raises us up to show us what we can be in Him. There is pain in the process. But joy comes in the morning.