

When Worlds Collide

Scripture Text: Daniel 10-11:1

Introduction

Last week, I offered the following points from Daniel's vision of the Seventy Sevens in chapter nine: *God Appoints A Time For His Plan, God Decisively Atones for Our Sin, and God Brings An End to Suffering and Evil*. We now enter the fourth and final vision of Daniel in the book. We have a little more to go before we reach the end of the book, but chapters ten through twelve are actually about one, single vision. It is Daniel's final vision about conflicts that will happen until the end times. As I was reading this passage, I thought about our own conflicts. I think most people see other people as the *source* of their problems. When conflict arises, someone does something mean, something terrible happens, it is easy to point the finger at the person (or persons) and blame them for what is happening. That is not to say that people are not responsible for the things they do or the trouble they cause, but there is another battle that is happening, one that we may not perceive. In fact, Paul spoke about this battle that is happening around us and even told us how to respond to it. Look at the following verses.

Ephesians 6:12–13 ¹² *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.* ¹³ *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

Our conflict is not *really* with human adversaries, but it is against dark spiritual forces that wish to destroy us and the kingdom of God. Knowledge of these dark, spiritual forces may make even the strongest Christian squeamish and run in fear, but that is not what God wishes for us to do. Therefore, Paul wrote we should put on the whole armor of God, so that we can fight these dark, spiritual forces and stand firm in our faith. In this final recorded vision, Daniel gets a glimpse of the spiritual war that was happening around him and he was terrified by it and what it meant for his people. God did not reveal to Daniel the great spiritual war and the terrifying result it had on mankind to scare His beloved prophet, just like God did not reveal the previous visions to scare Daniel or His people. God revealed these things to Daniel for a far grander reason. In this final vision a heavenly being appeared to Daniel and revealed to him the history of Israel from the time when the vision was given until the coming of the kingdom of God. These final chapters of the book cover some of the same things God revealed earlier in the book, but with greater detail about one of the nations to come. It also revealed additional information about the Antichrist and the tribulation period of the last days.

Touched By An Angel

One thing I noticed in this passage was that Daniel made a point to remind us of his Babylonian name, Belteshazzar. We have not seen it since chapter five, and we will not see it again in the book. Why did Daniel remind us about this name? Perhaps it was to

emphasize that he was indeed the same person mentioned earlier in the book. After all, it had been over seventy years since he had been taken into captivity. Daniel would now have been about eighty-five years old. Yet, Daniel was still alive and serving the Lord. Two years before this vision was received, the first of the Jewish exiles had returned to Jerusalem in response to King Cyrus's decree. Daniel was able to see his people begin to return home, but Daniel's age and responsibilities in Babylon may have prevented him from making the long and arduous journey to his homeland with his brethren. But things were not all well, as the people faced severe opposition back home and had ceased their rebuilding work when Daniel received this final vision. Even though things were looking good for his people, Daniel was concerned. Like before, when things troubled him, Daniel turned to prayer and fasting. Look at the following verses.

Daniel 10:2–3 ² *In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. ³ I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.*

Daniel was at the Tigris river, away from the city, perhaps to spend uninterrupted time with the Lord. He had been praying and fasting for three weeks. Perhaps the season of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was a factor in Daniel's decision to fast and pray. Passover was the time of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and this may have turned Daniel's thoughts toward the present "exodus" of from Babylon. However, Daniel may have been praying and fasting for his people since they were facing difficult situations in the homeland. He went without choice foods such as meat or wine, and he abstained from lotions that made life more comfortable in a dry, desert climate. He was denying himself the pleasure of life to focus on his people's plight and his time with God. Fasting is a personal matter between the individual and God. It is voluntary. However, if giants of the faith like Moses, David, Esther, Daniel, Paul, and Jesus Himself felt the need to fast, should we be willing to deny ourselves in order to pray more earnestly for the furtherance of the kingdom of God? Are we as devoted to God and to the things of God as our spiritual ancestors? As Daniel was praying and fasting, he saw a heavenly being, dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold around his waist. His body glowed with inner light, like beryl, a flashing gemstone, and his face shone like lightning with eyes like torches and arms and legs like polished bronze. The sound of his words echoed like the roar of a crowd. Some believe this was an angel of God. Others believe this was God Himself. Either way, God had some things to tell Daniel.

You Are Greatly Loved

One thing the heavenly being reminded Daniel was that Daniel was "greatly loved". Maybe Daniel forgot that. Sometimes, we forget that we are loved. Sometimes, we fret too much about things and question God's love because of some situation in our lives. We forget just how much God loves us. Look at the following verse.

Daniel 10:11 *And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.*

The heavenly messenger encouraged Daniel by telling him that God “greatly loved” him. Maybe Daniel needed to hear this. Maybe he was the good and faithful servant of God, but forgot how much God really loved him. No matter what happens, we, too, are greatly loved. God has loved us so much to reveal Himself to us. God loves us so much that He gave us His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior. We are greatly loved.

The Real Battle is Spiritual

Another thing the heavenly being told Daniel was that he had been sent to Daniel in answer to his prayers, to give him insight and understanding and encouragement in response to his mourning. As previously stated, perhaps Daniel was mourning the plight of his people in Jerusalem. However, we can get caught up in the problems and issues of this earthly life and forget that there is another battle happening around us. During this time of discouragement, Daniel received a vision of a great conflict, which exposed the ongoing spiritual warfare in the heavenly realm. God, or an unnamed angel, or both, brought news of a spiritual war that was ensuing. The presence of this heavenly being and the vision he gave to Daniel overwhelmed him. It also terrified those who were with Daniel. The heavenly being explained how he had met resistance from other spiritual powers on his way to deliver the news to Daniel. Look at the following verses.

Daniel 10:13–14 ¹³ *The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia,* ¹⁴ *and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.”*

This glorious figure was unable to complete his task without the help of Michael, one of the chief princes, so it is unlikely that this individual is a physical manifestation of God or Christ. The angel was delayed by the prince of Persia. The prince of Persia was most likely not a man, for it is unlikely that a mere mortal could resist God’s messenger. This was probably one of Satan’s emissaries. This information showed that the Jews were not simply facing human opposition and enmity at the earthly court of the Persian king, but powerful spiritual beings operating in the heavenly realms. Although this spiritual opponent was powerful enough to delay God’s messenger for a period of three weeks, all he could do was delay him. When Michael, one of the chief princes (angels), came to help the messenger, the angel was finally able to complete his journey and bring the message of encouragement to Daniel. Conflicts on earth reflect conflicts in the heavens, which will continue till the end, when God ultimately triumphs. The spiritual battle the angel described to Daniel reminds me of the heavenly army revealed to Elisha. 2 Kings describes how God provided an army of angels leading horses and chariots of fire to protect the prophet Elisha and his servant. God opened the servant’s eyes so he could see the angelic army surrounding them. Look at the following verses.

2 Kings 6:15–17 ¹⁵ *When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?”* ¹⁶ *He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”* ¹⁷ *Then Elisha*

prayed and said, “O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

This passage shows us that there is far more going on than the earthly eye can see. There is a spiritual battle going on. The good news is that God’s forces are far greater than anything that opposes Him. The heavenly messenger declared to Daniel that he would return to the fight against the prince of Persia. I think we see several important facts about angels from this passage in Daniel. (1) Angels are real. Daniel did not see a vision of angels, but had a real conversation with one (or more!). (2) There are good and evil angels. God’s heavenly messenger in this passage had to fight with another “prince” and was going back to the fight once his mission was complete. (3) Angels can influence the affairs of human beings. The angel of Persia had some effect on the kings of Persia. This passage teaches that spiritual beings influence human governments.

Do Not Fear, God’s Got This!

Daniel’s response to the heavenly messenger was natural. On hearing of the magnitude and power of the spiritual forces raging against God’s people in Jerusalem, Daniel was overtaken again by such an overwhelming sense of weakness that he was bowed to the ground, and he was unable even to speak until the angel touched him on the lips. The conflict against dark, spiritual forces continues to this day, though our human adversaries constantly changes. In face of spiritual and physical conflict, the heavenly messenger told Daniel to be strong and of good courage. Look at the following verses.

Daniel 10:18–19 ¹⁸ *Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me.* ¹⁹ *And he said, “O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.” And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.”*

The angel encouraged Daniel and told him to not fear, but to be strong and courageous. This reminds me of God’s encouragement to Joshua as he began to lead God’s people into the Promised Land. God told Joshua at least four times to *be strong and courageous* before they embarked on their mission. Why would Daniel need to be encouraged? Why would he need to hear “be strong and of good courage”? Like many of us, we seem to let our fears control us. We tend to let fear lead us rather than faith. Perhaps God has revealed the great spiritual battle around us and it scares us. Perhaps the physical conflicts in your life scare you or discourage you. Perhaps the uncertain future troubles you. God is saying to us, “Be strong and courageous”. Yes, the world is troubling. Yes, there is a spiritual battle around us. Time and again the people of God are bowed to the ground, yet they are not destroyed because God continues to support, sustain and strengthen them. Therefore, do not fear. Do not fear the future. Do not fear change. Remain strong in the Lord and remain faithful to Him. Trust God and follow Him wherever He leads. Jesus is our source of strength and He will not lead us astray!

Conclusion

In closing, this passage in Daniel is a good reminder of several things. It reminds us that there is conflict in this world, and there is even spiritual conflict. There are battles being fought right around us that we may not even realize. Yet, in the midst of so much physical and spiritual conflict, God is telling us, as He told Daniel, "Do not fear!" God is saying to us, "Trust Him!" We are greatly loved by God, as Daniel was greatly loved by Him. God has fought and continues to fight for us. And one day, all conflict, both physical and spiritual, will cease and God's faithful will enjoy eternal peace and joy with Him. This is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!