**DANIEL’S VISION OF GREAT WAR**

**(Daniel 10:1-21)**

**“‘Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed,’ he said. ‘Peace! Be strong now; be strong.’ When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, ‘Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.’” (v. 19)**

 In the previous passage, Chapter 9, Daniel prayed to God to terminate 70 years of captivity in Babylon. The Israelites had rebelled against God for a long time. Consequently, God disciplined them through the Babylonian Empire as He had already warned in the Book of Moses. The temple was destroyed, and the holy city, Jerusalem, was burnt. Many of them were killed or became exiles in Babylon. But God promised to restore them after 70 years. Daniel prayed to God in his repentance to fulfill God’s promise. God listened to his prayer. Today we are studying Daniel chapter 10. Continuing from last week’s passage, today's passage is Daniel's prayer. Daniel prays to God for his nation again. Through today’s passage, I pray that God may help us to learn how God responded to Daniel’s prayer and what He taught him through His response.

Read verse 1. **“In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true, and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision.”** The time period of this passage was 536 B.C., the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia. In his first year, after conquering Babylon, Cyrus issued a decree to allow the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Cyrus’ decree was the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah (44:28-45:1) and Jeremiah (25:11-12) that God would terminate the 70 years' captivity of the Jews in the land of the Babylonians and rebuild the temple. According to the decree, many Jews returned home and gathered in Jerusalem to start rebuilding the temple. They laid the foundation of the temple in 536 B.C., but soon the construction was stopped by the opposition of enemies.

Around this time, a revelation was given to Daniel. The revelation was God’s message concerning a great war. Here, **“a great war”** means extreme conflict, misery, or hardship that God’s chosen people will certainly go through. Daniel came to understand the revelation in a vision that he would describe in today’s passage. In response to the revelation, what did Daniel do? Read verses 2-3. **“At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips, and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.”** Daniel probably already heard about the difficulties his people were facing in their homeland by their enemies to stop the temple’s reconstruction. God also revealed to him that the nation Israel would be involved in a great war in the future. The current situation of his people and the revelation given to Daniel shattered any hope that Israel would enjoy her new freedom and peace to worship God for long.

 With deep sorrow and concern for his people, Daniel decided to pray to God for understanding and for God’s mercy on his people. He humbled himself before God by abstaining from food and mourning for three weeks. At that time, Daniel was almost in his eighties. However, he did not care for himself but offered himself to decisive intercessory prayers for his people. We can learn from Daniel how to respond to current or upcoming great conflicts and hardships on a personal, community, or national level. It is to pray. How did God respond to Daniel’s prayers and what did He teach him?

 First, God showed Daniel a vision of the Son of God. Look at verses 4-6. **“On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.”** The man Daniel saw was different from the common order of men. He shone with heavenly glory. He was the Son of God, who would come to this world with the name Jesus Christ. God lifted Daniel’s eyes to see the Lord Jesus in glory. The Lord was clothed in linen, a priestly garment symbolizing holiness and purity. The kings of the world were like beasts, such as lions, bears, leopards, and horned ferocious animals, as we see in chapters 7. No matter how powerful they may be, their nature is cruel. But our Lord is holy and pure. He had a belt of fine gold from Uphaz, the famous gold-producing region, and His body was like topaz. Pure gold or topaz symbolizes unchanging glory and authority. The kings of the world may do well for a time, but over time they corrupt and lose their power, whereas our Lord's glory endures forever (Daniel 7:18). The Lord's face was like lightning, and His eyes were like flaming torches, which means that He drives out the powers of darkness and burns away all kinds of sins. With arms and legs like shining brass, the Lord crushes the wicked and triumphs over them. The Lord's voice is like the sound of many waters, majestic and authoritative. Before the authority of this word of the Lord, all bow the knee.

 Why do you think God showed Daniel this glorious picture of the Lord? Although Daniel was surrounded by many cares and anxieties, he was told not to despair. No matter how threatening the enemies of God, he need not fear. The God of great glory and power would triumph over the wicked world powers. Indeed, after a 14-year interruption of the construction of the temple in Jerusalem, the temple construction would be also eventually completed in four years, with God's help. (Ezra 6:15) God, the King of heaven, is far more powerful than the kings of the world. Although dark clouds may cover the sky, the bright sun still shines above them. Likewise, whatever difficulties and hardships we may have, God is always present, and God is in control. God’s people are under God’s protection and care. Jesus says in John 8:12, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”** Therefore, we need to lift our eyes to Jesus in prayer, trust in him and follow him in any situations.

In verse 7, we see that this vision of the Lord was seen only by Daniel. The people with him did not see the vision, but they were overwhelmed by the spiritual authority and ran away trembling. What was Daniel's reaction to the vision? Let's read verses 8 and 9 together. “**So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground.”** Daniel was an upright man, but when he stood before the holy Son of God, he became like dead man. When he heard the voice of the Lord, he was so frightened that he fell on his face to the ground and fell into a deep sleep. He was unable to stand before the holy and glorious God.

Secondly, God taught Daniel about spiritual warfare. Read verses 10-11: **“A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, ‘Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.’ And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.”** A hand touched Daniel and helped him stand up. It could have been an angel’s hand. The angel addressed Daniel as **“one highly esteemed.”** Although Daniel was weak like us, when he honored God, God esteemed him highly and sent an angel to him. The angel strengthened Daniel to listen to the word of revelation.

He continued. Read verse 12: **“Then he continued, ‘Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them…’”** The angel told Daniel that his words were heard from the first day he was determined to understand God's will. God immediately dispatched an angel to help Daniel.

The Bible teaches that God helps us through His angels. In Psalm 34:7, David confesses, **“The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.”** In 2 Kings 6, the king of Aram sent a strong army to capture the prophet Elisha. When the servant of the prophet saw the army with horses and chariots surrounding the city, he panicked and said to Elisha, **“Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?”** **“Don’t be afraid,”** Elisha answered. **“Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”** And Elisha prayed, **“Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see.”** Then God opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:15-17). Daniel prayed for the safety of his chosen people, and God sent an angel to protect them. Angels fight for God’s people both collectively and individually. Through these examples, we can see God’s constant care for our safety.

But why didn't the angel appear to Daniel until the twenty-fourth day? Let's read verses 13 and 14. **“But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.”** Here, **“the prince of the Persian kingdom”** refers to the evil spirits that control the Persian Empire. In other words, Satan had a strong grip on the Persian Empire, which is why it took a while for the angel Gabriel to arrive. We learn something important here: there is spiritual warfare that takes place in heavenly realms between God’s angels and Satan’s evil forces. Ephesians 6:12 says, **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”** The evil spirits in the heavenly realms are desperately trying to enslave people and thwart the work of God. 1 Peter 5:7 says, **“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”** Satan and his evil forces try to attack one person’s life, family, cities, nation, and the world. They build strongholds of lies, sexual immorality, violence, idolatry, godless value systems, and ideologies, among other things. Ultimately, they want to occupy territories and build up the kingdom of Satan. This is how Satan works and hinders the work of the Holy Spirit, and that's why we must fight the battle of prayer so desperately.

The important thing is that no matter how much the evil spirits of Persia tried to stop the angel from coming, they couldn't succeed. Why? Because in verse 13b it says, **“Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.”** The angel broke through Satan's obstruction with the help of the archangel, Michael (Jude 9). God plants his angels against all the works of Satan. No matter how mighty Satan’s power may be, it doesn’t matter before God. God wanted to teach Daniel through the angel’s testimony that there is spiritual warfare, that God heard Daniel’s fervent prayers, and that God is always providing for the safety of his people and always has a variety of methods in operation to defeat Satan. The angel desired to teach Daniel about God’s loving kindness towards his chosen people.

Satan plants fear and hopelessness in our hearts to keep us from praying fervently. But we should not back down. Rather, we should fight the battle of prayer with more eagerness, by having faith in God’s love, care, and ultimate victory. Luke 22:42-44 tell us about Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane before taking up his Cross. As Jesus prayed, determined to take up the cross, Satan continued to plant fears and human thoughts in his mind. So, Jesus prayed to God a second and third time, saying, **“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”** He fought the battle of prayer so fiercely that his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Then God sent an angel to strengthen him, so that he could overcome all of Satan's obstacles and confidently take up his cross. We can learn from Daniel and our Lord Jesus Christ how to fight the spiritual battle for ourselves, our families, communities, nations, and the world. Ephesians 6:18 says, **“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”**

Thirdly, God restored Daniel’s strength. Read verses 15 and 16, **“While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, ‘I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I feel very weak.’”** When Daniel's face was turned to the ground and he was speechless, the angel touched his lips, enabling Daniel to speak to the angel. How did the angel respond? Let's read verses 18 and 19, **“Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. ‘Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed,’ he said. ‘Peace! Be strong now; be strong.’ When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, ‘Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.’”**

Through the angel, God reassured Daniel and encouraged him to be strong. He told Daniel to be strong in heart, assuring him that he doesn't have to be afraid no matter what happens because God is with him. By God’s grace, Daniel was restored to trust in God and to have fellowship with the holy God.

Whenever we are weary and burdened, we can come to God in prayer. Jesus invites us in Matthew 11:28, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest…”** We may be burdened by our own problems and family issues. Like Daniel, we may have burdens because of Satan’s work to degenerate our nation with immorality and a godless value system. We may also carry burdens because of conflicts and wars around the world. Jesus invites us to come to him in faith. When we come to Jesus Christ, he promises to give us his rest and peace. Christ is always with us and interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25). By depending on the power of the blood of Jesus shed on the Cross for us, we can have access to the holy God and ask him with confidence (Hebrews 10:19).

Now, let's read verses 20 and 21. **“So he said, ‘Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince…)”** In verse 20, the angel tells Daniel that after he fights the prince of Persia, another strong evil force, the prince of Greece, will come. God’s people would undergo difficult times under Greek rulers after Persian rule. The angel was sent to tell Daniel about God’s plan for Israel under Persia and Greece (11:2-35), and later about the great suffering immediately before Jesus’ Second Coming (36-45) and finally Jesus’ Second Coming (12:1-4). The angel told Daniel that what was about to happen was scary and terrifying, but he shouldn't worry. Daniel is not alone in fighting the demons of each nation; God is with him. He sends the angel Michael to fight for him, so there is no need to be afraid.

Furthermore, the angel said that everything was and will be done according to the Book of Truth. The Book of Truth refers to God’s plan for the future of mankind. It is absolutely true, and everything will be fulfilled according to His plan. Jesus will certainly come again, Satan and death will be eternally destroyed, and the perfect kingdom of God will come. God is the Sovereign Ruler, and He is in control, no matter what may happen.

In conclusion, we've learned that “prayer is a battle.” There are many enemies of God that we have to fight against, as the forces of evil spirits continually work. But God says, **“Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed, ‘Peace! Be strong now; be strong.”** We are fighting a battle that is already guaranteed to be won because the Lord sends us angels, so we don't need to be afraid; rather, we need to be strong in heart. Instead of succumbing to fear, we should pray fervently and fight fierce spiritual battles until we see our prayers answered, so that we can experience the great victories that God gives us. May God bless each of us as we pray and experience victory over spiritual battles, and may we be strengthened in Christ Jesus!