



Daniel

דניאל

Chapter 10

THE SPIRITUAL WORLD AT WAR

We tend to think of the tangible things we can see and feel as the world we live in. Although Christians are well aware that a spiritual dimension exists, it seems far away and removed from the “real” world that affects us throughout the events of our lives. We get promoted, our spirits soar. We lose our jobs and sink into deep concern and fear, forgetting that God really is in control. People we love get hurt, sick, or are taken from this world and we grieve. Babies are born and we rejoice. It often seems that these things happen to us merely because of things we do or other people do to us. Yet the Bible tells us that the real issues of life don’t take place at all on the levels we can physically experience. Scripture says that the real battle is not one of flesh and blood but of spiritual warfare.

During the reign of king Hezekiah, the Assyrian king Sennacherib taunted the God of the Jews, saying that He was powerless against the Assyrians. Sennacherib called for the Jews to find even 2,000 soldiers and he would equip them with horses to ride, a taunt designed to show his numerical superiority. Read about it in 2Kings 19:10-36. That night a single angel put to death 185,000 Assyrian warriors. Sennacherib retreated to Nineveh in shame.

Another example from 2Kings 6 shows how God is on our side in huge numbers, though we are usually unaware of it. The king of Aram sent his troops to find and arrest the prophet Elisha after learning that he was telling Hezekiah the secret battle plans of the Arameans. Elisha’s servant opened the door of the house to see the Aramean army covering the hillsides. Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened to see the spiritual dimension and suddenly the servant saw vast numbers of spiritual warriors scattered throughout those same hills.

And Elisha prayed, “O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

-- 2Kings 6:17

In his book “God’s Secret Agents” Billy Graham tells a similar story about missionary John Paton and his wife in the New Hebrides. One night they were surrounded by hostile natives. Sensing that the natives wanted to kill them, Paton and his wife prayed through the night. Years later the chief of the tribe was asked about the event. He explained that they never attacked because a large number of men with drawn swords were protecting the missionary couple.



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Ephesians tells us that we are at a constant state of war with spiritual forces attacking us from the heavenly realms. This is the true source of the events, human interactions and physical things that affect our lives.

“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.”

-- Ephesians 6:12 (NASB)

Romans 8:38 suggests that these evil forces are highly organized into “principalities.” Daniel makes it clear that they have a structure associated directly with power structures on the earth, including demonic forces in charge of specific empires and countries.

We often have an attitude that is much too cavalier about the spiritual world, as if we don't fully believe this state of war exists. Even some hymns make light of the powers wielded by the side of evil. The apostle Jude made it clear that we must show a great deal of respect even to the forces of evil. The example he uses is remarkable:

Yet in the same manner these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”

-- Jude 8-9 (NASB)

Jude refers to an incident in which Michael the great warrior angel refused to speak in a negative tone to Satan. Instead, he recognized that only God has the authority to rebuke spiritual beings. After this, he goes on to identify other sins related to speaking against the spiritual forces.

The word “angel” is from the Greek word “angelos” which simply means “messenger.” Angels can reveal themselves with physical bodies. They can eat with us and be entertained by us, looking like ordinary people. Abraham met three angels (one of them was the Lord Jesus) and he entertained them for the evening. The writer of Hebrews seems to indicate that this is a common occurrence!

“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”

-- Hebrews 13:2



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Angels were present when God created the world, and shouted for joy (Job 38:4-7). They were present at the birth of Christ (Luke 2:8-14), during His temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), during the transfiguration, during the night of agony in Gethsemene (Luke 22:43), near the tomb at the resurrection (Luke 24:1-7), at the ascension (Acts 1:10-11), and will accompany Jesus' return (Matthew 13:39; 24:31).

Yet despite all the references to angels throughout the Scripture, Daniel's account that introduces his final vision is perhaps the most graphic description of how angels are constantly at war in the heavenly realms.

DANIEL 10:1

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, (who was called Belteshazzar). And the message was true, but the time appointed was long and filled with strife. He understood the message through a vision.

- This vision was given to Daniel in the third year of the reign of Cyrus, which was the fourth year after he officially took the throne and released the Jews from captivity. This was about five years after the fall of Babylon as described in Daniel chapter 5.

DANIEL 10:2-4

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris,

at that time I, Daniel, was in mourning for three full weeks.

I ate no pleasant bread, nor allowed meat or wine in my mouth. I used no lotions on my body at all, until the whole three weeks were completed.

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, the Tigris [also called Hiddekel],

- Daniel has been in mourning for three weeks and it was now the 24th day of the first month. The Jewish year was changed by God just before the Exodus to begin in the month Nisan, but the secular year began in the month Tishri, so it is somewhat unclear whether Daniel meant Nisan or Tishri.

If Daneil meant Nisan he would have fasted through Passover and begun his fast on the third day of the month, both events seeming out of character for Daniel. The first two days of Tishri are Rosh HaShana, the Jewish new year's festival. The celebration of the reading of the Torah known as the Feast of Rejoicing takes place on 23 Tishri. It appears most likely that Daniel began his fast right after Rosh HaShana and ended it



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as the Feast of Rejoicing came to a close -- three full weeks.

- This was not a complete fast. We tend to think that only complete fasts are “holy” but any fast is acceptable to God, as it represents a sacrifice on our part of something that we enjoy. Daniel was avoiding wine, meat, delicacies and lotions commonly used for hygiene.
- Daniel’s mourning was likely the result of having received the message that he now reveals. The first verse of Daniel 10 suggests that he had the message already in some form (perhaps a vision also), but now receives its interpretation in the vision that will be described here. The message was so disturbing he mourned. Now he looks up and sees a vision.

DANIEL 10:5-6

Then I looked up and saw a certain man dressed in linen, who wore a belt of the fine gold of Uphaz.

His body also was like beryl [or chrysolite], his face looked like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and feet were the color of polished brass, and his voice was like the sound of a multitude.

- The description of this angel is almost identical to that of Jesus’ appearance to the apostle John in Revelation 1:13-16. White robe, gold belt, face shining impossibly bright, eyes like fire, flesh like glowing bronze, voice like rushing water, rain or white noise (qol hamon). There are scholars who believe this is Jesus, for many reasons, including the sense of dread described in the next verse. Others say this could not be because of the fact, mentioned in verse 13, that he was held back by a demonic king. However, there are good rebuttals for the potential of the forces of evil holding back even Jesus for a time in this context. The result is an inconclusive argument. This angel may be Jesus, or it may be just an angel.

DANIEL 10:7-8

I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision, for the men with me didn’t see it, but such terror fell upon them that they fled to hide themselves.

So I was left alone, and saw this great vision. There remained no strength left in me, for my color turned deathly pale and I became helplessly weak.

- Daniel was evidently with companions at the Tigris river. But like the experience of Saul in Acts 9:7, the men don’t see the vision but know something spiritual is happening.



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- The companions flee with an overwhelming sense of dread. Only Daniel is left. We flee from such a presence because when spiritual forces are so closely linked to our earthly existence, we are left with a deep understanding of our own fallen nature. The fear comes from a deep awareness that we are filled with sin and evil.
- Daniel had no strength left. Though he didn't feel the terror that his companions experienced, the impact of this close interaction with the spiritual dimension left him trembling and weak. He couldn't move.

DANIEL 10:9-11

Then I heard him speaking. As I listened to the voice of his words, I fell into a deep sleep with my face toward the ground.

A hand touched me, which set me upon my hands and knees.

And he said to me, "O Daniel, a man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand up, for I am now sent to you." And when he had said this to me, I stood trembling.

- Daniel is called "highly esteemed" or "beloved of God." In the New Testament Gospel accounts, the apostle John is called the one Jesus loves and he is the one who receives the apocalyptic vision. In the Old Testament it is also the one loved by God who receives the apocalyptic vision.

DANIEL 10:12-13

Then said he to me, "Don't be afraid, Daniel. From the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard and I have now come in response to them.

But the ruler of the kingdom of Persia resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I remained there with the kings of Persia.

- This angel was held back from his attempt to reach Daniel by the spiritual forces of darkness. For 21 earthly days he battled the spiritual "king of Persia," a demon king in charge of the empire. This is one of the reasons scholars do not agree that this angel is Jesus, though there are strong rebuttals to this argument.



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- Note that in the second sentence related to this battle, the angel refers to these spiritual rulers in the plural. It wasn't just one demon king giving the Persian empire its blood lust!
- Here we see a very real example of the structure of spiritual forces, both good and evil. The statement shows that demonic forces are organized into structural hierarchies. There are "ranks" of both angels and demons. Some are put in charge of groups, some in charge of cities, some in charge of countries and even of empires.
- Hebrews 1:14 asks, "are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" The archangel Michael helped this angel so he could be free from barriers in order to help Daniel. Sometimes when we pray we struggle with patience, because we fail to understand the depth of the battle raging in the spiritual realm that causes delays even when an answer is immediately on its way. This chapter of Daniel is an excellent picture of how God is continually at work on our behalf even when we don't see the results of our prayers.

DANIEL 10:14

Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the distant future, for the vision concerns a time many days away."

- The vision will be an explanation of what Daniel already knows. He was in mourning because of a message about the future that concerned Israel and the Jewish people. Now he will receive the explanation so he can understand it.

DANIEL 10:15

When he had said these words to me, I set my face toward the ground and became speechless.

- Some Bibles say that Daniel "bowed" with his face to the ground, suggesting that Daniel was worshipping the angel, and one of the arguments in favor of considering that this was Jesus. However, that isn't entirely clear from the passage so we can't draw conclusions from it.



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DANIEL 10:16-18

Then one in the form of a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, “O my lord, because of the vision I am filled with sorrow, and I have no strength left.

For how can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? I have no strength left in me and I can hardly breathe.”

Again one who looked like a man touched me and strengthened me,

- The prophet Isaiah had a vision in which he became speechless until an angel held a coal to his lips.
- When Jesus was praying in agony in the Garden of Gethemene, an angel came to give him strength.

DANIEL 10:19-20

and said, “O man greatly loved, don’t be afraid. Be filled with peace! Be strong now, be strong.” When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Speak lord, for you have given me strength.”

Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? Shortly I will return to fight against the prince of Persia. When I have gone forth, the prince of Greece will come.

- The spiritual battles continue, and this being will have to return to the fight. Notice the reference to the demon prince of the kingdom of Greece, which will not rise to prominence for another 200 years!

DANIEL 10:21-11:1

But I will show you that what is written in the Book of Truth. No one supports me in these things except Michael your prince.

And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and strengthen him.

- The angel says that he took action to support and protect someone from spiritual attack. Who was being protected? Some scholars think this refers to Darius, while others believe the reference is to Michael the Archangel. In other words, the sentence may read “And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect Michael the Archangel.” Some Bibles present this view, but it is not completely certain that this is the meaning here.



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- Revelation 12:7 tells us that there was war in heaven and that Michael the archangel and his army fought against the dragon and his angels fought back. Currently Satan has been granted limited authority as the ruler of the space we live in (Ephesians 2:2). When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, one of the temptations Satan used was to promise him all the kingdoms of earth. It would not have been a temptation if Satan didn't have the right to make such an offer!
- We should not assume that the angel's words about support mean that no one came to help him. It may just as easily mean that nobody was available to help him because they were assigned to other tasks. In other words, he may not have meant "I was helpless except for Michael's help" but instead could have meant "Only Michael was available to assist me." So this reference doesn't invalidate the view that this angel is the Messiah, though that view is far from certain and filled with debate.
- The Jewish people have faced many times in their history where Satan attempted to wipe them out of existence. The angel's reference to the battle with the spiritual king of Persia may be related to the attempt by Haman to eliminate the Jews through the decree by Xerxes, the one thwarted with the help of Esther. Another attempt was the attack under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Later would come orders to expell the Jews from the Roman empire and during the Spanish inquisition, then the great holocaust under Hitler. If God's plan for Israel was transferred to the church as some teach, Satan would have no more interest in the Jews. It is clear that his continued attempt to eliminate the Jewish people means God's plan for the Jews is far from complete. Attacks in the world against Christian beliefs and principles (such as the US courts declaring the Pledge of Allegiance unconstitutional because it refers to God, or Canada's proposed Bill C-250 that would make it a hate crime to quote biblical passages against homosexuality) are examples of the war raging in the spiritual realms. We need to continue praying and acting on what we believe!
- The first verse of chapter 11 is actually the end of the angel's statement in chapter 10. Chapter and verse numbers were added centuries later. Speculation is that the passage was broken this way because the preceding verses have to do with the angel's alliance with Michael and the next (Daniel 11:1) with the angel's involvement with the life of the human king Darius the Mede.