

Spiritual Warfare, Politics, and Prayer

Daniel 10:1-11:1

Daniel: When Kingdoms Collide

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Today we come to a chapter that is unique in the book of Daniel; in fact, it is unique in the Bible. It tells us that Daniel receives a final prophetic vision, but the details of the vision are not revealed until chapter 11. The focus of this chapter is upon the spiritual warfare involved behind the scenes while Daniel prays for understanding of the vision. I have chosen as my title today, “Spiritual Warfare, Politics, and Prayer.” With the election less than ten days away and politics much on our minds, I believe this is a uniquely relevant topic.

Nothing is clearer in Scripture than the fact that there are supernatural beings who rarely appear visibly but who are real, and who interface with our world and impact our lives. Angels are mentioned at least 275 times in at least thirty-four books of the Bible. Demons are mentioned in all but four New Testament books and many times in the Old Testament. We are all familiar with these words from Ephesians 6:12: “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.”¹

But do we really believe that? Ours is an age of science and technology. People are constantly saying “listen to the scientists,” whether regarding global warming, COVID-19, vaccines, social science, evolution, or what have you. But rarely does anyone talk about the presuppositions the scientist holds. Carl Sagan famously pronounced, “The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be,” by which he meant the material universe. I suspect he knows better today, but the fact is there are a lot of Christians who live their lives as though Sagan was right. They don’t expect or even consider the possibility of angelic or demonic interference in their daily lives.

Here in Daniel 10 we are awakened to the fact that there is an unseen realm of angels and demons, who impact not only individual lives but also international affairs and domestic politics. Furthermore, the warfare going on between angels and demons can actually delay the prayers of God’s people! Friends, if this chapter doesn’t stimulate your imagination, you must be brain dead!

The text of Daniel 10 is difficult to follow, so let me give you an overview of what is happening before we read it. Daniel receives a fourth and final vision about a great war in the future. He understands enough that it drives him to his knees seeking further understanding. For three weeks he mourns, fasts and prays, but then he is visited by an unnamed angel of incredible description. Only Daniel actually sees the angel, but the men with him know something strange is going on and they hide in fear.

Daniel’s strength is sapped and he even loses consciousness, but then the angel revives him and explains that although he was sent immediately by God when Daniel began praying, his arrival was blocked for three weeks by a demon of high rank assigned to the nation of Persia. In fact it wasn’t until Michael the archangel arrived to help him that the logjam was broken.

¹Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® unless otherwise noted.

Daniel is so shocked by all this that it virtually knocks him out again, but once again the angel revives him, affirms him as greatly loved by God, and urges him to be strong and of good courage. He then informs Daniel that he, the angel, has to go fight some more demons in Persia and then in Greece but thankfully he knows he will be supported again by Michael. In fact, he says Michael is actually paying him back for support he provided Michael two years earlier! Let's read Daniel chapter 10:1 through 11:1.

Daniel 10:1-11:1

¹*In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. And the word was true, and it was a great conflict (i.e. it was about a great conflict). And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision.*

²*In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. ³I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks. ⁴On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris) ⁵I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. ⁶His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude. ⁷And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. ⁸So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. ⁹Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground.*

¹⁰*And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. ¹¹And 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. ¹²Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. ¹³The 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, ¹⁴and 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."*

¹⁵*When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute. ¹⁶And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, "O my lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength. ¹⁷How can my lord's servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me."*

¹⁸*Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. ¹⁹And 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." ²⁰Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come. ²¹But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: (I believe there should be a period there and the rest should be in parenthesis, as in the NIV) there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.*

^{11:1}*And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

Let's begin, then, with the fact that ...

DANIEL RECEIVES A FINAL FRIGHTFUL VISION, BUT THE DETAILS AREN'T REVEALED TO US UNTIL CHAPTER 11.

The date given in verse 1 is the third year of Cyrus king of Persia.² Several years have passed since the events of chapter 9, where Daniel confessed his sin and the sin of his people, after which he received the vision of the seventy weeks. Now in chapter 10 he receives a fourth and final vision. It concerns a great conflict which will be the subject of next week's sermon on chapter 11.

The prophet's reaction to this vision is noteworthy. He mourns and fasts for three full weeks, at the end of which he is confronted by an angel, who is described in such breathtaking terms that one gets the distinct impression that he must be an angel of very high rank. Some even believe this is an epiphany of the pre-incarnate Christ, but I am inclined to believe it is an angel, perhaps Gabriel, who appeared in a similar role in chapter 9. The angel gives Daniel a glimpse of the existence of the unseen spiritual warfare between supernatural beings of a very high order that is occurring on a macro scale.

DANIEL IS TOLD THAT UNSEEN SPIRITUAL WARFARE IS OCCURRING ON A MACRO SCALE.

The angel tells Daniel that he was sent by God immediately to answer Daniel's prayer for greater understanding, but his arrival was blocked by the prince of the Persian kingdom. Please understand who this prince of Persia is. He is not the son Cyrus, the king of Persia; rather he is one of the cosmic powers over this present darkness that we read about in Ephesians 6. He is a demon—also apparently of very high rank, an arch-demon you might say. And it's not until Michael the archangel arrives on the scene that the angel is able to get through to Daniel with the answer to his prayer. Is that amazing or what?

Now the first thing this reveals to me is that ...

Supernatural beings, both good and evil, are assigned to human governments.³ Michael is clearly God's special angel assigned to Israel, for the angel calls him "your prince" in the last verse of the chapter, and in Daniel 12:1 he is called "the great prince that protects your people." Satan, on the other hand, has assigned one of his high demons to Persia (mentioned in vv. 13 and 20) and another to Greece (v. 20). In Daniel's day, of course, those two nations constituted the current world empire and the one that was destined to succeed it.

But should we think this phenomenon is unique to world empires, or unique to ancient history? I see no reason to doubt that Satan assigns to every nation of the world a high-ranking demon, who supervises a vast number of lesser evil spirits. Nor do I doubt that God has assigned corresponding angels of high rank to those same nations to do battle with Satan's emissaries.⁴ But if I am correct, what are these supernatural beings up to? These angels and demons are not playing Star Wars, nor

² Since Cyrus defeated Babylon in October 539 BC on the night Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall, this is probably the spring of 536 BC.

³ For a thorough treatment of the activity of angels and demons in God's world, see Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 2015.

⁴ David Helm, *Daniel for You*, p. 185, "What underpins this verse (Daniel 10:13) is the idea that God has fixed the geopolitical borders of nations according to assignments given to angels. And this has further, and older, biblical warrant. Deuteronomy 32:8-9 says: "When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God." Unfortunately the NIV translates "sons of God" as "sons of Israel," but Helm is almost certainly correct when he identifies the "sons of God" as angels.

should we think that reference to them is simply a poetic way of expressing the eternal battle between good and evil.

These supernatural beings are engaged in titanic spiritual struggles with huge political implications. This passage, of course, is not the only place we see this sort of thing in Scripture. We see it in 1 Kings 22 in Ahab's day where the prophet Micaiah reveals a scene from heaven where the Lord asks a host of angels gathered around him, "Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?" (v. 20). We see it again in 2 Kings 6 where the king of Aram tries to capture the prophet Elisha because he is revealing state secrets, and God sends an army of angels to protect Elisha. And we see it also here in Daniel 10. Turn your attention to the last verse of our chapter along with the first verse of chapter 11, which really belongs with chapter 10.

You're really going to have to put your thinking caps on here, so hang with me. The same angel who was rescued by Michael the archangel back in verse 13 is speaking to Daniel, and I am going to paraphrase what he tells him: "When I was waylaid by the Prince of Persia and his fellow demons, no one fought with me except Michael the Archangel. But, in fact, Michael was paying me back because two years earlier I fought for him in another great conflict."

Now what was that earlier battle all about? I believe it refers to the events recorded in Ezra 1.

Ezra 1:1-4

¹In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia (this is the same date mentioned in Daniel 11:1 because Cyrus appointed Darius to be king over the Babylonian province of his empire), that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:

²"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem."

Friends, Cyrus didn't make this momentous, mind-boggling decision to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem on his own. He didn't do it just out of the goodness of his heart or because his counselors felt there would be a political advantage to it. He did it because, as the text says, God stirred him up to do it, but there was undoubtedly major spiritual warfare surrounding that decision.

Let me explain it this way. Suppose for a moment you are Satan. You hate the Jews because they are the people of God, and you desire to wipe them off the map. In fact, when Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar back in 586 BC you must have rejoiced because you believed you were finally rid of the nation through which he had promised to bring his Messiah, the head-crusher (Gen. 3:15), into the world.

But then you learn that the prophet Daniel (whom, incidentally, you already tried to eliminate in Daniel 1 and again by means of the lion's den in chapter 6) has been reading the book of Jeremiah and has been praying that God would fulfill his promise to end the captivity after seventy years, restoring his people to their land. If you were Satan wouldn't you do everything in your power to prevent that from happening by trying to convince Cyrus to deny permission for the Jews to return

to Jerusalem? Wouldn't you assign one of your most powerful demons to persuade the king of Persia? I think that's exactly what Satan was doing.

Now switch hats. Imagine you are Michael the archangel, assigned by almighty God to serve and protect his people, the Jews. Wouldn't you do everything possible to facilitate their return to Israel by trying to convince Cyrus that it was best to allow the Jews to return? Well, I suspect that's also exactly what happens. Satan's emissaries are pulling one way and Michael the archangel is pulling the other way. But even God's archangel is facing more opposition than he can handle, so the unnamed angel of Daniel 10 is apparently sent by God to support and protect Michael. Together they prevail and Cyrus issues the decree allowing the reestablishment of the nation of Israel!

Now two years later that angel acknowledges in the last verse of Daniel 10 that Michael has returned the favor by breaking the three-week stalemate with the prince of Persia, allowing him to answer Daniel's prayer for understanding of the vision.

Now let's use some sanctified imagination to apply this amazing situation to modern times. The year I was born (1944) the diabolical Holocaust against the Jews was going full throttle in Germany. Do you think that was the sole product of Hitler's and Himmler's and Eichmann's planning and effort? I don't; that's why we call it diabolical. It is impossible, in my humble opinion, for such unspeakable evil to be dreamed up by any human being on his own, no matter how degraded and debased that individual might be. The Holocaust was the brainchild of Satan himself, and I believe it was carried out under the direction of the prince of fascist Germany, a high demon commissioned by the Evil One himself. And as brilliant as Dwight D. Eisenhower was, I wonder if Michael, the prince of Israel, might have had more to do with bringing Nazi Germany to its knees than did Ike.

Thirty years ago the Berlin wall collapsed and another seventy-year captivity collapsed with it—that of the Soviet Union to Communism. This is vivid in my mind because I stood there in Berlin as that wall was coming down in 1990. I even picked up pieces of the wall with graffiti proclaiming freedom for the captives. Ronald Reagan is often given credit for this amazing development, which took even the most astute political minds in the world by virtual total surprise. But far more was going on there than was ever reported in the news. I believe the prince of the Soviet Union and the prince of East Germany and other cosmic forces found themselves engaged in a titanic struggle with the angels of God over the freedom of one-third of the earth's population to hear the gospel. And I suspect the prayers of faithful believers, both inside and outside the Iron Curtain, did more to bring down that wall than Reagan, Gorbachev, and all the world leaders put together.

Nineteen years ago the Twin Towers fell. Do you think Osama bin Laden pulled off 9/11 by himself, without any demonic help? Do you think he was able to hide for almost ten years through his own ingenuity? Do you think he was captured solely by the bravery and skill of Seal Team Six? I don't. I believe the prince of Islamic terrorism was battling with the hosts of God Almighty.

And let me rush in where wiser pastors might fear to tread. Do you think the racial unrest in our country is merely a conflict between white supremacists and Black Lives Matter? Are the riots and mayhem our great cities have endured for months just peaceful protests that have somehow gotten out of hand? No friends, this involves spiritual warfare. And Satan probably doesn't even care whether you are on the far left or the far right, just so you are on one extreme or the other—because both have deep roots in demonic influence.

I don't know if you're aware of it, but Hitler and Nazism were heavily involved in the occult,⁵ and the KKK and white supremacy movements share in that heritage. Just Google "Hitler and the occult" and literally thousands of sources will come up. But the same is true of BLM. Patrisse Cullors, one of the founders and leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement has openly admitted on tape that the BLM leadership talks to the dead and calls on spirits for empowering their movement and for protection.⁶ Just Google "Patrisse Cullors and the occult" and you will find multiple sources for this.

Frankly, I believe we are observing spiritual warfare of the highest order today. I am convinced many of the conflicts we are experiencing—international, political, social, and racial—involve efforts by Satan to destroy or hinder the spread of the gospel, to undermine God's church, and to silence the followers of Christ. But at the same time, thankfully, God's angels are working overtime to open up unreached people groups to the gospel, to strengthen the church, and to help God's people return to their God-given priorities on faith, family, and the future.

Now I want to go back and address the fact that ...

THIS SPIRITUAL WARFARE CAN EVEN IMPACT THE BELIEVER'S PRAYER LIFE.

Let's start with a biblical principle.

Sincere prayers offered in faith by God's people are immediately heard and answered by God. I believe that is the uniform testimony of Scripture. However, not all are answered in the same way. I can think of four possible answers to any sincere prayer offered in faith by a believer.

1. Sometimes the answer is yes. You pray for forgiveness and God immediately grants it. You pray for encouragement and you begin to feel the peace that passes all understanding.

2. Sometimes the answer is no. There are times when a true believer will pray sincerely in faith and God says no. I have many times sat by the bed of a friend or loved one and prayed for healing. Some of those people died within twenty-four hours. Oh, one can rationalize and say they received permanent healing, but that was not what I prayed for. God simply said no.

Now the theological reason why sincere prayers offered in faith are sometimes answered with no is that we do not always know how to pray in the will of God. Romans 8:26-27 says, "We do not know what to pray for as we ought." But God provides a solution to that. The text goes on to say, "but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts (*i.e. the Father*) knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." That's why I consider "no" to be a genuine answer to prayer. I prayed one way, the Holy Spirit, knowing that the will of God was in a different direction, re-prays my prayer and God answers my prayer the way the Spirit prays it. It is answered, nevertheless. (By the way, I thank God that some of my prayers have been answered no.)

3. Sometimes the answer is wait. You pray for a child who is delinquent or rebellious. Your prayer is clearly in the will of God, but the answer may come months, or years, or even decades

⁵ [Hitler and the Occult](#)

⁶ [Found on Pinterest](#)
[The BLM Connection to Witchcraft, The Hamilton Corner](#)

later. I have shared before the story of my sister for whom my parents prayed every single day for forty years before she came to faith. For his own reasons God sometimes says, wait.

4. Sometimes the answer is delayed. This is different from the preceding category. When God says wait, the answer comes at the time God determines is best. When the answer is delayed, however, it may be because spiritual battles in the heavenlies have interfered with the delivery of the answer. I do not believe Satan can prevent the will of God from being done, but he apparently can delay it. I don't know any other way to interpret Daniel 10 and still be honest with the text.

Practically speaking, this may indicate there are times when we give up too quickly, believing God has said no when actually God has said yes. Consider, for example, a prayer for an opening to share the gospel with a relative or co-worker. The opening doesn't come, so we assume God has shut the door and we quit praying. Dr. Charles Ryrie, my theology professor many years ago in seminary, told us, "When considering open and shut doors, always ask whose hand is on the doorknob."

Now a second truth about the relationship between spiritual warfare and the believer's prayer life that comes out in this passage is this:

Believing prayer is exhausting work, but God rewards it with spiritual refreshment. Three weeks of fasting and prayer left Daniel totally spent. He understood better than anyone except perhaps Jesus himself that prevailing prayer is exhausting work. But God rewards the prayer efforts of his people with times of spiritual refreshment. Look at verses 18-19: "Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. 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.'" By the way, I can't remember a time when our nation needed prayer and fasting by God's people more than today.

POINTS TO PONDER

I want to wrap up this morning with two points to ponder.

1. Human governments have a supernatural spiritual dimension we must take into account.

We tend to see everything in terms of Democrat versus Republican, left versus right, socialism versus capitalism, government programs versus free enterprise, social justice versus white supremacy. But there is a dimension to international relations and even domestic politics that transcends all these categories. This should drive us to our knees and cause us to pray more concerning the big picture. We should be praying that the Word of God might go forth with power in our nation, that Christians would begin to repent and live by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that our leaders would be men and women of character who follow policies that reflect the divine will.

However, while we must not ignore the supernatural we also must not become consumed by it. There is a tendency for believers to do one or the other, and ironically, both serve Satan's purposes equally well. If we are skeptical about his existence or the reality of his demons, he is then able to work unhindered.

On the other hand, if we see a demon behind every bush and every illness and every mental disorder and every Supreme Court decision, Satan knows we will be chalked off as nut jobs and he can still

proceed unhindered. We need a balanced approach that acknowledges the existence of diabolical forces but doesn't try to explain everything in terms of their influence.⁷

2. God is ultimately sovereign and those supernatural beings loyal to him will be victorious over those loyal to Satan. Nothing is clearer in the book of Daniel than that God is sovereign. Don't ever forget that. It would be a serious mistake to conclude that Daniel is teaching a great dualism, namely that the forces of evil and the forces of good are engaged in a titanic struggle to the death with the outcome still in doubt.

The outcome is not in doubt. Jesus defeated the cosmic powers at the cross, and he sentenced them to eternal damnation, but in the meantime they are, so to speak, out on parole. So long as Jesus tarries there will be spiritual battles in the heavenlies, and as long as we're sojourning on the territory that temporarily belongs to the Prince of the Power of the Air, we will be fighting skirmishes and occasional full-fledged battles with the Evil One. He is a formidable foe as he goes around seeking whom he may devour. But, and don't forget this, his doom is sure.

When we sang "A Mighty Fortress," Martin Luther's famous hymn so appropriate for this Reformation Sunday, did you pay attention to its incredibly biblical perspective on spiritual warfare?

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe (*that's Satan*) doth seek to work us woe
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal. (*Ah, but, friends, in the heavenlies he has met his equal!*)

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,
Were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he.
Lord Sabaoth his name, from age to age the same,
And he must win the battle.

And tho this world, with devils filled (*he should have written "demons", since there is only one devil*)
should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph thru us.
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him.
His rage we can endure, for lo, his **doom** is sure ...

In the book of 2 Kings, chapter 6, we have the amazing story of Elisha, the prophet of God who was informing the king of Israel every time the Arameans set up an ambush against Israel. The king of Aram concluded there must be a spy in his royal palace and demanded to know who the guilty party was. "None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom." "Go get him," was the king's command, so horses and chariots and a great army were sent by night to surround the little

⁷ In his book *Miracles, A Preliminary Study*, C. S. Lewis was somewhat more skeptical than I would be when he gave this advice: "To be sure, the morbid inquisitiveness about demons which led our ancestors (the Salem witch hunters) to a pseudo-science of demonology, is to be sternly discouraged: our attitude should be that of the sensible citizen in wartime who believes that there are enemy spies in our midst but disbelieves nearly every particular spy story. We must limit ourselves to the general statement that beings in a different, and higher, "Nature" which is partially interlocked with ours have, like men, fallen and have tampered with things inside our frontier" (p. 126, 1947).

town of Dothan where Elisha was staying. We pick up the reading in verses 15-17: “When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out to get the paper (*this is the Andrus version*), behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, ‘Alas, my master! What shall we do?’ He said, ‘Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.’” 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.”

May God open our eyes today so that we may see. Will you pray with me.

Prayer: Father, our minds and imaginations have been stretched this morning. Give us spiritual eyes to see all the dimensions of reality that are in the world today—not just those available to our five senses. Through the eyes of faith may we see what Elisha’s servant saw, namely that “Those that are with us are more than those that are with them.” They’re not only more numerous but also stronger, because “greater is he that is in us (*Jesus*) than he that is in the world (*Satan*).” In Jesus’ strong name we pray, Amen.