THE ANGELIC WARFARE

Daniel 10:1-21

Key Verse: 13

“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.”

Thank God for the wonderful prophetic message that seventy ‘sevens’ were decreed to put an end to sin and to bring in everlasting righteousness. It is truly amazing that Jesus entered Jerusalem as king on the 9th of Nisan, AD 32, 483 years (sixty-nine ‘sevens’), 173880 days after the date of the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, on the 14th of Nisan 445 BC. That was on Palm Sunday, and Jesus would be cut off on Friday in Palm week, at three in the afternoon, the time of the evening sacrifice. God has his numbers, days and even hours. It is clearly written that the Anointed One, the Messiah, would be cut off after sixty-nine ‘sevens.’ Truly, God is the God of prophecy and its fulfillment. He sees the end and all the processes at the beginning. This precise fulfillment of prophecy convinces us to believe all the prophecies and promises of God. Most importantly, it is true that the Son of God was crucified to death for us because of our sins. This is the one single greatest event in human history, and it is the core of Christianity and the foundation of our faith. We should always keep the death of the Son of God as an atoning sacrifice in our hearts and strive to live bearing this amazing love of God. Sixty-nine ‘sevens’ have been fulfilled and we believe that the one ‘seven’ will be fulfilled at the coming of Christ, the Messiah.

Chapters 10-12 are related to Daniel’s fourth and last of his great prophetic revelations. Chapter 10 introduces the vision, chapter 11 gives the prophecy, and chapter 12 adds an epilogue. All the prophecies written in chapters 7-12 stretch from Daniel’s day until the great tribulation and the return of Christ. However, among chapters 10, 11 and 12, particularly in chapter 11 we see greater detail about the Tribulation than in any other prophecy. In today’s passage, chapter 10, heavenly visitors help Daniel, who mourned for three weeks. Let’s take a look.

Verse 1 says, “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.” This is a general description of this chapter. After his first vision, Daniel said, “…I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself” (7:28). After his 2nd vision, Daniel said that it was beyond understanding (8:27). No response was written after his 3rd vision. In regard to his fourth vision, he said that its message was true, though difficult to believe, and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him.

Now let’s refer to Ezra 1:1, “In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing.” That proclamation was to let the Israelites to go up to Jerusalem and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel. We see that Daniel’s prayer was answered directly in the very year in which he prayed. At this decree, 42,360 Jews returned (2:64). And Daniel 1:21 says, “Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.” So Daniel was not in the government as the prime minister anymore.

Two years have passed. What did Daniel do? Surely, he was a very old man, some say around 85 years old. In verses 2 and 3, Daniel says, “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.” It seemed that he had three weeks of a kind of fasting prayer. It must have been very hard to engage in such a long fasting prayer in mourning at such an old age. Why was he mourning, refusing all the delicious food, even normal food with no lotion, a symbol of joy (Pro. 27:9)? In our understanding, he should have been full of thanks and joy because of the end of his people’s Babylonian captivity. We cannot be 100% sure of why he mourned. Yet, we can surmise that the number of the returnees was just 42, 360, too small to rebuild even the temple, not to mention the city of Jerusalem. In fact, the power of the returnees was so small that they could not overcome oppositions in rebuilding the temple for a certain time. Probably, Daniel expected that all of the Jews would return and powerfully restore and rebuild the holy city Jerusalem and renovate the nation according to God’s purpose. However, most of God’s people had been so absorbed in their lives in Babylon, their secure and comfortable life there established for the last 70 years. Most likely it was very disheartening and disappointing to Daniel. And another reason for his mourning could be that the desolation that was decreed for his people in the previous vison was a great burden to him. One thing is clear that whenever Daniel had a problem, he turned to God and prayed, even fasting for three weeks in his old age. Truly, he was a man of God, a man of prayer.

Then here, verse 4 says, “On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris.” It was three days after his fasting prayer. According to the Jews, the first month was the month of Nisan and on the fourteenth day the Passover lamb was sacrificed and the feast of Unleavened Bread began for one week, until the 21st. Here we see that even during the time of the festival for his people, Daniel fasted in mourning. After three days he was standing on the bank of the Great River, the Tigris, with other people mentioned in verse 7. They were probably some of the Jews whom Daniel wanted to convince to return to their land.

What happened on the bank of the river? Daniel says in verses 5 and 6, “I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, 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.” This description reminds us of the image of the risen Christ written in Revelation 1:13-16, “…someone ‘like a son of man,’ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters…His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.” In Daniel the features of the man were described, linen dress, a golden belt, chrysolite-like body, shining face, flaming eyes, burnished bronze-like arms and legs, voice like the sound of a multitude, which are similar to the description of the risen Christ. It is interesting that in Revelation 19:6 the sound of a multitude and the sound of rushing waters are written together: “Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters…” What Daniel saw was really glorious. In the previous vision, the Anointed One was cut off. Probably Daniel wondered what would happen to the Anointed one after being cut off. It seemed that God showed this glorious appearance of Christ at the time of Daniel’s deep disappointment and sorrow to comfort him. We can say that John saw Christ in post-resurrection glory on the island of Patmos, and Daniel saw Christ in preincarnation glory on the bank of the Tigris. We also remember what John saw in his first vision: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power…” (7:13-14). Yet, here in Daniel 10, most likely that Daniel directly encountered this glorious preincarnate Christ. Since Christ has all authority and he is the commander-in-chief of the invisible angelic army, it is fitting that He should appear in this particular place because of the nature of this prophecy, for Daniel is going to see the tremendous angelic warfare.

What was the response of this appearance? Verse 7 says, “I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves.” Even those who did not see the glorious appearance felt his majestic, holy, powerful presence that they fled and hid themselves in the overwhelming terror. Daniel describes the scene continually in verse 8, “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 fainted. He utterly lost consciousness.

This 85-year-old prophet flat out with a mouthful of dirt and his nose against the ground. He had no strength. It could be a similar response to that of John, who saw the glorious risen Christ, written in Revelation 1:17, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.” Here what is important is the glorious appearance of Christ, which is written in the New Testament and in the Old Testament as well. As for us our Lord Christ Jesus who was crucified to death, resurrected, ascended and glorified. Now in his glory we thank of his own as we sang in the hymn song, “Moment by Moment.” He is coming in such a glorious appearance. What matters in the end is Christ’s suffering and glory. As we participate in his suffering, so we will participate in his glory. May we keep the blessed hope in our hearts, waiting for the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who was cut off and so gave himself to redeem us from all our transgressions and iniquities and to purify us as his people (Titus 2:13-14).

Now verse 10 says, “A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.” In other translations, “…behold, a hand touched me.” We need to think of this verse carefully. Daniel did not write, “He touched me” or “His hand touched me”, but “A hand touched me.” In concerning Gabriel and Daniel, it is written in 8:18, “Then he touched me and raised me to my feet.” So here this hand does not seem to be the hand of a man dressed in linen, Christ mentioned above. And when we refer to 12:5, which says, “Then, I Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river.” We see that there seem to be four heavenly visitors to Daniel, the man clothed in linen, one who has been speaking to Daniel, and two others.

And in verse 11 Daniel wrote, “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.” Now comes the angel’s message. In 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.” These words of the angel must have been a great encouragement to Daniel, who most probably wondered why God did not respond at all to his prayer for his weeks of fasting prayer, while in chapter 9 his prayer was answered even before he finished his prayer offered at the time of the evening sacrifice. But the angel let Daniel know that he his highly esteemed/greatly loved, and said that on the first day his prayer was answered as he humbled himself before God, trying to understand about some questions such as why his people did not go back to their land.

The angel says continually in verse 13, “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.” Here we feel a battle or warfare in the space of heavenly realms. And verse 20a says, “Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia.” Paul also talked about the battle in the heavenly realms. said in Ephesians 6:12, “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 spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

The ruling kingdom of that time was Persia. Persia had a prince, yet that prince was not a man, but a demon being. His job was to control and order the affairs of Persia as to work against God’s people and God’s plan. Satan has an incredibly clever organization. He has set up a network of demons that are behind all of the activities of human history. There was a demon assigned to Persia. And when Persia passed away, Greece would become the third great world empire and, according to verse 20b, there would be another demon assigned to be the power in Greece. The Bible says that all the gods of the nations are demons (Ps 96:5). Throughout all of human history, Satan’s network of demons has been behind the scenes, endeavoring to do all they can to foil the plan of God. The human systems of this world are demonic under the influence of Satan, who is the prince of this world.

Here, the angel was sent by God to go to Daniel and deliver God’s message to him in response to Daniel’s prayer. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted him for 21 days, which seemed to be a long battle, so that Daniel would be discouraged and fall into deep despair. But Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help the angel. He said, “because I was detained there with the king of Persia.” Here we see that while the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted the angel, the angel probably tried to enforce and influence the actual king/kings of Persia more and more for God’s plan. Here we see another aspect that apparently God has also assigned holy angels to nations to carry out his purposes. And this warfare goes on all the time to the end.

We know that God chose the nation Israel to carry out his purpose for world salvation as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The nation became so miserable and weak, but still there was a man of God like Daniel, who prayed seeking for God’s will for his people. It is interesting to know how God has move the power station of the gospel from one nation to another. The gospel work began in Galilee in the land of Israel, the gospel force moved to Rome, Germany, England, and to America and Canada. I am so thankful to God for the amazing work of God that from Canada, more than 250 missionaries to Korea, a very remote Buddhist and Confucianist country, in the 1900s along with more than 3000 missionaries from America. God truly used Canada to influence Korea with the Spirit of Christ and Christianity until Korea became a strong missionary-sending nation. It is said that nowadays, the gospel force is powerful in the nations of Latin America and Africa. It seems to be related to the angelic warfare over each nation or continent. Probably this can be a reason for us to pray for our nation to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. I think it is true in each university as well. University of Toronto was established with the spirit of Christianity and this university sent precious missionaries, James Gale (1863-1937) and Robert Hardie (1865-1949) to Korea. Nowadays we see that universities once founded on godliness and the strong Christian spirit have been replaced by very secular ones, which I think is related the angelic battle over each university. It is also true in each family and the family line. In certain families, the work of demons is so rampant. A whole family can be saved, while another whole family can fall into demonic power. Of this is true in an individual level. Jesus said in Luke 22:31-32, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.” We have enough reason to pray for each of God’s flock of sheep, each of our families, the community of God and our church, and the bigger body of Christ to serve God’s purpose.

Here verse 14 says, “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.” We will see what happens in chapter 11 when the angel unfolds the vision.

In the following verses Daniel said that he was overcome with anguish because of the vision and helpless. We see Daniel’s struggle after fasting as an old man and hearing about the angelic warfare which he might have had never experienced in his life. His strength was gone to the point of breathing difficulties. He was strengthened again and again through the divine help. The words of an angel are “Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed/greatly loved. Peace! Be strong now, be strong.” The angel continued, “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.)”

We thank God for the glorious appearance of Christ and the reality of the angelic warfare. We are to know that Christ Jesus is our commanding officer, commander-in-chief. Being aware of this spiritual reality, may we all more engage in a spiritual battle against the spiritual forces of evil, on an individual level and on a community level, for our campus and nation.