

---

**Day 267 - September 24**

---

## **Period of Restoration (535-425 BCE)**

### ***Daniel's Last Vision***

**Readings: *Daniel 10:1-12:13***

#### ***Reflections:***

- The final visions of Daniel look into the future and foresee maneuverings of both political and spiritual forces. As Daniel nears the end of his life, he is given a window into the unfolding events that will fill up the coming 400 years, years that will be a time of prophetic silence. We are reminded again that the time and authority of kings and kingdoms is under God's sovereign rule. This passage also reminds us that there is an inter-connection between spiritual forces and political powers. In the New Testament, Paul the apostle will refer to principalities and powers to describe the opponents to the advancement of the kingdom of God. These forces, both spiritual and human, work in concert together in their attempt to thwart the expansion of God's true kingdom.
- In the third year of Cyrus, Daniel receives a vision that really stresses him out. He is in a partial fast, maybe because of his age. The man who appears is an angel that is described in symbolic terms: dressed in linen (purity), belt of the finest gold (high standing), body like chrysolite – rare gem (symbol of royal status), eyes like torches (judgment), arms and legs like bronze (strength), and voice like a multitude (authority).
- The identity of the angel is never mentioned. He is a comrade of Michael. In a similar visioning experience in Daniel 8:16, the angel in that context is Gabriel. This is a possibility but it would seem equally logical that if this angel was Gabriel, that he would be mentioned by name.
- The report of the angel gives a fascinating window into the spiritual realm. Daniel's fasting and prayer ("Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God...") connected him immediately to God and this angel was sent with a message (as we saw in Daniel 9:20-32 with Gabriel). In this case, the delay was directly related to what appears to be a spiritual battle: "the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me for twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia." Although we have little explanation it would appear that this again gives the reader a view to realities of the spiritual realm. It would appear that there are spiritual forces assigned to earthly domains, organizations or

kingdoms and these spiritual forces exercise their influence through these human expressions. The spiritual forces of God apparently are engaged in conflict and this spiritual battle ground can impact the timing of God's unfolding purposes. Now, all of this is prior to the coming of Christ. With the death and resurrection of Jesus we learn that Christ triumphed over them through the cross. "And having disarmed the principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." (Colossians 2:15) We see in the book of Acts that Paul's focus is not on spiritual forces but rather the leadership of the spirit of Christ (See Acts 16:7). He acknowledges their reality (Ephesians 6:10 ff) but they remain for the most part out of view. This is important to note within the meta-narrative. The revelation of God is the primary focus and the story of Satan and the demonic realm is more like a footnote. Satan attempted to raise himself up in his pride and in his humiliation he is consistently pushed into the shadows as all the light remains focused on the main character, God.

- The use of the term "prince" may have led the New Testament writers to call Satan by similar titles: "The prince of this world" (John 12:31, 14:30), "The prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), "Prince of demons" (Matthew 12:24).
- The "Book of truth" is another reference to the eternal record of the will of God. The image of a book communicates that the will of God is sovereign and unchangeable.
- The vision empties Daniel of all strength and out of his incredible weakness Daniel receives the final vision of his life. Here we see that encountering the spiritual realm doesn't always result in a sense of empowerment, but can actually produce a sense of weakness and deep vulnerability. The angel's response to his weakness aligns with so many words of encouragement from angelic messengers, "Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed.... Peace! Be strong now; be strong!"
- The long detailed prophetic explanation of the future political realities facing the small nation is very detailed in the sequencing of events but with generic names like "king of the north" and "king of the south." Some scholars have speculated that the four Persian kings are Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius, and Xerxes. "The mighty king of Greece" is most likely Alexander the Great. The kings of the south are thought to be the rulers of Egypt, the Ptolemies: Soter, Philadelphus, his daughter Bernice, and Ptolemy Philopator. If the Seleucid kingdom of Syria is the kingdom of the north, then the kings would most likely be Antiochus III and the vile Antiochus Epiphanes who will desecrate the temple and temporarily put a stop to the sacrificial system (165 BCE).
- The second part of the vision is more of a mystery to scholars with less certain speculation. For this reason some see this as still to be fulfilled and related to the return of Christ. Others see this passage as relating to the events surrounding the coming of the Christ. Some would see the following passage as relating to the first Christ-followers: "those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. When they fall, they will receive little help, and many who are not sincere will

join them. Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the pointed time.” It is easy to see why this passage might refer to the early church. Hebrews 11:36-38 would seem like a parallel passage. Although we can’t be certain, we do see the principle that those that follow Christ face the real cost of suffering for the truth. This reality transcends any specific time or place. In the advancing of truth, spiritual and natural forces work against those who are committed to the ways of love, peace and truth.

- This prophecy ends with a vision of the resurrection. This is a very rare concept in the Old Testament as there was no clear understanding of resurrection or the afterlife. This passage finds parallel to Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1 ff) and no doubt gave the people great hope. Jews of Jesus’ day debated the reality of the resurrection (Matthew 22:23) but with the resurrection of Jesus, the first Christ-followers knew that this prophecy was true and that the Messiah was the first one to return from the dead in a resurrected body.
- At the time of the resurrection, those that are raised to righteousness are described this way: “Those who are wise (or impart wisdom) will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” This verse fits well with Jesus words, “You are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:14). The story of God reveals the glory of God through the broken and weak. Throughout eternity those who are Christ-followers will radiate God’s glory because we have sought his divine wisdom (that looks like foolishness – 1 Corinthians 1:18-25) over human wisdom and have led many into a righteousness that is by faith, not by works (See Philippians 3:9).
- The vision concludes with two angels standing on either side of the river. This image of a river is recurrent throughout Scripture as a reminder of the Garden of Eden and the picture of new world (Ezekiel 47, Revelation 22). The river symbolizes the eternal life-giving power and grace of God.
- The final question is obvious, “When will this happen?” The answer is very cryptic. First, it will happen half-way through the seven years – a time, times and half a time. As we have said before, this appears to be a reference to three and a half years. “When the power of the holy people has finally been broken, all these things will be completed.” This could refer to the destruction of the temple, the end of the sacrificial system (the symbolic end of the Law). “Many will be purified, made spotless and refined (Christ-followers), but the wicked will continue to be wicked (therefore it is not the final judgment).” None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.” This will be particularly true of the Jewish people. Some will understand the message of Jesus and follow, others will reject Christ. This way Christ will be the scandalous stumbling stone that causes people to stumble. The final reference is again to the “abomination that causes desolation” that happens in the middle of a seven year period (1290 days and 1335 days).

- These references all appear to refer to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. This makes sense as the final sign for the Jewish people. Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple and warned the people. From the time of his death and resurrection (approximately 40 years, one generation) the truth was preached before the final judgment fell. This prophecy of Daniel gave the Jewish people all the insight they needed to see God's sovereign hand in sending the Messiah and completing his purpose to end religion and reveal a way of true relationship through faith and a lavish outpouring of his grace in Jesus.