

The Weapon of Spiritual War

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[0 : 00] Right, Daniel chapter 10 and verse 1. In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a word was revealed to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar.

And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word, and had understanding of the vision.

And in those days, I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all for the full three weeks.

On the 24th day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, that is the Tigris, I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist.

His 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.

[1 : 16] And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision. But the men who were with me did not see the vision. But a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves.

So 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.

And then 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. And behold, a hand touched me, and sent me trembling on my hands and knees.

And 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. And then he said to me, Fear not, Daniel. For from the first day that you set your heart to understand, And humbled yourselves before your God, Your words have been heard.

[2 : 30] And I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days. But Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.

For I was left there with the kings of Persia, And came to make you understand what is happening to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for the days yet to come.

When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face towards the ground and was mute. And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips.

And 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.

How can my Lord's servant talk with my Lord? But I know strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me. Again, one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me.

[3 : 39] 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 I said, Let my Lord speak, for you have strengthened me. And then 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. But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth.

There's none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince. Amen. And may God bless to us.

His word. Well, do please have Daniel chapter 10 open in front of you.

[4 : 44] And if you've been here the last few weeks, well done for coming back. These chapters require full brain power, don't they? These are tricky chapters. They engage us with our, not just with the visual things we see, but they are challenging to the mind as well.

So well done for returning. But do please have Daniel 10 open, and we'll spend a bit of time thinking about this chapter together this evening. There is, I think, a great danger in thinking that this visible world is all that there is.

If we, as the Christian church, fall into the trap of thinking that the visible is the sum total of reality, then we are quickly going to be discouraged and give up.

Daniel chapter 10 gives us a stunning and vivid insight into ultimate reality. It reveals to us that the visible world is not all that there is, and that there are hidden forces at work which have real influence in the visible world.

Do not fall into the trap, Daniel 10 warns us, of thinking that the spiritual realm is not real. It is. And we see that so clearly tonight.

[6 : 03] Listen to this short section from C.S. Lewis' Screwtape Letters. If you've not read the book, I'd really recommend you do so. And if you've not read it, the Screwtape Letters are a set of imagined letters from a senior devil to a junior devil.

And the aim of these letters is to equip the junior devil to destroy the faith of a young Christian. It's a set of tips on how to discourage a Christian.

And listen to one of the tactics employed by the senior devil to the junior. Here's what he said. I wonder, you should ask me, whether it is essential to keep a patient, that is a Christian, a patient in ignorance of your existence.

That question at least has been answered for us by the high command. Our policy for the moment is to conceal ourselves. When the humans disbelieve in our existence, we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism and we make no magicians.

But on the other hand, when they believe in us, we can't make them materialists or skeptics. I do not think that you will have much difficulty in keeping the patient in the dark.

[7 : 18] The fact that devils are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. So, if any faint imagination suggestion begins to arise in the mind of the Christian, if he begins to think he might be real, then suggest to him a picture of something in red tights and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that, he cannot believe in you.

So, C.S. Lewis is making the case there that one of the enemy's tactics, one of Satan's tactics is to convince us that the spiritual realm is not there, that this material world is all there is.

What you see is it. And Daniel 10 corrects that view. This chapter pulls back the curtain on the visible world and it shows us a deeper country, a deeper reality, one that's just as real as the one we can see.

It is a hidden reality, a hidden warfare, a hidden spiritual warfare, which explains the visible world we see, the warfare, the opposition to Christ and his church, the things we observe with our eyes.

This chapter explains that. It shows us a deeper reality, a hidden reality. We'll look at it in three sections of this chapter.

[8 : 42] First, what Daniel feels. And we see here the reality of conflict for God's people that leads to mourning. The reality of conflict for God's people that leads to mourning.

Now look at verse 1 there in chapter 10. This verse serves as something of a headline for the remaining chapters of the book. What we have in Daniel chapter 10, 11 and 12 is really one vision.

And rather than take it as one, I think we'd be here to midnight if we did that, we're going to take it in three weeks. But it's basically one large vision. And chapter 10 is a very lengthy introduction to that final vision.

Chapters 11 and 12 give us the detail of the vision. Chapter 12 deals with the end of time. The scope of the vision in chapter 12 is huge. Chapter 11 is a bit more detailed about a particular period of history.

But just notice the summary there in verse 1. In the third year of King Cyrus, a word was revealed to Daniel and the word was true. And it was a great conflict.

[9 : 52] In other words, this final vision, this vision that stretches forward into history and on to the very end of time with the return of Christ, it is a vision, notice, marked by warfare, a great conflict.

Now as we've seen in these last few chapters of Daniel, there will be war until the end. We saw that last time. There will be suffering and hardship for God's people until the end.

That's the big picture. That is the headline in this final section. Here it is in verse 1. But notice the situation into which this final vision is given to Daniel.

We're told that it takes place in the third year of Cyrus. So it's a couple of years after the vision that we saw last time in chapter 9. And by this time, Daniel is probably in his mid-80s.

This is maybe 70 years almost after the events of Daniel chapter 1. And what is Daniel doing here when this vision arrives? What's going on?

[10 : 59] Well, look at verse 2. Daniel was mourning. For three weeks, he had been in mourning. He had shunned the good food of the palace.

He had dialed down the personal grooming. He was in a dark place. He was mourning for three weeks. But why? Why was Daniel mourning?

Well, the key is in the date. And just notice throughout Daniel, he's very careful with the dates of everything that happens. This is the third year of Cyrus.

And the most likely explanation for his mourning would be the reality of opposition that Daniel is aware of. God's people were continuing to endure tough days.

So yes, King Cyrus here, he had signed an edict allowing God's people at last to return to Jerusalem. And they did that under Zerubbabel's leadership two years prior to these events in chapter 10 here.

[12 : 02] And that ought to, don't you think, have been reason for rejoicing, not mourning for Daniel. The fact that God's people were now beginning to return, rebuild the temple. But the thing is, there was significant opposition to those people who had returned.

Listen to what was going on in Jerusalem at the very same time of Daniel's mourning here. I don't need to turn it up, but Ezra, it's on my head's in Esther as well.

Ezra chapter 3. Here's what we see recorded there. Now, in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, that's the same year that Daniel's getting this vision.

In the second year, in the second month, Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel and Jeshurah, the son of Zadok, made a beginning to the rebuilding of the temple. But as you read on Ezra pretty quickly, opposition arises.

You can read about that in chapter 4. And we're told there in Ezra 4 that the people of the land, that is, those who are not God's people, who are living around them, discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build.

[13 : 16] Now, Daniel, remember Daniel's at the very center of things in Persia. He was one of the leading men in the government. He would have been aware of these reports, I'm sure, coming from Jerusalem.

How it would have grieved him to hear that the rebuilding of the temple, which had begun so well, was now met with determined opposition. Opposition so severe that the people were afraid to continue.

They've been frightened into putting down their tools and stopping. See, Daniel is observing, he's hearing the very real enemies of God who are seeking to disrupt and destroy the efforts of God's people to worship the one true God.

And although that was all to be anticipated, remember we saw that last time in Daniel 9. Daniel was told, wasn't he, that yes, Jerusalem, the temple, they would be rebuilt.

But it was going to be in the midst of trouble. Remember we saw that in Daniel 9. It would not be easy. But even though Daniel had been forewarned, even though he kind of knew this was going to come, it's still hard to see the opposition, the reality of it.

[14 : 32] And so he mourns here in chapter 10. And even though we have been forewarned, even though we've heard it in recent weeks in Daniel, even though we see it again and again over the New Testament, even though we're told that hardship will come as we seek to witness to Christ, it's still hard when it comes.

It saddens us. It is right to be saddened at the hardship that fellow Christians face. It is right to be saddened at what some of our young folk have to stand against in school when all around want to fly the flag for Stonewall.

And they're there flying the flag for Jesus alone. It's right to be saddened by that. It's right to be saddened when we hear about the great opposition our friends in North India face, just seeking to keep their ministry open, seeking to secure funding.

It's hard. It's right to be saddened about that. It's right to be saddened and to mourn. But note that Daniel's mourning here, it doesn't lead to passivity, does it?

Look what he does. He prays. That's the implication later on. Look at verse 12. We'll come to this later, but just look at what the man who appears to Daniel says.

[15 : 54] He says, Fear not, Daniel, verse 12, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humble yourself before God, your words have been heard.

And I've come because of your words. See, in the face of this news about opposition to the temple rebuilding, Daniel humbled himself before God and prayed.

He didn't just sit there mourning. He prayed. You see, Daniel grasped that there was a deeper reality.

Daniel understood that the visible is not all that there is, and that the most powerful weapon at his disposal in the midst of this conflict was prayer. Because of all that he had seen over his decades there in Babylon, he knew there was a God in heaven.

He had been there in the lion's den, hadn't he, and wonderfully rescued. He knew there was a God who was sovereign over all things, a God who controlled the empires of the world. And so he pours out his heart and prays to the one who does, in fact, control all things.

[17 : 07] And the New Testament affirms this. The Apostle Paul, in the light of the reality of spiritual warfare, commends prayer. Ephesians 6, verse 16 and following.

Here's what the Apostle Paul says. In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that my words may be given to me, and opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.

For which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak. So yes, the reality of spiritual conflicts leads to mourning, but it doesn't lead to passivity.

Rather, it should move us to prayer. That is our chief weapon in the ongoing conflict against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And I think that ought to be a great encouragement to us, because prayer is something that all of us are commanded to do, and all of us can do.

[18 : 32] All of us can do that. I think one of the newest teams in the church is one of the most strategic and significant, and it's the youth prayer team.

It's a group of senior saints, some of whom are in their 80s, like Daniel was here. Daniel's in his 80s here. He prayed. And our youth team prayers, they commit to pray regularly for our young people.

Every single child who's part of this church family is prayed for by the youth prayer team. And if you were at the prayer meeting on Wednesday, you would have heard one of our mums sharing what our daughter is facing at secondary school in terms of the relentless LGBT propaganda flowing from Stonewall, endorsed by the school, and infusing almost every lesson you could think of.

They need our prayers. Pray for them. That is our chief weapon in the ongoing conflict against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And Daniel knew that and he prayed. And what we see in the rest of the chapter is the response to Daniel's prayer.

[19 : 45] He has this extraordinary encounter and he's given an extraordinary message, a message which brings clarity on what's really going on in the present and for the future of God's people until the end.

So we've seen what Daniel feels. He feels the grief of this. But notice secondly what he sees. Here's our second point. verses 4 to 9. And we see the reality of the heavenly encounter that floors a faithful servant.

Just cast your eyes over verses 4 to 9 there. And this section, it ought to, as well as humble us and instill in us and instill in us a right fear of God, this ought also to bring us great encouragement.

For the one who fights on our behalf in the spiritual realm is a mighty warrior. He is strong. He's powerful. And the focus here is on the appearance of this heavenly man and the impact seeing him has on Daniel.

Who is this man? Look at verse 4. Look at that description again. Daniel lifted up his eyes and looked and behold, a man clothed in linen with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz round his waist.

[21 : 07] His 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 were like the multitudes.

Compare that vision with the vision John received of the risen Lord Jesus Revelation 1. Listen to this. In the midst of the lampstands was one like a son of man clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash round his chest.

The hairs of his head were white like white wool like snow. His eyes were like flame of fire. His feet like burnished bronze refined in a furnace. And his voice was like the roar of many waters.

Now it seems quite probable to me that the man Daniel sees here in his vision is very likely the very same man that John saw in Revelation.

What we have in Daniel is most likely the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. I think that is what explains Daniel's response to what he sees.

[22 : 16] He is absolutely flawed. He hits the deck. Look at verse 8. I, Daniel alone, saw the vision for the men who were with me did not see the vision but a great trembling fell on them and they fled to hide themselves so 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. Then I heard the sound of his words and when I heard the sound of the words I fell on my face in a deep sleep with my face to the ground.

This is the impact receiving God's revelation had on Daniel and Daniel was no wimp. He was prepared to do very difficult things for God, wasn't he?

Prepared to face the lion's den in defiance of the king but to encounter the risen Lord Jesus himself well, it totally floors him. It totally drains him so that he can barely lift his head from the dust.

And encounters like this they do floor people. Remember the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus set on persecuting Christians he meets the risen Lord Jesus doesn't he on the road and it utterly floored him literally and spiritually.

[23 : 34] He was never the same again. And we may not have experiences like this but we serve the same Lord Jesus and too often perhaps we are casual and matey with Jesus but he is a warrior who strikes fear even to the bravest of his faithful people.

Daniel Paul these were able strong men and they were brought to their knees just at the sight of Jesus in his glory. Jesus is a warrior his eyes burn like flames of fire the sound of his voice is like the roar of many waters and perhaps we need to regain something of that awe and wonder that Daniel has of that reverence and fear and it will humble us on the one hand but it also will give us great courage on the other hand courage because we belong to this Jesus.

He is our God and even the fiercest of this world's kings even those most set on destroying and discouraging his church they will not stand against his warrior.

They will not stand against Jesus but as people they will stand. You see the impact of this encounter as well as being terrifying for Daniel he was flawed wasn't he?

It was also strengthening for him. We're told on two occasions that the man he sees in his vision the Lord Jesus strengthens Daniel.

[25 : 25] Look at verse 18 and verse 19. Twice we're told that the man touched Daniel and strengthened him. Again in verse 19 as he spoke to me I was strengthened.

So terrifying as this vision was for Daniel Jesus was tender and gentle towards his servants.

So this chapter is not here to crush us. It's not here to break us down but rather it's to brace us up to equip us and strengthen us for the conflict for the realities of living as his people in this world.

So Daniel is flawed and strengthened by this encounter with Jesus. That's what he sees.

But let's consider lastly what is revealed to Daniel in this chapter. and this is really teeing up chapters 11 and 12 but we're given a crucial insight in chapter 10.

[26 : 40] Here's the last thing we'll see. This is what Daniel heard. We've seen what he felt the mourning the sadness of the conflict. We've thought about what he sees with his eyes but lastly what he hears the message.

Our final point from verse 10 to the end the hidden reality of spiritual warfare explains present struggles. The words of the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus revealed to Daniel and to us they reveal that there is a hidden yet very real warfare going on.

There is a heavenly warfare and God's people will experience the earthly reality of it. Look at the words spoken to Daniel verse 12.

It says 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've come because of your words.

The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days but Michael one of the chief princes came to help me for I was left there with the king of Persia and 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.

[28 : 06] So this explains partly why there is a delay in the vision. Daniel's been praying three weeks and we're told here that the pre-incarnate Jesus has been battling against the prince of the kingdom of Persia for 21 days.

That's the three weeks that Daniel's been praying. And what's this about? What's this battling against the kingdom of Persia? What's going on here? Seems rather odd.

What's happening? What this section is it's a pulling back of the curtain that lies around the world we can see to reveal the world we can't.

There is a spiritual realm and that is the realm in which the battle being described here takes place. The prince of the Persian kingdom and the prince of Greece are ways of describing in apocalyptic language evil forces that characterize these superpowers.

Their intent is to dominate the world to conquer all before them to rule without reference to God to persecute the people of God. It's the reality of spiritual warfare that we've been told about.

[29 : 18] Jesus has been battling behind the scenes against these powers. It's the same reality that Paul speaks about in Ephesians.

He says that 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 force of evil in the heavenly places.

it's the same reality that Daniel is being shown here in Daniel 10. There is a spiritual battle between God and his legions of angels on the one hand and Satan and his minions on the other.

That is a real conflict a real battle. And it's a battle that has waged through all of time. And it's a fierce battle. Abraham Kuyper a theologian former prime minister of the Netherlands explained the reality like this.

He said if once the curtain were pulled back and the spiritual world behind it came to view it would expose to our spiritual vision a struggle.

[30 : 34] so intense so convulsive sweeping everything within its range that the fiercest battle ever fought on earth would seem by comparison a mere game.

Not here but up there. That is where the real conflict is waged. You see beneath the surface of history we can see there is a hidden war.

A war which seeks to decimate the people of God. And that hidden war bubbles up on the surface of human history from time to time. Just look at Daniel's experience here.

Just consider the situation that's brought him to mourning and prayer. Think about the plot to destroy God's people that plays out in the book of Esther.

Read about the repeated opposition to the early church through the book of Acts. Consider the constant conflict and opposition and persecution that the church endures through every age and today.

[31 : 39] And of course the opposition that the Lord Jesus experienced during his earthly ministry. That's hidden battle.

It bubbles up all the time. But it is a battle which we know the decisive blow has already been struck.

We can look back on Jesus through his death and resurrection he has already landed the killer blow. We are now in the latter days as described in Daniel 9.

We're in this last week. The last portion of history. The end is sorted. Jesus has won the final battle.

But until the end until Christ returns as judge until that day we're told there will be war that is the reality. And that is a conflict that God's people through every age are inevitably caught up in.

[32 : 48] We are engaged in this hidden warfare as we do what on the surface seems weak and feeble. Namely as we pray. Note that 21 days mentioned in verse 13 is the length of time that Daniel has been in prayer and mourning.

And remarkably we're told that the heavenly man the Lord Jesus comes verse 12 because of your words Daniel. the implication is that our prayers are in some way connected to the battles waged in the spiritual realm it seems.

Daniel's prayers on earth there in Babylon had impact in the heavenly warfare. He was engaged in it. It's astonishing to think. Our prayers don't control God but they are in a very real way part of this spiritual warfare.

In some way it seems Daniel's prayer sustained a behind the scenes triumph over the invisible powers in charge of Persia. As one commentator puts it in the mighty battle being fought between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world Daniel succeeded in mobilizing the angels as a spiritual air force against the satanic powers in the air.

It's incredible to think isn't it? That Daniel's prayers mobilized an angel army. You see we are in a war.

[34 : 25] Daniel knew that. And we need to know it too. A war every bit as real as the one in Ukraine. And that is in no way to downplay what is happening there.

Rather it's to play up and help us see the very real ongoing spiritual warfare that's raging all around us all the time. Imagine if this spiritual warfare we see in this chapter had as much coverage as the Ukrainian war.

I imagine we'd all be praying a little bit more. Don't you think? See prayer is one of our key weapons in this spiritual battle. So are you praying?

individually for your family corporately does Satan tremble when the Tron church gathers for prayer every other Wednesday?

If you're not there if you're not there in the spiritual trenches every other Wednesday then think about it. Ought you to be there?

[35 : 37] Barring health or work reasons ought you not be there beside your brothers and sisters in the spiritual trenches praying? Do you see what our prayers do?

Do you see the impact of our prayers in that hidden battle? They matter. They're heard in heaven. Angel armies are roused by our prayers.

Isn't that astonishing to think? And this is the role that we are called to play in this great hidden spiritual conflict. And God hears our prayers and he delights to answer them.

And his answer ultimately gloriously is to send his own son the Lord Jesus Christ. The great answer to all our prayers is to be a man.

He appeared to Daniel in this chapter and he has come to us. He has dealt the decisive blow in the battle. And so we can be, as Daniel was, greatly strengthened and play our part in the battle.

[36 : 53] See, our God is at work behind the scenes at this very moment battling on our behalf, on your behalf, on my behalf. He is right now waging war.

Imagine if we could lift the roof of this building and instead of seeing the sky, we caught a glimpse, as Daniel did, of the unseen battles being waged at this very moment.

We would all of us fall flat on our faces, as Daniel did in awe. more. But that vision would also surely bring us great assurance that we, like Daniel, are greatly loved because we serve the very same Lord Jesus Christ who wages that war on our behalf.

So don't make the mistake of thinking that does not exist. there is more to what we see, but what we can't see, while Jesus is fighting on our behalf.

So be encouraged, Tron Church. Let's pray. Amen. O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you, be strong, and of good courage.

[38 : 28] Father, please help us to be encouraged by your word tonight. Help us not to fear, but to trust, because we have a mighty God.

Help us, for in Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.