



A Vision That Grieves

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. (Daniel 10:1-9)

We spent several studies dealing with Gabriel's prophecy to Daniel regarding the seventy weeks. The literal rendition of the Hebrew words apparently would be "seventy sevens," not necessarily "weeks." Given the occasional representation of a day for a year in Scripture (For example, God's judgment of forty years in the wilderness for Israel's forty days of rebellion and refusal to obey Him and enter the land of Canaan), most commentaries interpret the seventy week or "seventy sevens" prophecy as four hundred ninety years. (Seventy times seven or four hundred ninety days, representative of four hundred ninety years)

Another evidence of the day-year representation in Gabriel's prophecy appears in our present passage. When Daniel states, "I Daniel was mourning three full weeks," he used a different Hebrew word for "weeks," a word that literally means "weeks of days." If the seventy weeks prophecy intended to depict literal days, there would be no logical reason to change the word in the tenth chapter to a word that specifically means "weeks of days." However, if in fact the seventy week prophecy intended weeks of years, a day for a year, the different word in the tenth chapter is necessary.

We tend to think of God's revelations to His people as causing joy, as being upbeat and joyful. In this case God's revelation to Daniel evoked intense grief in Daniel. Notice the language in the text that describes the vision and Daniel's reaction to it.

1. ...*the thing was true.*
2. ...*the time appointed was long.*

3. ...*and he understood the thing.*
4. ...*and had understanding of the vision.*
5. *I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.*
6. *I ate no pleasant bread.*
7. ...*neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth.*
8. ...*neither did I anoint myself at all.*
9. ...*till three whole weeks were fulfilled.*
10. *I was left alone.*
11. ...*and saw this great vision.*
12. ...*and there remained no strength in me.*
13. ...*for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption.*
14. ...*and I retained no strength.*

At this point Daniel tells us that "...the thing was true...." How did Daniel know that this revelation was true, that it was from God? In our last study we examined our own criteria for evaluating truth claims. We have Scripture, revealed and preserved by the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is God, He cannot change or contradict Himself, so any subsequent revelation He gives to anyone will in every detail harmonize with Scripture. A lady occasionally visits our church who regularly tells us that "God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit live inside me, and God told me to tell you..." typically followed by rather bizarre ideas. In my last conversation with this lady I tried to be gentle but to clearly tell her that perhaps she was listening to the wrong voice because her "revelations" were not in harmony with Scripture, our only reliable basis to evaluate such claims. How did Daniel know that this revelation came from God, that it "...was true"? Although Daniel does not specifically tell us the

basis for his confidence in the truth of the revelation, the book of Daniel up to this point has given us a detailed account of God's interaction with Daniel, so Daniel by this time is quite familiar with God and with God's way of doing things. Whatever the specific basis of his assurance, Daniel writes with confidence in the truth, the divine origin, of his knowledge.

Given the contextual proximity, it is quite likely that this revelation in some way relates to the details of the seventy week prophecy. As we move forward in our study, we will see that God's revelations to Daniel build on certain repeated facts, each revelation adding more details to the last. For example, including Babylon, four world empires would govern the region from Daniel's time till the coming of Jesus, "Messiah the Prince." Although Daniel does not name each power, he gives sufficient details that we are left with little doubt as to their identity. The history of that region outside the Bible fully agrees with Daniel's information. While modern skeptics attempt to date Daniel's writings to a "ghost writer" around the time of Alexander and the Greek empire, the prevailing evidence is that Daniel lived and wrote during the Babylonian captivity over five centuries before the birth of Jesus, exactly as the book claims. The accuracy of the details of future historical events centuries in advance of that history unfolding strongly and consistently affirms God's powerful hand in the writing and preserving of Scripture.

Based on information that flows out of this sad revelation and corroborated by world history, we learn that these four empires were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, ancient historical Rome, not a future Roman-like empire.

We have seen Daniel's search for the role and survival of his beloved people, Judah, in the unfolding revelation that God gives to him of the next five centuries, but we have seen little detail up to this point that might serve to answer the question. I suggest that the strongest and most logical explanation for Daniel's reaction to this vision is that the vision gave Daniel that specific information, but the future of his beloved people as revealed by God also caused his intense grief.

Daniel's isolation with this information, "...I was left alone..." would only serve to deepen his grief. Recently I have read some of C. S. Lewis' writings, always thought-provoking. In one piece that I read Lewis observes that grieving people need to be in company with close friends, but they also need those friends to be quiet, not try to talk them out of their grief or to talk it away. Most people who visit grieving friends think they must talk non-stop to their friends, but this habit is likely the least comfort they can possibly give. Many years ago I read a story about Queen

Victoria of England. In the narrative the queen learned that the wife of one of her servants had just lost a baby. She immediately directed her staff to arrange for her to pay the grieving mother a visit. When the royal coach arrived at the servant's cottage, the queen ordered her staff to remain with the carriage while she went alone into the home. She remained in the home for well over an hour. Eventually after the queen returned to the carriage and was driven back to the castle, someone asked her what she and the grieving mother talked about for so long. Wise and tender, the queen said that they didn't talk at all. Rather she said that she sat down beside the mother, held her hand, and the two women wept together for the hour. In his grief Daniel didn't even have a silent friend to hold his hand and grieve with him. "...I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision...."

What can we learn from this lesson that applies to us and to the world in which we live? First we should learn that God's true revelations may not always evoke speechless joy. Sometimes they indeed evoke grief. However, God's revelations are always true. We may not always trust information provided to us by other humans, even by trusted friends, but we may always trust God's revelations. Our task is to test every revelation by the master revelation that God gives us in Scripture. If our ideas fail the test of Scripture, we may safely conclude that they didn't come from God.

At times I am amazed at the extent to which people change their minds, wholly re-interpret Scripture, all to rationalize their "new ideas." They give a façade of Biblical support, but they also destroy their own credibility. If at Point A they claim that God's Word, Scripture, teaches "ABC" doctrine, and at Point B they claim that Scripture refutes "ABC" doctrine, instead teaching "XYZ" doctrine, why should we believe them at all? They couldn't be right at both points. I fear that folks often follow the same strategy as the lady at our church, but with more credibility. Their claim of truth revelations from God are in fact their own ideas, simply dressed superficially with Biblical clothes to give them undeserved credibility. Thank you; I'll stick with Scripture alone for my truth claims.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
16434 Woodruff
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
Joseph R. Holder Pastor