

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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God Unfolds History before it is History

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)

A dear friend and fellow minister, Elder Mike Rodgers, pastor of Bethany Primitive Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas, encouraged and nudged me for over a year before I engaged the present writing on the book of Daniel. Mike has also collaborated with me in the writing up to this point, though more passively at times than I would have preferred. He has agreed to write the next few chapters that deal with the tenth and eleventh chapters of Daniel. More than I can express fully, I appreciate Mike's encouragement and assistance in this work. When I first considered the idea, I felt more intimidated than with about anything I ever considered in my writing. However, as Mike's encouragement prodded me to take a closer look, I fell in love with Daniel and with his inspired writing. Thank you, Mike. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

In these chapters God reveals greater details that Daniel has thus far known regarding his beloved people and the things they shall face during the next five hundred years. Now let's examine Mike's thoughts together.

Chapter 10 is essentially about the setting of when and how Daniel received his final recorded vision. It is interesting to remember that, at this time, Daniel is elderly and has lived in Babylon since his teenage years. He was taken there as a captive, and now he comes to the end of his years without having been able to return to his home in Israel. To understand the purpose of the visit from the messenger angel and the extent of the revelation given to Daniel, it is important to recognize that even after all of these years in captivity his heart is still toward Jerusalem. He

yearns not just for his homeland, but more so for the glory of God.

Notice first that Daniel had been fasting for 3 weeks. Fasting is an interesting and neglected subject in today's world of convenience and plenty. Without getting deeply into the subject, suffice to note that Daniel was "mourning" or lamenting. From the context we believe that he most likely was sorrowful over not being able to return to Jerusalem and over what might become of the Israelites. Now notice what the angel says. The angel refers to Daniel's desire – "thou didst set thine heart to understand" – and to his discipline – "to chasten thyself before God". As a result, God blesses Daniel with a special message from a special messenger.

How wonderful it is to receive a message from God. As discussed in our previous writing, it is important to compare any message that we think we may have received to what we know is God's inspired writ. But if we are faithful to seek God, then God will bless us. If we set our heart to understand and are disciplined enough to pray and study, then we will find that His path becomes more clear. His word becomes a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

Again, Daniel's desire was not just for himself, but for "his people." Notice that the angel says, "Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days..." Evidently Daniel's thoughts had been toward the Israelites – the people of the living God. They were the people that God had chosen above all other nations and people on the earth. It may confound us as to why God chose them, but the fact remains that they were chosen and that it

pleased God to do so. We must accept that God is holy and perfect, and that whatever He does is the right thing to do even if we don't understand it.

What a good example Daniel sets for us also in this regard – his thoughts and concerns are for God's people. He could very well have lamented his own situation – a lifetime effectively in captivity and away from home. What of his parents? His siblings (if any)? His kindred and friends? He had been faithful to God for these many years, facing lions and enemies and treachery and death. Yet here he is, an old man, with no hope of ever again seeing the temple or bringing sacrifices to the altar of the court.

For the entire 70 or so years that Daniel has been in captivity, his strong belief was that God is sovereign and that God's will is perfect. Why had God allowed the captivity – *his* captivity – to occur? Why had God allowed one so upright as Daniel to be taken away? Why had God not delivered him from that godless place and allowed him to once again worship in the sanctuary at Jerusalem? These types of questions occur to us as they must have with Daniel, but the answers may be elusive. Still, God is sovereign, holy, perfect. His ways and thoughts are higher than ours. We may not ever understand, but God does, and we must trust and rest in this truth.

Thankfully God does give Daniel that ray of hope. He sends a special messenger to Daniel with a special message for Daniel. God allows Daniel to look – as it were – into the future. It is not a vision of eternal heaven as was given years later to Paul and John, but it is a heavenly vision. It is a vision of more strife, but which ends in the triumphant coming of the Messiah, the King, the Lion of Judah, the Law Giver, the Prince of Peace, the Redeemer. Like Moses looking into the Promised Land but not entering, Daniel is given a vision of the coming kingdom of God. It is not one that is natural, but one that is spiritual. It is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is the kingdom established in the heart of every one of God's spiritually chosen.

Daniel is no stranger to this vision and this message. The message was revealed early in his life when he explained "the great image" to king Nebuchadnezzar. He was reminded of it when Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall. He saw it in the four beasts, then in the rams. He understood it in the ending of the seventy weeks. Yes, Daniel knows the message, and now, as he approaches the end of his earthly journey, God blesses him to see it again and to understand the end thereof. We perceive that God's heart is toward Daniel, to comfort him in

his lamentation, to reassure him in his fears, to strengthen him in his weakness. God is good at that – at strengthening the weak, lifting the lame, causing the blind to see and the deaf to hear and the mute to be able to sing praises! Looking ahead to Chapter 12, we see that He will renew Daniel's hope by assuring him of the deliverance of "every one that shall be found written in the Book." Kingdoms will come, and those kingdoms will go. One is established but for awhile, then another overtakes it. Daniel is well aware of the four kingdoms – Babylonia of the past, Medo-Persia in the present, and the Greek and Roman yet to come. He knows of the plots and subplots within each. He knows that each successive kingdom will envelope the previous one, but also that each is becoming more and more earthly, like the clay feet of "the great image." Until the time when THE KING arrives on the scene, with a simple message going before: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Thanks be unto God for that kingdom – that spiritual kingdom – that will be established without end, "from henceforth even for ever." Praise be to God!

So, dear Daniel, "man greatly beloved", fear not, be at peace, be strong, for your Lord cometh! And so with you, dear reader whom God loves without end. Do not be afraid, for His perfect love casts out fear. Be at peace, for the Prince of Peace has fought the battle. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. For thus hath the Rock which was cut without hands crushed the presumptuous and false authority of the prince of the power of the air, who would have established himself as king, but whose dominion is crushed the supposed kingdom of Satan.

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor