

Daniel 10: Wisdom in a World at War

In 1970 sociologist and futurologist Alvin Toffler wrote *Future Shock*, a book sold over 6 million copies. Toffler said that technological and social change was accelerating at a pace that left people feeling disconnected and stressed and disoriented. As Daniel looks into the future he too is deeply disturbed and distressed by what he sees.

A website advises people how to overcome their 'fear of the future phobia':

1. Try to understand your own potential.
2. Create the future you desire in your mind through the process of visualization.
3. Plan for your future achievements, making your dreams turn into reality.
4. Believe in yourself and try to be successful in life.

Contrast this individualistic, elitist, self-absorbed, fantasy-world tripe with our Christian hope. Our hope is not whitewash; not "let's pretend"; not the power of positive thinking. Daniel 10 introduces the last vision of the book, extending through to 12:4. Yes, at history's end you will physically rise IF your name is written in the book of life. But if not then you have every reason to fear the future, because as Daniel 12 also teaches, all others will rise to face utter humiliation and everlasting contempt. If you are not right with God then plead with God to give you new life.

The greatness of our Christian hope is that it shines in the blackest night, when all looks grim. In this book the more Daniel discovers about the future the more distressed he becomes. He knows that God's people, the Israelites, will return to their land from their exile in Babylon. He knows Jerusalem and the Temple will be rebuilt. But he also knows that even more terrible things will happen to God's people than those things that have already happened. So, at the end of Chapter 9 Daniel is told that "an anointed one", namely the Messiah, will be "cut off", that is, killed. He is told that after Jerusalem and the Temple have been rebuilt they will yet again be destroyed.

The Great War

At 10:1 we learn that Daniel's vision "*concerned a great war.*" There are three reasons to call this "a great war." Firstly, as indicated in 9:26: "*War will continue until the end.*" There will be unending conflict until the final resurrection. Secondly, this great war is not war in general but that relentless conflict in which God himself is defied and God's people end up being the victims. Chapter 11 traces conflict between Persia and Greece and then many phases of the conflict between the King of the North, that is, the Seleucid Kingdom based in Syria and the King of the South, that is, the Ptolemaic Kingdom based in Egypt. Palestine, here called "*the beautiful land*", is between these empires making God's people the meat in the sandwich. The conflict of Chapter 11 climaxes when blasphemous human rule - a major concern in this book - will blatantly express its defiance of God and seek the destruction of his people.

Thirdly, this conflict is "a great war" because it involves angelic princes locked in battle, anticipating Paul's words that "*our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against*" 'principalities' and other spiritual forces. In 10:21 and 12:1 the archangel Michael is called "your prince", that is, the princely angel guarding Daniel and the people of God. In Daniel 10 Michael and the Glorious One who reveals the last vision to Daniel are presented as fighting against other angelic princes, clearly evil angelic authorities, namely "the prince of Persia" and "the prince of Greece" (v20).

In his book *Let the Nations Be Glad*, John Piper states, "There is not a warfare part or life and a non-warfare part. Life is war." As Piper observes, most of us show by our priorities that we don't really believe this. We act as though we are in peacetime not wartime. Around 15 million people were killed during World War I. It was called "The Great War." Very few of us really believe that spiritual warfare is greater than either of the two world wars. Do you really believe that spiritual war is more deadly than any nuclear war you might imagine? Have we really grasped that the casualties of this war enter a hell of everlasting torment? As Piper points out, because our churches are characterized by a peacetime mentality there is a lack of willingness to suffer, to take risks, to launch out on God alone.

What is this battle in the heavenly realms all about? Clue #1: the timing of this vision: "*the third year of Cyrus king of Persia.*" The vision of Chapter 9 occurred in the first year of Cyrus when Daniel's prayers began to be answered with Cyrus' decree authorising the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and the return of God's people to their land. Clue #2: in verse 13 the Glorious One who reveals this vision to Daniel speaks of being detained "with the kings of Persia", not "king" as mistakenly in the NIV. Cyrus had made his son Cambyses his co-regent, hence "kings" not "king." Clue #3: At 11:1 we read: "And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I [the Glorious One] took my stand to support and protect him." Clue #4: The book of Daniel is totally preoccupied with the implications of world events for God's people. Clue #5: Both Daniel's prayer and the closing vision of Chapter 9 have centered around the return of God's people to their land and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple.

Given these five clues, we can be confident that the battle in the heavenly realms is tied to the return of God's people from exile and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple. This is Daniel's obsession, as Daniel 6 makes clear. For even though certain death stares him in the face Daniel still goes to the upper chamber of his house and prays to God three times a day, deliberately facing Jerusalem as he does so, precisely because that's what his prayer life always centres around - the restoration of God's people and the glorifying of God in the re-establishment of the centre from which God will rule the world. That is, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

During the last three days Australia was locked in battle with the West Indies at the Gabba in Brisbane in the first cricket test. You should not underestimate the significance of this. After the Duke of Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, he commented, "The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton." He also said, "My successes in the Army are owing in great measure to the manly sports of Great Britain, and one sport above all - cricket."

You will never again disparage test cricket, will you? Didn't you realise that Australia's dominance in cricket means we can conquer the world? Yes, laugh at the idea of associating military victories with struggles on a cricket field. But then many non-Christians might laugh at the way we Christians think our day-to-day struggles are tied to a titanic conflict involving mighty angelic forces.

The idea of ordinary people fighting against otherworldly beings sounds like fiction to many people. Our televisions have been full of programs of this nature: Charmed, Angel, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Medium, Ghost Whisperer, Doctor Who, X-Files,

Pushing Daisies, Supernatural, Smallville. In the same manner heaps of movies have been made involving angels, all serving to encourage people to think that any talk of angels or non-human spiritual persons is all the stuff of fiction.

Yet very high numbers of Westerners do believe in paranormal forces and many believe in angels, even if their views of such beings are way out. The irony is that many who adhere to a scientific worldview still believe there is more to the world than what they can see and hear and touch.

Otherworldly Warriors

Daniel 10 only speaks of two evil angelic princes, one associated with Persia and one with Greece. Their activity is linked to a Satanic attack on God's people who at that time are also a nation with a land it is in the process of reoccupying. It's dodgy, on the basis of this evidence, especially now that God's people are no longer a land-bound nation, to think every nation is controlled by its own evil angelic prince. Despite this there are Christians who believe not only that all nations are ruled by evil angels but also cities and other geographical areas as well. Some years ago 200 YWAM missionaries went to Cordoba, Argentina during the World Cup soccer play-offs. After prayer and fasting they believed that God had identified for them a Satanic territorial spirit who ruled Cordoba, manifested in the cultural pride of the city. To defeat this proud demon by humility, the team scattered around the central mall shopping area and, in full view of passers-by, knelt down and prayed for Jesus to be revealed to the city. Intrigued, crowds gathered and accepted tracts. When John Dawson preached some people dropped to their knees and repented of their sins. Those YWAM missionaries believed they had defeated the territorial spirit of Cordoba.

Many Christians have walked in the *March For Jesus Movement*. If asked why, many would answer, "I'm marching for Jesus." But the founding leaders of this movement would answer differently. They would say, "We are marching as an act of spiritual warfare to defeat the territorial spirits ruling in the areas in which we march."

Contrary to the teaching on territorial spirits, the New Testament indicates demons dwell in people (and, occasionally, animals) rather than in regions, houses, or territories. Unlike some Christians today, Daniel does not try to find out the names of the angelic princes, nor does he even pray against them. David Pawson observes, "One striking feature of engagement with demons by Jesus and others in the New Testament is that they never took the initiative. They never went looking for them."

Against these evil angelic princes stands the Glorious One of Daniel 10, who speaks of being detained by "the prince of the Persian kingdom" for 21 days until relieved by the archangel Michael. This doesn't mean he must be an angel, limited in power. While God is absolutely sovereign he has permitted Satan along with his evil angels to contest what he has planned for his people. Listen to Daniel's description:

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, 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 (vv4-6).

In Revelation 1 John uses the language of Daniel 10, along with that of Daniel 7, to describe his vision of Jesus in all his glory. Also, Daniel's description of the Glorious

One resonates with Ezekiel's vision of God, as described in Ezekiel 1, where Ezekiel ends up looking at "a figure like that of a man" high above the throne. In Daniel 10:16 Daniel recalls how "one who looked like a man" touched his lips, inviting us to see him as John evidently saw him, one and the same as the divine Son of Man portrayed in Daniel 7. In Daniel 10 Daniel is in the presence of God himself.

Quest for Wisdom

In verse 12 this Glorious God, in radiant human form, says to Daniel: "*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 have come because of your words.*" Daniel was a man in search of understanding, wisdom. In Ezekiel 28:3 God mocks the King of Tyre for his immense arrogance, saying, "*You are indeed wiser than Daniel; no secret is hidden from you.*" This sarcasm assumes that the King of Tyre is familiar with the international reputation of Daniel as the wisest man on earth. Yet wise Daniel is confused because he knows God is sovereign. This being so why do bad things keep happening to God's people. Where will it all end? But Daniel ends up learning what is inscribed "in the book of truth" (v21), that is, the book that truly reveals what God will do in future history. It is as if God has already written down in a book everything that will happen in future times. Everything is predetermined; everything happens according to God's schedule, in tune with his program.

You are kidding yourself if you think you can acquire wisdom by simply sitting passively in your pew and listen to me preach, or by simply turning up unprepared for your home group Bible study. Daniel models what we read in Proverbs 3:3-6: "*Yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*" It takes sweat and blood to mine for silver and diamonds. How much sweat and blood do you expend in seeking wisdom from God?

Make sure you are getting adequate biblical input into your life. The Bible is God's Word and as Psalm 19:7 puts it, "*The law/Torah of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*" Mining the depths of God's Word is a crucial aspect of acquiring wisdom. Maybe you need to sign up to do an evening course at the Presbyterian Theological Centre or do a correspondence course or maybe even spend a year or more at a Bible College. Are you regularly reading and studying and probing God's Word?

I was converted at the age of 19 through the Navigators in New Zealand. Sometimes a Christian leader came to speak. Often, after the meeting was over, a number of us would corner the speaker and besiege him with questions, trying to squeeze as much out of him as we could. I see very little of this today. Instead I see a large measure of ho-hum, "that was a nice talk" and that's it. Where is our heart to learn, to grow in wisdom? Daniel had it.

As the example of Daniel makes clear, it is a great mistake to equate the acquisition of wisdom with developing a greater head knowledge of what the Bible teaches. Daniel acquired his wisdom in highly stressful situations. In Chapter 1 Daniel acquires extraordinary God-given wisdom after resisting intense pressure to be a boot-licker. In Chapter 2 failure to tell the king not only what his dream meant but the dream itself

would mean certain death. In Daniel 9 Daniel is so burdened with all the evil God's people have done that he fasts, wearing sackcloth and coated with ashes. In Chapter 10 the new wisdom Daniel receives comes after three weeks of praying in this way.

In this book Daniel is enabled to see the horrific things that evil anti-God rulers will do in future times. But **it is necessary for him to learn that God is far more to be feared than any evil, anti-God ruler of the future.** This, I take it, is why our glorious God reveals himself to Daniel in such a terrifying manner, causing those with him to flee and terrifying even Daniel so much that every ounce of energy is drained from his body. It is because God in his awesome glory is the ultimate source of terror that the destruction of his enemies and the consummation of his purposes are assured. But how wonderfully God deals with his servant, Daniel. He reassures him, telling him twice that he is highly esteemed. He gives him the precious gift of restful sleep, strengthens him, and speaks to him gentle words of peace.

May the Lord free us of naïvete! May we see ourselves on a war-footing, aware that Satanic forces ever threaten the Lord's people. May we like Daniel strive for wisdom, especially that wisdom that will enable us to understand what history is really all about. As we anticipate the dreadful things this world is yet to experience, may it be with a vision of our glorious God and with the peace that only he can give.