

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, July 19, 2020

We are continuing our examination of the vision of Daniel in chapter eight. In May I discussed several points about this vision¹ to prepare us for the deeper things found there relating to eschatology, and the conflict between Antichrist and the redeemed of Israel. I should reiterate the primary focus point about this vision is that *the Jews will be in active conflict with Antichrist for 2,300 days prior to the new temple being set up on Mt. Zion*. Daniel articulates that in the vision he **“heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake” (Daniel 8:13)** what the timeline was going to be between the rise of Antichrist and the cleansing of the sanctuary from all unholiness toward God. The time is 2,300 days. We will get to that statement in proper context by the time we end our examination of chapter eight ... but it’s good to hear a reminder of that golden nugget found in this prophecy.

As we closed the last sermon on this vision, I indicated that I would take up the issue of how this emerging king – or world leader – will be joined with Satan in conflict with the holy angels in an attempt to secure this earth from Christ’s dominion. So let us begin our continuation of the work on that issue.

“And [the little horn] waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.” (Daniel 8:10-11)

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“And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.” (Daniel 8:23-25)

There’s a conflict described in these words. First laid out in the vision, and then in the angel Gabriel’s tutorial about the vision. The better we understand the conflict, the more we will take away from the vision Daniel was given so that we might apply it to our knowledge of things to come. The conflict is between **“the little horn”**, and **“the host of heaven”**, and **“prince of the host”**, and **“the holy people”**. The use of the proper nouns and the pronouns are dizzying in the descriptions, but with discipline and care we might see what Daniel saw and be both terrified and full of joy.

The engagement is between the parties who are in conflict over the Covenant of Grace; and the fight has been perpetuated from the creation.

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. ... and out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” (Revelation 4:1-2, 5)

As I have described in previous discussions on the subject of eschatology, this scene displayed in Revelation four and five opens the stage on which the magnificent events of the seals and trumpets play out. John is given to see from the perspective of the heavenly staging ground the players who are brought forth for this cataclysmic event of Christ staking his claim for the ***“redemption of the purchased possession”***. (Ephesians 1:14). Among those staged for the action are the ***“seven Spirits of God”*** ... with the mighty elect angels in rank below ***“the[se] seven angels which stood before God [to whom] were [later] given seven trumpets.”*** (Revelation 8:2), as I discussed more extensively in my sermons on those grand events of the seven trumpets. While the ***“seven spirits”*** are directly ***“before the throne”***, the same passage later identifies ***“many angels round about the throne [even] ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.”*** (Revelation 5:11) My point here is that the angels are staged as integral to the conflict that will literally and finally define the human experience and its conclusion. It will be a great conflict.

The *fact* of the conflict is indisputable, and considering all that has been reported on that matter – both scriptural and speculative – throughout the millennia of human experience, it is quite clear to the whole race. The society is so saturated with the certainty that it is coming, it occupies the headspace of virtually every human. Most have undisciplined thoughts that make them chase every nonsensical theory that men can dream up, which is why Christ gives His strict caution:

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Matthew 24:23-24)

Indeed, the greater work is to understand *why* the conflict rages, which is what ultimately distinguishes the self-willed and power-hungry from the humble saints of God who are charged with the responsibility to search the Scriptures and be prepared to ***“discern the signs of the times”*** (Matthew 16:3). An elect soul does not look for his own glory, but searches for the words that show how God’s glory is displayed.

This is why, when we read these amazing prophecies and visions that our Father has put into His Word for our edification, we look for the words that tell us how His glory shines in the work under

consideration. How does this conflict described in such detail in all the eschatological prophecies show God's glory? We know that no creature has ever, nor can it ever, add to the glory of God. The *only* thing the creation is able to do, when God gives the ability, is display and declare that glory. Hence, all those participants on display before John's seeing eyes join in declaration:

***"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."* (Revelation 5:12)**

Here is our answer to the question *why*. While this same vision only shows the dead and living saints of God articulating the personal salvific act that Christ ***"has redeemed us to God by [His] blood"* (Revelation 5:9), *all the created beings* join to recognize that through that covenanted act Christ has made Himself ***"worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof"* (v. 5)**. The conflict is initiated at the opening of the seals. The opening of the seals is to open the Book of Redemption! To declare what members of the Adamic race will be redeemed under the terms of the Covenant of Grace. *That's* the ***"mystery of the gospel"* (Ephesians 6:19)**; *that's* the conflict of Canaan; *that's* the great ***"quarrel of [God's] covenant"* (Leviticus 26:25)** ... and that's the nature of the battle that we are seeing waged under the vision given Daniel in chapter eight.**

It is the same conflict that has boiled since Satan's engagement with the human race in the Garden of Eden, when he was told by God ***"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* (Genesis 3:15)**. Just before the human was cast out of the Garden. The fight began, with the angels and men in conflict over what men would be granted to dwell with God in Paradise. When Christ is preparing to return and resolve the matter ... redeem what was lost in the fall ... angels and men are brought back to pitch battle over the Covenant of Grace.

In addition to the ***"Angel of God"* (e.g., Judges 6:20)** – that is Christ in a pre-advent appearance – Angels are seen prior to grand engagements by Christ, as ***"the Lord of Sabaoth"* (Romans 9:29)**, in many places in scripture.

***"And [Abraham] lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground".* (Genesis 18:2)**

Here, in the engagement with Abraham before the God of heaven destroyed Sodom and the ***"cities of the plain"* (Genesis 19:29)** with fire out of heaven, angels are seen in escort with Christ. As Jacob faced engagement with his brother Esau, having the knowledge that harm was intended against him (Genesis 27:41), he was given to see the host of angels who are perpetually dispatched to the defense of the elect and for the work of God (Genesis 32:1-2). Indeed it is said ***"The chariots of God"***

are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place” (Psalms 68:17) in the Messianic psalm, about which Gill explains:

Gill: “By which are meant the angels, as the following clause shows; called “chariots,” because they have appeared in such a form, [2 Kings 2:11; 6:17]; and because, like chariots of war, they are the strength and protection of the Lord’s people; and because of their swiftness in doing his work; and because they are for his honour and glory: they are the chariots of God, in which he rides about the world doing his will; they are the chariots in which Christ ascended up to heaven, and in which he will descend at the last day.”

The **“host of heaven”** is a term used in Scripture to describe the gathering of angels with God in the proverbial war council to determine the strategies to be executed upon in the specific expressions of the **“wars of the Lord” (Number 21:14)** that fall out in human history. When Ahab was to go and perish at Ramothgilead, the prophet Micaiah tells him how that council was determined to execute his demise:

“Again he said, Therefore hear the word of the LORD; I saw the LORD sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left. And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one [angel] spake saying after this manner, and another [angel] saying after that manner. Then there came out a spirit [i.e., angel], and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so.” (2 Chronicles 18:18-21)

Other examples exist, but these have the case. As part of the preparation for that final and most devastating engagement between the Lord’s host and the **“devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41)** upon this earth, there is an engagement in the heavens. The angels that make up the armies of heaven who have not been **“charged with folly” (Job 4:18)** engage with those **“angels that sinned [and were] cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.” (2 Peter 2:4)**. Since the time of the fall of the rebel angels **“which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (Jude 1:6)**, these have been engaged against elect angels and the saints.

Daniel himself is told of this form of conflict in the tenth chapter, when his angelic tutor Gabriel informs him that **“the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days.” (Daniel 10:13)**. There, as Dr. Gill articulates **“the prince”** *“is not to be understood [as] the then reigning king of Persia, ... but an evil angel, either Satan, the prince and god of this world, or one of his principal angels under him, employed by him to do what mischief he could in the court of Persia, against the people of God, the Jews;”*

So, the angelic host of elect creatures war alongside Christ, the **“Lord of Sabaoth”**, at all times for the safe travels of the saints of God ... and particularly when great events of moment are in the offing. We should understand this both of the language in Revelation chapters four and five, as well as an indelible part to this vision of Daniel chapter eight. The host of elect angels are engaged in conflict with the **“host [that] was given [the little horn] against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression” (Daniel 8:12)**, the fallen angels under Satan.

Antichrist is given to join with Satan and his angels in the conflict with the angelic forces, such that it appears to Daniel that it is this *human creature* that dares to assault the very King of Glory not just on earth but in the heavens.

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;” (Isaiah 14:12-16)

This passage is a prophecy by Isaiah, as Gill indicates, against *“the king of Babylon [who] may be here considered as a type of antichrist”*. It goes from verse four through verse 23. The whole prophecy is instructive, but I’m drawing forth a specific portion for this unique point. The language is in perfect sync with Daniel’s vision in chapter eight ... which is clearly *not* against Babylon. As we’ve discussed previously, Babylon is not even discussed in chapter eight ... except that king Belshazzar is still reigning over the Jews at the time that Daniel is given the vision. So we should focus less on what historical events get the prophet’s temporal attention. Because it is a prophetic declaration against the Antichrist beast first, and a temporal expression about the tyrant in history second.

In the language of this prophecy by Isaiah as well as that of Daniel ... of Ezekiel ... of Jeremiah ... of the minor prophets ... and in the writings of Apostles ... the subject that is expressing the great wickedness of Antichrist is shown as a man. Not one of the created angels. King of Babylon, king of Persia, King of Greece, **“a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences” (Daniel 8:23)**, **“man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3)**, and in Revelation the eighth king that rises from the dead and stands upon the final mountain or kingdom. Human man.

The language in this passage **“I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High”** is my focus. This is the behavior Daniel sees out of the *“little horn”* that **“waxed great, even to the host of heaven ... he magnified himself even to the prince of the host”**. Like the Sodomites who will *never* be happy until all the world not

simply accepts them, but worships them like the superior creatures they believe themselves to be ... such is the spirit of Antichrist. He will not be content to harass and distress the saints in the earth. He has to unseat Christ! He has to be God!

“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

Of course, the fact that these passages identify Antichrist as a man means our knowledge of the human creation and the physical restraints placed upon him causes us to shrink back a bit from such a notion. How would a human being go forth in the heavens to do combat – whether you view that combat as physical or forensic – with the majestic angelic creature? When humans go into the first or second heavens, they use massive machines to propel them contrary to gravity lest they fall by the immutable laws of physics to the earth and to their death.

But we also know that when God appoints a thing for a human being, it is no counterargument to say that we know it cannot happen. No human being would naturally have the strength of Samson. When Scripture says of that unique human ***“And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times”***, the Targum translation of the original text says *“and the Spirit of strength from the Lord began to strengthen him.”* That is, because there was a work prepared in providence for Samson that would require such strength, God put it within him.

Elijah, Gill says, was given *“more than common strength of body”* when he was required to outrun the chariot of Ahab to Jezreel (1 Kings 18:46). In the human expression of His power, he gave his servants to raise the dead (e.g., 1 Kings 17:21), heal the sick (Luke 9:2), walk unaffected among flames (Daniel 3), and even go for instruction into the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2). And not just the righteous show great strength of mind and body when energized by the Spirit ... when an ***“unclean spirit”*** entered a man, he was so strong that chains and fetters were unable to hold him (Luke 8:29). Where the race of man goes beyond what our intelligent understanding expectsⁱⁱⁱ, it should be less our concern how outlandish or unbelievable it is and more our concern to understand what God has brought to pass through His sovereign power.

We should see this as no different. It is certainly true that the difference between when the righteous receive extraordinary gifts to act or think and when the wicked are so granted. The righteous give all glory to God and maintain a proper and humble spirit knowing that ***“when [we] are weak, then [are we] strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:10)***. The wicked, however, forget that they are appointed to their events at God’s prerogative and order, and arrogate unto themselves the glory for their strength and power (e.g., Isaiah 10:15).

We know that when Antichrist rises in his full power and swagger, it is expressly said that ***“the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.” (Revelation 13:2)***. That is, whatever it is that we observe written of this human being ... we are to fully understand that both

the beginning and the end of his atypical power as a human comes from what has been granted to his Majesty the Devil. They are intertwined. They are inseparable. Hence, they receive the same description in the Revelation, to wit:

“[Description of Satan, the fallen angel]And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. ... And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world:” (Revelation 12:3)

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“[Description of Antichrist, the man]And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.” (Revelation 13:1-2)

Looks the same ... and in the work appointed at that hour, behaves the same. One the energizing source, the other a willing actor in execution of the work. In Revelation 12, it is this dragon named Satan who fought with “Michael and his angels” (Revelation 12:7). In Daniel’s dream, the king – the “**little horn**” is the actor described engaging in the warfare ... but it says in that vision that when Antichrist stands up it is “**not in his own power**” (v. 24) because he’s energized by Satan. Same battle ... same time referenced ... and it involves both the dragon and his energized human Antichrist, or the “**little horn**”.

The time of this heavenly battle is during the Day of the Lord.

There is one more issue I wish to address that is related to this grandiose engagement that Daniel’s vision is articulating that occurs in the heavens and is associated in time with the events upon the earth. I believe that the scriptures are clear that there is an engagement in the heavens where “**Michael and his angels [fight] against the dragon [] and his angels**” (Revelation 12:7). I think that it is clear that a result of that engagement is that Satan and his angels are removed from heaven and “**cast out into the earth**” (Revelation 12:9). I also believe that through the information we find in Daniel chapter eight (as well as other places), that the prophesied human who is appointed to be the Antichrist is engaged in that conflict. There remains the task of establishing when this battle occurs. How can we know whether these prophecies are making reference to an event in history or distinctly pointing forward to the time of the end? Further, if we can conclude that it is an engagement that is within the dispensation of the Day of the Lord, can we discern when during that period it is appointed to occur? Here is the last question for today’s treatment of Daniel chapter eight.

“Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven:” (Isaiah 34:1-5)

This is a prophecy. It is a prophecy that Isaiah later specifically articulates as ***“the day of the LORD’S vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.” (v. 8)***. There are many parallels in the events articulated throughout this prophecy with the language and events that are elsewhere articulated as occurring during the period of the Revelation. Even in the language quoted above, we have the ***“host of heaven [being] dissolved”*** in direct juxtaposition to the ***“heavens [being] rolled together as a scroll”***. Every student of the Revelation knows that under the sixth seal being removed ***“the heaven [is] departed as a scroll when it is rolled together” (Revelation 6:14)***. We also know that in that passage of Revelation, the description given to the falling angels is that they fall ***“even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs” (Revelation 6:13)***, as the Isaiah prophecy specifically articulates.

There is a shaking that is coming, as articulated by Haggai the prophet (Haggai 2:6), which is intimately identified with the coming of Christ when he ***“will fill the house [or, final temple] with glory”***. To dispose of any notion that it references any event prior, including Christ’s first advent, we are reminded by Paul in his book to the Hebrews:

“Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” (Hebrews 12:26-27)

A shaking of heaven comes, and it comes in association with the restitution of all things when Christ comes onto the scene to remove all things that are not eternally appointed to remain. That includes the shaking of the heavens to remove those rebellious angels as the Book of Redemption is opened and the righteous of both created races are violently separated from one another.

The view we have worked out of this vision so far is that a great human king will be called forward from part of Alexander the Great’s vast kingdom – likely the area of modern Syria. He will be granted a level of power previously unseen among men. This explosion of energy will be as Satan perceives the final return of Christ is imminent. In some manner, this emerging Antichrist joins with Satan in a great combat with the host of God’s elect angels in the second and first heavens. This conflict is

calculated to bring this wicked campaign to the very throne of God and take power. The result is that those angels that were predestined to be ... are fully and finally cast with Satan into the earth. This dissolving – rotting or decaying further away from **“their first estate”** – brings all these malicious creatures down to this world. In every great conflict there comes a time for the last stand ... the hill upon which all remaining forces fight to take or to die.

Because it is the place where God’s glory is revealed by His determination to love, predestinate, call, justify, and ultimately glorify (Romans 8:29-30) a determined number of the human creation – this is where the doctrine of **“ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4)** will be finally fought over and perish. It is no small matter, because the grotesque pride of men and angels – that enemy of every good thought and action dwelling in all of us – will not submit. This generation of man is so deaf to God’s truth ... is so violently opposed to the notion that their will is subject to God’s ... that there will be no peace until it is imposed by Christ by the slaughter at Armageddon and taking His earthly throne. We, in this portion of Daniel’s vision, are seeing the great heavenly conflict that precedes the earthly.

We will take up this matter again, when I next am able to speak with my friends here. The visions of Daniel are of the real outcomes in human affairs – to replace the endless speculative ones that our generation can pluck down from nearly any streaming service and occupy our mind space. There is more true drama in a single one of the visions granted our friend, than in all those wonderfully crafted epics. Our duty here is to separate speculation from scripture – and give God the glory in all the blessed details.

I love you.

Amen

ⁱ Here are the points discussed in the May 24, 2020 sermon:

1. Daniel saw himself in the capital of the Persians fourteen years before Babylon fell.
2. The historical accounts – distinct from the eschatological accounts – in this vision end with the fall of Alexander the Great and the breaking up of his kingdom.
3. The true weight of this vision is what will happen in eschatology ... particularly for us.
4. The same Antichrist identified in the vision of chapter seven is the actor who comes to the eschatological stage in chapter eight.
5. The seventh iteration of the Antichrist springs up among human leadership before the time of direct confrontation with the saints begins.

ⁱⁱ Interestingly, when this vision of Daniel expresses that **“the little horn”** goes against **“the prince of the host”**, it is referencing (according to Strong’s) the Hebrew version of this same Sabaoth, or “host” under the marching orders of the Captain.

ⁱⁱⁱ Paul writes of tremendous feats of human beings that defy both our nature and character when saving faith engages situationally:

“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were

tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” (Hebrews 11:32-38)