

October 31

Scriptures: Read Daniel 9 & 10

Key Verse: "... I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved..." (Daniel 9:23)

Overview

At this point, Daniel had been in captivity nearly seventy years. Knowing of the prophecy of Jeremiah, which predicted the downfall of the king of Babylon (which had just happened) and the end of the seventy-year captivity (Jer. 25:11-12), Daniel would have known that the time for freedom was near. This prompted him to seek the Lord with prayer and supplication. His prayer is exemplary, in that he came before the Lord humbly and sincerely ("fasting, sackcloth, and ashes", 9:3), worshipped the Lord by contemplating some of the Lord's great attributes, confessed his sin (and that of his nation), and then petitioned the Lord and made intercession. Like Moses, the great intercessor, Daniel appealed to the Lord's mercy. Daniel reasoned that since God's people and His chosen city of Jerusalem were objects of reproach, He should for His name's sake bring their deliverance, that He might receive glory and honour.

Daniel received an immediate answer to his prayer. Even before he stopped praying, the angel Gabriel came to him a second time to help him understand the vision (8:16; 9:21) and to tell him that he was "greatly beloved" by the Lord (9:23). In the providence of God, Daniel's prayer, in effect, brought about the plan of God to end the captivity of His people.

The Lord honoured Daniel by revealing to him the time when the Messiah would come to His people. No other prophet had been so privileged and honoured to receive such a precise Messianic prophecy. The "seventy weeks" is literally "seventy sevens" or seventy times seven years, a time period of 490 years. The Captivity lasted seventy years, but the period between the Captivity and the coming of the Messiah would be seven times that. The prophetic time clock was to start when the Jews began rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. The seventy sevens are subdivided into seven, sixty-two, and one. There are numerous speculations as to the time and events in each division, but it is very interesting to note that the seven and sixty-two sevens, totalling 483 years, is remarkably close to the period of time between the rebuilding of Jerusalem (and the Temple) until the beginning of the public ministry of "the Anointed One", our Lord Jesus the Messiah. Within three and a half years Jesus was crucified, that is, in the midst of the "one week", when He was "cut off" for the sins of many, made "reconciliation for iniquity" and brought in "everlasting righteousness" (9:24, 26-27). Some commentators believe that the last half of that one final week was suspended according to God's chronology and that it will be fulfilled in the end-times. Regarding the exact truth of the times, the Lord has chosen for it to be a mystery to us, but what we can be sure of is that the Lord has His own timetable for everything, and He will providentially overrule. The prominent truth in all these prophecies is that earthly kingdoms will come and go, but the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ will prevail and last forever.

Chapter ten through to the end of the book of Daniel constitutes one unit of prophecy which records Daniel's final vision. It fills in the details of the sketches given in his previous prophecies. Chapter ten is the introduction to the vision that follows. We learn that it came to

him two years after the Jewish exiles were permitted to return to their homeland, which was in Cyrus' third year. The date explains the reason for his mourning, for at that time those rebuilding the temple were experiencing much trouble and opposition (9:25); the work had even come to a stop (cf. Ezra 4:4-5). He may also have been mourning because of the indifference of many of the Jews who, although able, did not return when given the opportunity. By this time, Daniel was about 90 years old, which may be the reason he did not return himself, but another reason is that he had been called to be a missionary to his people in the land of their deportation.

Daniel was likely conducting a prayer service by the Tigris River when he alone beheld the awesome and terrific sight of the glorious man dressed as a high priest. This most certainly was the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, for the similarities to both Ezekiel's and the Apostle John's visions of Him are numerous (cf. Ezk. 1:26-28; Rev. 1:12-18). Daniel's reaction to this magnificent manifestation (a Christophany) shows that it was not the angel Gabriel whom he had already met twice before (8:16; 9:21). Once again, the second Person of the Trinity, whose voice Daniel had heard before (but did not see), sent the angel Gabriel to help Daniel understand the coming vision (8:16; 10:9-11). As Daniel grew closer to the Lord, the Lord revealed to him more of Himself and more prophetic details. He learned of the spiritual warfare that the angels of the Lord God had been engaged in against the prince of darkness and his demonic hosts. Gabriel had been engaging in battle against "the prince of the kingdom of Persia", likely a reference to Satan himself who was attacking the kings of Persia in order to stop the rebuilding of the Temple. For the first time we read about the Archangel Michael, who had come to help Gabriel and relieve him so that he might go and attend to Daniel. It is made clear that Michael was the angel given special charge over the Lord's people, and with Michael's help, Gabriel could succeed against the powers and principalities of this world (10:21). We see that the Lord sent his angel to not only illuminate His beloved servant Daniel regarding spiritual truth, but also to strengthen him. Still today the Lord will strengthen and enlighten His faithful and beloved servants who seek after Him and His truth.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your Word which so often confirms that You will strengthen those who wait upon You. Thank 'You for Your Holy Word and the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates our spirits and minds to Your understanding.