

A spiritual conflict behind the scenes

- *Demonic beings seeking to hold up the progress of the kingdom of God*

- *It is part of the mercy of God that for much of the time these are hidden from us*

- *We live by faith and prayer and obedience*

An outline-sketch of God's future plan for future generations

- *Fixed and sure*

- *Angelic help behind the events of Daniel chapter 5*

- *The captain of the armies of Yahweh – the angel sent to Joshua*

While the angel is speaking to Daniel, Daniel is overwhelmed¹. It is a fearful thing to be in the presence of such an angel. Then another angel in human form touches Daniel and enables him to speak. 'I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord', he says. How can he speak with such an overwhelming majestic being²? But again an angel touches him and encourages him³, and the revelation is able to proceed. The 'angel of the Lord' is engaged in a battle against wicked beings. The 'prince of Persia' and the 'prince of Greece' are demonic beings seeking to hold up the progress of the kingdom of God. ²⁰'I am about to return to fight against the prince of Persia. I shall go to deal with him and when I am through with him the prince of Greece will come.' God wants Daniel to know a little (not much!) of what is going on behind the scenes of the progress of the kingdom of God. In the hidden spiritual realm, battles are taking place. It is part of the mercy of God that for much of the time these are hidden from us. Think how utterly overwhelmed Daniel was when he saw even the tiniest part of the conflict. If we could see everything it would overwhelm us to the point of total prostration. So many of these matters are kept from being visible most of the time, and we live by faith and prayer and obedience. It is enough for us to know that a spiritual conflict is taking place, and many delays and digressions in the kingdom of God come as a result of hidden battles. We think also of Job chapters 1 and 2 and the things that were happening behind the scenes that Job knew nothing of.

The angel has come to give Daniel a revelation. ²¹'However I am to tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. There is not one with me who contends against these "princes" except Michael, your prince.' God has a 'book of truth', a book of faithfulness and reality. He has definite plans for his kingdom and no amount of demonic opposition can prevail against him. Daniel is about to be given a sketchy symbolic outline of things that are destined to happen. It will all help future generations to know that the kingdom of God is sure and certain and its manifestation in greater visibility is fixed and sure. The 'book of truth' is a record of the plans of God.

Daniel 11:1 belongs with chapter 10. The 'angel of the Lord' goes on speaking. 'And I, in the first year of Darius the Mede, was standing alongside Michael as a supporter and a defence.' The first year of Darius was 539 BC, the year in which Babylon collapsed, Cyrus (aided by Darius or to be identified with Darius) came to power and the Persian empire commenced. Behind the events of Daniel chapter 5, there was angelic and demonic activity. Michael was also active at that time, as an angel sent to help Israel was present. The angel of the Lord (now speaking to Daniel) was the Captain of the warfare. The story resembles an incident in the Book of Joshua. 'It is as the Captain of the armies of Yahweh that I have come', said an angel to Joshua¹. It was an appearance of God himself – although Joshua was not seeing the 'stuff' – the innermost essence – of God. God can use angels to make something visible that represents him..

¹ 10:15

² 10:16-17

³ 10:18-19

¹ Joshua 5:14

• *Angelic help as history goes forward from empire to empire*

In the change from the Babylonian to the Persian empires, the angel of the Lord was present, helping Michael (Israel's angel) against demonic forces in Babylon and Persia Now (the angel makes clear) something similar will happen as the Persian empire gives way in a few centuries' time to the Greek empire, and history goes forward to the day of the coming of the Son of Man.

Symbolic predictions

• *The kings of Persia*

The actual symbolic predictions begin in Daniel 11:2. First we have predictive reference to the kings of Persia^{□1}, then to the kings of Greece beginning with Alexander the Great^{□2}. *2'Now I shall announce the truth to you. Behold, there are three more kings to arise for Persia. Then a fourth king will be far richer than all of them, and when he has grown strong through his riches, he will arouse everyone in relation to the kingdom of Greece.'*

□1 11:2
□2 11:3-4

• *The name of the Greek empire*

Daniel is receiving this vision in the third year of Cyrus (that is, about 537/6 BC). It is not giving much detail about Persia. It is mainly focused on the coming 'third empire', Greece. Daniel is now told the name of the empire. Although the Greek empire had not become the mighty territory that it became under Alexander the Great it was already in existence in Daniel's time and was becoming a powerful nation.

• *Four more kings of Persia before the start of conflict with Greece*

Daniel is told that there will be four more kings of Persia before the start of conflict with Greece. The three would be Cambyses (530–522 BC), Smerdis (a pretender who reigned briefly in 522 BC) and Darius I (522–486 BC). The fourth king was Xerxes (486–465 BC). As was predicted, Xerxes was immensely wealthy^{□1□2}. The scene in Esther chapter 1 gives us a picture of his vast wealth. He also was interested in invading Greece, and he got everyone involved in his plans. The event in Esther 1 was almost certainly a council of war planning for the invasion of Greece.

□1 see Esther 1:4
□2 see Herodotus 7:20-99

• *Four kingdoms and then 'the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it for ever'*

So Daniel is being given an assurance. The four kingdoms that he knows about (because of the visions of Daniel chapters 2 and 7) will certainly proceed. After the four kingdoms have run their course to a certain point, 'the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it for ever'^{□1}.

□1 7:18



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