

Do Not Fear, You Who Are Greatly Beloved

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[0 : 00] Well with the Lord's help let us turn to look back at the chapter that we've read. I'm going to try and cover the whole chapter, I know that's an ambitious task in the time of God but we'll see, we'll see how we get on.

But we can read again particularly verse 19, I don't think you, oh yeah, she's run through it. Verse 19, one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me and he said, O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you, be strong and of good courage.

And as he spoke to me, I will strengthen and said, let my Lord speak for you have strengthened me. O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you, be strong and of good courage.

Now I'm sure that all of us are familiar with certain things about the life of Daniel ever since we were little, we've heard of Daniel and the lion's den and perhaps one or two others, his companions being thrown into the furnace of fire and so on.

But we tend not to be so familiar with the final chapters of the book of Daniel. And the reason for that is very simple and very complex because the final chapters are visions that Daniel is given of times to come which are extremely difficult to understand unless you are familiar with the history of the period of time between Daniel and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ because that's basically what the vision beginning in chapter 10 and running into 11 and 12 that's what it is all about.

[1 : 55] It outlines the history Daniel is told by this angelic being of what is to come in the timeframe from his period in captivity or in exile in Babylon remember there's a difference between captivity and exile, I think I've been into that before but I'm not going to go into it again here.

And the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are able from the very first verse of the chapter we are able to actually date this particular vision.

Now not all the visions in the book of Daniel doesn't run completely chronologically in places but the date here we are able to work it out from the first verse and the third year the first three verses are like a sort of prologue like an inscription to the chapter may well be that somebody else wrote them you see in verse 2 it starts with in those days I Daniel but in the first part of the first verse I should say in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel whose name was Peltischaetzer and the word was through and it was a great conflict and he understood the word and had understanding of the vision.

What year was this? We are able to work it out exactly. We know that this was the year 536 BC and that also allows us to connect in another couple of things in scripture as well.

If you're familiar with the prophecy of Isaiah in chapters 44 and 45 Isaiah 100, 150 years earlier had prophesied that Cyrus would be the one not only who would capture Babylon but who would allow the Jews to return from exile to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

[4 : 06] Now again you need to put all that in its historical context but give me a little bit of history lesson coming up here but I will try and be as brief as I can with it.

In chapter 9 we had seen those of you who may be familiar with chapter 9 if you look back at the beginning of chapter 9 in your Bibles and particularly in verse 2 you'll see in the first year of Darius the son of Aswerus by descent Amid who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans in the first year of Israel I Daniel perceived in the books the number of years that according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem nearly 70 years and there is the reference that we see to the children of Israel or more correctly what was left of them the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin being taken into exile into Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and that this captivity or exile whatever you want to call it would last for a period of 70 years and the rest of chapter 9 is Daniel's prayer of confession for the sins of his people and again that Jerusalem would be restored and at the end of chapter 9 you

see that Gabriel is the angel of Gabriel he's not mentioned as an angel he's simply mentioned Gabriel the man Gabriel in verse 21 whom I had seen in the vision that the first came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice some deduce from that of course the angels have wings in swift flight but that simply means in the original it simply means came very very quickly not necessarily that he was flying but that's a side issue altogether and Gabriel then gives him a word about the restoration of Jerusalem and how this would happen and it is Cyrus who allows Esra and Nehemiah to return at different times to Jerusalem to start rebuilding the temple and the wall of the city now Daniel at this stage in chapter 10 has been in Babylon for a long time he was taken away in the early captivity you can see that in the book of Kings he was probably a teenager probably about 12 or 13 or 14 when he was taken into exile what is referred to as the first exile a number of captives were taken hostage by Nebuchadnezzar away from Jerusalem and it was 10 years later that Jerusalem was completely destroyed so Daniel has spent virtually all of his life in Babylon and there you will remember again the stories of Daniel he has been educated in all the science and the arts of the Babylonians the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, then the Persians, then the Medes and so on and therefore he is a man of enormous intellectual ability but also of great wisdom now when you look at Daniel, Daniel is not a prophet in the same sense as Jeremiah and Isaiah and Ezekiel Ezekiel in the captivity is the counter prophet to Daniel but what Daniel recounts are the visions that he is given and the interpretation of the visions they are not really prophecies as such the Jews did not include the book of Daniel among the books of the prophets they included them in historical sacred writings so they saw the difference as well and we have to remember that Daniel never returned from Babylonia he died in Babylon well over 90 he is probably around 90 years old when this chapter is actually or the vision in this chapter actually takes place and if you ever get the chance to go to Iran which is highly unlikely at the moment that you would go but if you ever went to visit you can actually visit the tomb of Daniel at Sousa or what was called Sousa now the town of Shush in the south of Iran and it is of course venerated by both Muslim faiths, Jewish faiths and Christian faiths as well as so many Old Testament figures are so there is a bit of the background, the historical background to this and when we come to look at the picture of what Daniel sees in this vision we find the state in which he is in verse 2 in those days I Daniel was mourning for three weeks and we are told in verse 3 that this mourning also brings in a period of fasting I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth nor did I anoint myself at all as was the custom of the Babylonians that anointing with oil or with perfume whatever was of course in lieu of what many of us regard as bathing ourselves nowadays and then he is given this vision on the 24th day of the first month as I was standing on the bank of the Tigris I lifted up my eyes and lo and behold a man clothed in linen with a belt of fine gold from upas round his waist now there is only one other place in scripture where the gold of upas is mentioned in Jeremiah 10 and verse 9 where was upas we have no idea very simple we have no idea it is like the gold of upas that is mentioned frequently in the Old Testament as well we have no idea where it came from but it seems to have been a special quality of gold and the appearance of this man his body was like a barrel now again we have no real clarity as to what barrel actually means in scripture we know that it is a semi precious stone there are barrels of all kinds of colour ranging from sort of diamond clear right through to green and blue and so on so what exactly that means we are not sure except that it would seem to glisten his face was like the appearance of lightning his eyes like flaming torches arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude now if you are familiar with scripture you should be familiar with scripture then that description should ring a bell and it should ring a bell immediately with you in the book of Revelation in the first chapter of Revelation we didn't put it up on screen you find because it is a very short passage you find in chapter 1 of Revelation you find John having an exactly similar vision in the book of Revelation

John had a vision of the cosmos when he is in the spirit and lifted up to heaven in the vision that he sees at verse 12 he turns to see the voice that is speaking to him and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash round his chest the hairs of his head were white like wool as white as snow and his face refined in a furnace and his voice was like the roar of many waters now you can see that the description is almost exactly the same who is he?

[12:14] the man in Revelation identifies himself very clearly in verse 17 saying, fear not, I am the first and the last and the living one I died and behold I am alive forever more and without going further into detail in Revelation you can see that that is the Lord Jesus Christ who is speaking to

John in his vision does that mean that the person who appears to Daniel here in the vision is the Lord Jesus Christ?

well it would seem not it would seem that this is an angelic person who appears to him here some think it's Gabriel again but he is not named Gabriel had appeared as I said in chapter 9 and spoken to him but it may not necessarily be Gabriel here there is great argument about this whether it is Gabriel or whether in fact it is what we call a Christophany or a Theophany that is a pre-incarnation appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ it may well be but it seems from the rest of the chapter that it is not the Lord Jesus Christ but it is an angel and we'll come to that in a moment or two but what I want you to notice about it is this the book of Daniel and especially the end of the book of Daniel is to the Old Testament as the revelation of St John is to the New Testament what do I mean by that? two things Daniel closes the canon of the Old Testament that is it is the last book of prophecy vision prophecy, vision stroke prophecy in the Old Testament and what it does is it predicts and foretells and interprets for us what is to come from the time of Daniel until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ what does the book of Revelation do?

it closes the New Testament and it tells us what is to come at the end of time when the Lord Jesus Christ will come again for the second coming so Daniel is to the Old Testament as revelation is to the New Testament and therefore the vision that Daniel sees here is a fascinating vision to look at why was Daniel mourning and fasting for three weeks?

well many think that it follows from the previous chapter the confession of sin and his prayer the sins of his people and for the situation of Jerusalem but we have to bear in mind that there's quite a period of time between the first year of Darius in chapter 9 and the third year of Cyrus in chapter 10 and it's more likely that Daniel here has received news from Jerusalem from those who went with Esra and Nehemiah of the difficulties that they are having in rebuilding the temple and rebuilding the wall of the city of Jerusalem if you're familiar with Esra and Nehemiah if you're not, you ought to be then you will remember that Esra and Nehemiah were particularly opposed by Sanballat and various others of the Samaritan Jews there as to the rebuilding and the work had not gone at all as it should have done eventually of course with the coming of Nehemiah 10 years later the work has re-strengthened and the second temple, the temple of Sarubabel is then rebuilt and that may be the reason for Daniel's fasting it may quite simply be that again he is fasting and praying because of the sins of the people of Israel and what has caused him to come into captivity in Babylon even though he knows that some have come back he knows that he himself will never go back again and you remember of course the reason why God had spoken so clearly through the prophets that a time would come when the people of Israel the whole of the children of Israel would be taken into captivity and exile because of their idolatry you see it first of all taking place in the 10 tribes of the north this idolatry spreads down from the children of Dan all the way down in the north and eventually through into the kingdom and the capital in Samaria that the 10 tribes of the north the children that we know as Israel is then conquered by the Assyrians and the people are taken away and they are assimilated into various cities and villages

[17 : 15] Israel is repopulated by Assyrian people and Assyrian tribes and the 10 tribes there disappear they disappear into the pages of history and we never hear of them again meanwhile in the south and the kingdom of Judah Judah and the half tribe of our Benjamin what's left of Benjamin still remain there for a period of time until Nebuchadnezzar captures them and you will remember the stories of idolatry through Ahas and Ahab and Manasseh and all the others until they are taken into exile in Babylon and God had made this very clear through Jeremiah, through Isaias, through the other prophets that because of their idolatry this was to be their situation why?

By taking them into Babylon the Jews would be cleansed from their idolatry after the captivity in Babylon the Jews never, we never have a record again of the Jews worshiping idols and it was in Babylon that the Jews first built synagogues in order to start their worship the name synagogues is a Babylonian word and they took the custom back with them to the land of Judah and it is from then on that the Jews worship in synagogues and towns and villages although the second temple is being built in Jerusalem and that temple would be destroyed later on as we'll see towards the end of the chapter by the Prince of Greece that is Alexander the Great by the way in verse 20 the Prince of Persia and the Prince of Greece is Alexander the Great and the visions in chapter 11 and 12 go through the rest of history as well when the temple is again desecrated by

I'm sure you've heard this name before Antiochus Epiphanus who was the guy who attempted to completely eradicate the Jewish worship and who sacrificed a pig in the Holy of Holies and on the

Holy altar that's what Jesus speaks about when he says in Matthew 24 and verse 15 the abomination of Daniel is referring particularly to that sacrifice but he is referring forward because the Romans would do exactly the same thing in AD 70 when they destroyed the temple as well so you can see that there's a great massive information flowing here after Antiochus Epiphanus and the pig that is when the revolt of the Maccabees start and then of course when the temple is re-established and Jewish worship is re-established and that continues through until the time of our Lord although Herod is then building the third and the final temple at that stage so there's the historical background again who does Daniel see here?

well I tend to think that it is indeed an angel it may be Gabriel but I tend to think that the man clothed in linen with a belt of fine gold is an angelic visitor and remember always that when you see a vision anywhere closed with linen we see the same in the book of Revelation fine linen etc is what the saints were what the saints addressed it's a sign of sanctification, a sign of holiness remember in the Old Testament that what was given to the priests that's what the priests wore as well and so this description Daniel alone sees the vision the men who are with him didn't see it but a great trembling fell upon them and they fled to hide themselves and Daniel is terrified by the vision that's what verses 8 and 9 actually mean I was left alone and saw this great vision no strength was left in me my radiant appearance was fearfully changed and I retained no strength then I heard the sound of his words and as I heard the sound of his words

I fell in my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground and Daniel collapses in fear basically and then we get this remarkable passage behold a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees and he said to me oh Daniel man greatly loved or beloved if you're using the authorised version understand the words and I speak to you and stand upright for now I have been sent to you now it seems that that is still the angelic visitor if it is Gabriel who is still speaking to him at that point but the question is whose hand touched him and set him trembling on my hands and knees we're not told it may well be the angel but I think it's someone else and we'll see in a second who this so the angel then says to him in verse 12 fear not Daniel for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before God your words have been heard and I have come because of your words one of the wonderful things about Daniel's experiences is how you and I can apply them to ourselves from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God your prayers have been heard isn't that exactly true of each one of us as we come to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ when we come to a knowledge of God we set our heart to understand and we should humble ourselves before God and perhaps we need to humble ourselves more and more before God all the time your prayers are being heard your words have been heard from the first day not just the prayer that you had done in chapter 9 or if you had been praying again just now but from the first day that he began to pray isn't that a comfort to you that every day that you pray your words are being heard they are being heard by angels but they are also being heard by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and I have come because of your words and you might think here well if Daniel had an angel who came to him because of his prayers why am I getting an angel who comes to me because of my prayers and gives me a vision of the things that I want to know it's a very interesting question

[24 : 05] I wonder what you would answer to that well I'll give you an answer to it in a moment or two because there is a reason why not but then we are given an insight into something that should really draw our attention something that perhaps you and I have not noticed and something perhaps that we don't pay very much attention to I have come because of your words the Prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days but Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me when I was left there with the Kings of Persia now that is a very difficult sentence to understand and still we start putting together what the words actually mean who is Michael?

we are told here that Michael, one of the chief princes but the only other place in scripture that Michael is mentioned is immediately before Revelation in the letter of Jude it's immediately before Revelation 1 if you want to have a look at it we didn't put this on screen either I thought it was a good exercise for them to be able to find it in the letter of Jude just before Revelation in verse 9 you find the following but when the archangel Michael contending with the devil was disputing about the body of Moses he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment but said the Lord rebuke now here we have to apply our standard rule of scripture or interpretation that we let scripture interpret scripture this is the only other mention that there is of Michael in the book of Revelation where we see him at war in the battle of Armageddon but again I'm not going down that road just

now but you notice the term that's used in verse 9 is archangel and it seems quite clear from that that the terminology and Daniel of princes refers to archangels but Michael, one of the chief princes does not mean that there is more than one archangel we don't know scripture does not mention any other archangel there are many who think that Satan was an archangel before he fell before he fell because of pride and it may well be that Satan it was who was opposing Michael here but here's the interesting thing whoever this angelic messenger is he has been delayed in verse 13 for 21 days three weeks three weeks in which he's been unable to come to Daniel because of opposition from another angel now that takes us into a dimension that you and I have very little understanding of and that scripture tells us very little about that there is a war going on between the devil and his angels and the angels of God at all times over each and every one of us perhaps you have never thought that the angels of God are contending with the angels of Satan about you and I perhaps it's never occurred to you perhaps so often as you are going through difficult times you are aware of Satan bothering you you are aware that you are being constantly weakened, attacked, tormented perhaps made to doubt that you have feelings at times that God is not helping you in the way that you would like him to help that you are not feeling the comfort of scripture in the way that you should that you are not feeling God's presence or the presence of the Holy Spirit in the way that you want to and Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 that we fight not against human blood, flesh and blood but we fight against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world now who are they?

you and I must never think that Satan is by himself there is a passage in Revelation, I think it's 19 if I remember correctly that Paul says about the fall of Satan and tells us that as the great beast the dragon is thrown out of heaven that his tail draws a third of the stars with him and many commentators take that to mean that a third of the angels rebelled with Satan against God now when you see the number of angels that John sees in Revelation and remember you see close parallels between Daniel and Revelation all the time when you see the number of angels that John sees hundreds and hundreds of thousands and thousands upon thousands and innumerable hosts he says how many million angels fell along with Satan and every single one of these angels or demons or whatever you want to call them is there to attack you and me and every other believer as much as he is permitted to do so remember again that you have great comfort from the book of Job that we are allowed into the presence of God in the book of Job to see that although Satan has access to heaven he cannot do anything without God's permission he is not allowed to speak until God speaks to him he is not allowed to act except within the bounds that God allows him and you will see that clearly in chapters 1 and 2 of Job and so it is exactly the same way here whatever these demonic influences are that are attacking you and I and attacking the launch people and in control of the darkness of this world there are limitations put upon them at all times they can only act within the boundaries that God has set for them it seems very strange to us that this angel the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me for three weeks, 21 days it seems very strange to us that God would allow this angel if it is Gabriel to be withheld from helping Daniel for a period of three weeks but God has a purpose in these things

God has a purpose in allowing you and I to be attacked to be tempted at times to doubt at times to fall, at times to struggle with our faith and the purpose always is to teach us humility that's one, the second purpose is to draw us closer to himself to whom else shall we go you remember what the disciples said to whom else shall we go for you have the words of eternal life and yet help does come it may not come exactly at the moment as you are going through the difficulty whatever the difficulty is it may be 21 days, it may be even much more than that that you feel as if you are going through the valley of the shadow of death I was listening to Kai Sermon on that on Sunday morning and you may well feel that you are going through the valley of the shadow of death for many many days, not just 21 days but God is always there because what do we see?

the angel says to Daniel in verse 14 I came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days for the vision is for days yet to come and as we saw the vision is for the future the vision is for the end times of the Old Testament for the period between Daniel's life the captivity ending in Babylon and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ approximately a period of around 450 years that's a long period of time by human standards but you notice that God's plan is clearly laid out from beginning to end and one of the things that the book of Daniel teaches us above anything else is God's sovereignty God is in control at all times his plan ranges from the first pages of scripture right through to the end and there may appear to be us periods whereas plan is not being carried out in the way that it should do we wonder so often when we see what is going on

in our own country what we see and what is going on throughout the world and we think where are you Lord?

[33 : 49] why aren't you in control? he is in control it's very difficult for us at times to see that very difficult to understand why God permits many things to take place not only in our own lives but on a global scale why the death and destruction and natural disasters and all the various other things that take place in this current time why they are being permitted but if you go and look at the plagues that the angels pour out in the book of Revelation I often think that we are at the end times where these plagues have been released and are being gradually released upon the earth before the Lord Jesus Christ comes again but that's another theme and another major sermon and major study that we would have to go into for that so what does Daniel see then?

when he had spoken to me according to these words I turned my face towards the ground and was smeared and then we get this surprising intervention behold one in the likeness of the children of men touched my lips now this is not the angel this is not the same person as the angel that we've seen at the beginning of the chapter who is it?

there can only be one in the likeness of the children of men that will appear in this way this is the Lord Jesus Christ the Lord Jesus Christ touches Daniel's lips and then he is able to speak oh my Lord, by reason of the visions pains have come upon me and I retain no strength how can my Lord serve and talk with me my Lord for now no strength remains in me and no breath is left in me and again you notice that it's the same person again one having the appearance of a man not the appearance of an angel but the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me isn't that what happens every time you and I feel the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ that he touches you and he strengthens you and you notice what is then said now again it's not clear who speaks here and he said is this the one having the appearance of the man or is this the angel?

we cannot be sure here I tend to think that this verse that verse 19 is actually spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ there are some commentators who debate that and say that it's actually the angel who says it but I think the words are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and that they are words that can be applied to every single one of us he said, oh man, oh woman greatly beloved, fear not peace be with you, be strong and of good courage and as he spoke to me I was strengthened every time you and I have the experience of the Lord's presence whether it's on your own and your own worship and your meditation and your prayers and the means of grace wherever it is isn't that what happens?

you are assured of being greatly beloved greatly loved and you are told to fear not how many times in scripture are we told to fear not?

[37 : 35] well I haven't counted them personally but I've read several times in several places that there are 364 times in scripture that we are told to fear not one for every day of the year isn't that amazing?

I haven't counted them but I've googled it and that's what it says and there are other people who actually have counted it and they say that and of course there's always the person who says oh well what about the leap year, 365 well again bear in mind that the biblical calendar didn't work that way, there wasn't an extra day in the biblical calendar, it was made up in a different way, the calendar at that time fear not, peace be with you be strong and of good courage isn't that the same instructions that the Lord Jesus gave the disciples before his ascension in Matthew 28 when he leads them out to the hell, what do you find?

he says, behold I am with you even to the end of the age fear not, be strong and of good courage it's the same instruction as Joshua was given going into the promised land and you see what Daniel's reaction is let my Lord speak for you have strengthened me so that's what you and I want every single day from the Lord we want to be strengthened we want to not fear we want to be at peace above all we want to feel greatly loved and we have to be honest as believers and say that there are times in our experience where we do not feel greatly loved where we do feel fear where we are not strong and we are not of good courage but yet we are told and if you come back to this verse every so often this is what you're told oh man, oh woman, greatly beloved fear not, peace be with you be strong and of good courage isn't that a wonderful verse for us to take with us this evening it's not easy to live up to it's not easy to feel that way all the time but nevertheless time and time again when the Lord's people are in difficulty through scripture, through their scriptural experience and you can see this in this hams so often this is what you are reminded of peace be with you be strong and be of good courage and as Daniel is strengthened from that he is then given

from verse 20 onwards the final vision of the historical process that will take place between then and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ really verse 20 should be at the beginning of chapter 11 so bad chapter division there do you know why I have come to you?

no, I will return to fight and it seems that it's the angel that's speaking again now no, I will return to fight against the Prince of Persia that's probably Cyrus again and when I go out, behold the Prince of Greece Alexander the Great will come but I will tell you what is inscribed in the Book of Truth there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael the Archangel your Prince not the Prince but your Prince that there is an Archangel who is looking after the Lord's people there may be more than one scripture only names the one but if you do any studies on what is called inter-ology that is revealed in other Jewish literature and so on you'll know that there's a whole bunch of other angels and Archangels that are mentioned but scripture as we have it only mentions that particular one Archangel remember the vision that was given to Gehazi when the armies surrounded him and Elisha and Elisha prayed, Lord open his eyes that he may see and he saw the chariots of fire and the hosts of God and the angels of God round about the city you'll find it in Second Kings I think if I remember correctly the story there and in the same way you and I so often require to have our eyes open to see what is upholding us round about to remember that there is a struggle going on and I mention that we cannot even understand that we cannot be aware of that Satan and his angels are contending there are many passages that speak of Satan and it would take, but way beyond the time already it would take ages to go into them but you see so often how Satan and his angels are struggling in order to overcome the Lord's people and to tempt them and to make them fall and yet who contends by your side

Michael your prince one having the appearance of a man the Lord Jesus Christ Himself interceding on the right hand of the Father for you this evening and saying to you, oh man, no woman, greatly beloved fear not, peace be with you, be strong and of good courage may the Lord bless to us these meditations on His word let us pray our Father in heaven we thank you that you allow us to see something and to understand something of the struggle that goes on of why at times we feel so down, so cast down even the Sabbath said, oh why are thou cast down, my soul and yet when we come to you we realise that you are with us at all times that you uphold us that we have no need of angels to defend us now or to reveal things to us in that sense because the Holy Spirit is present in our hearts and the Holy Spirit is the great Comforter who reveals all these things to us we thank you all that you are pleased to reveal things to us but you teach us to depend on you to trust in you that you are the Alpha and the Omega you know the beginning from the end and all things are worked out for your glory and for the benefit of your people be with us this evening, strengthen us help us to be of good courage and to fear not and partner us in through Jesus Christ our Lord

[44 : 35] Amen.