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THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL

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V. The Vision Glorious—*Chapter 10*

The substance of the closing four chapters of Daniel may be epitomised in three phrases:

Chapter 9: The Period decreed for Daniel's people:

Chapter 10: The Preparation of Daniel for further revelations:

Chapters 11-12: The Predictions of the time of the end.

The tenth chapter of Daniel stands in the same relation to what follows as Rev. 1 does to the rest of the Revelation given to John, the beloved disciples. Though not predictive in character, these two chapters—Dan. 10 and Rev. 1—form an important and essential prelude to the prophetic revelations that follow, because they portray the glorious Son of God in all the splendour of His person as 'Judge of all the earth' and 'King of kings'.

To the four major prophets and to John the Apostle were vouchsafed three outstanding proofs of their Divine call to special service and prophetic revelation. Each had a vision of the Lord of glory; each heard His voice and received His commands and communications; and each felt His touch of power. These experiences came to Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel near the commencement of their ministry (Is. 6; Jer. 1; Ezek. 1; 2; 3) equipping them for service. To Daniel, the man greatly beloved, and to John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, they were granted when their earthly course was almost run. In Dan. 10 it is recorded three times that Daniel felt this celestial touch. In verse 10, the outstretched hand of the Lord set him on his knees in the attitude of supplication: in verse 16, the touch of the Son of Man on his lips imparted cleansing (Is. 6:7) and ability to proclaim the heavenly message: and in verse 18, the hand of power brought Daniel strength and courage to receive and record the prophecies that follow, in spite of the opposition of 'principalities and powers in heavenly places'.

As at the conversion of Saul of Tarsus one man alone received the spiritual experience, so it was with Daniel, for he writes, 'I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw

not the vision'. Compare Dan. 10:7 with Acts 22:9. Neither Daniel's nor Saul's companions shared the experience. The date in Dan. 10:1—the 'third year of Cyrus King of Persia'—two years after the edict of Cyrus and the return of the first batch of exiles with Zerubbabel, proves that Daniel lived to see a partial answer to his intercessory prayer in Chapter 9. The place, as well as the time, of the vision is recorded. Daniel was by the side of the River Hiddekel (10:4), now known as the Tigris, the Greek modification of its name, when the events of Chapter 10 took place. This is one of the rivers that watered Eden, the terrestrial Paradise, and flowed thence eastward into Assyria (Gen. 2:14). The name 'Hiddekel' is said to signify a dart, or swiftness, and indicates the rapidity of its flow.

A threefold preparation given to Daniel is noted in this tenth chapter:

(1) *Preparation for the vision*

This preparation is briefly outlined in verses 2 and 3, and consisted in mourning, fasting and waiting before the Lord. Though the seer was then about ninety years of age and, it may be presumed, was frail in body, having passed the vigour of youth and middle-age, he did not shrink from fasting; and for three whole weeks he ate no pleasant bread and tasted neither flesh nor wine. The Apostle John, like Daniel an exile, when he had reached a similar age, was 'eating the bitter bread of banishment' in the Isle of Patmos, for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Then there appeared to him the same glorious form of the exalted Saviour, Son of God and Son of Man. As Daniel, communing with the 'God of Heaven', silently prayed during those three weeks of waiting in the presence of the Lord of hosts, 'the appearance of a man above' (Ezek. 1:26) on the Throne of Grace, the mercy-seat, laid him prostrate on the ground. 'There remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me to corruption, and I retained no strength', he writes.

"There, there on eagle wings we soar,
And time and sense seem all no more;

And heaven comes down our souls to greet,
And glory crowns the mercy-seat'.

(2) *Preparation for the revelation*

The revelation itself is recorded in the two chapters that follow, namely, Dan. 11 and 12; but the vision was God's way of preparing Daniel (and later John in Patmos) for the predictions concerning the time of the end. Of this vision Philip Henry Gosse writes in 'Sacred Streams':

'As when long afterwards He manifested Himself to the beloved disciple, John, the Daniel of the Church when in captivity, He was seen clothed in His priestly garments of fine linen, to express His office as the High Priest and Mediator of His people, and His unspotted righteousness. He was girt with a girdle of gold, denoting His infinite holiness and His preciousness in the sight of His Father, and also of His saints. His person had the radiant, transparent beauty of a precious stone, perhaps to intimate His perfect truth; His face as lightning, and His eyes as lamps of fire, might show His piercing omniscience, His instant detection of evil, and His terrible wrath to His enemies; while His arms and feet of polished brass might express His illustrious power engaged to defend His people, and to tread, as in a winepress, His enemies'.

The vision was doubtless a Christophany, a visitation of Him 'Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting' (Mic. 5:2).

In the glorious portraiture of Scripture, seven details of the appearance of the Heavenly visitant are given, beginning with externals:—His Robes, His Girdle, His Body, His Face, His Eyes, His Arms and Feet, and His Voice (Dan. 10:5-6). In these verses we may observe a very close similarity to the description in Rev. 1:13-16 of our Lord Jesus Christ, as He walked in the midst of the lampstands.

(i) His immaculate dress of linen, emblem of spotless righteousness (Heb. 7:27), marks Him out as our Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14).

(ii) His girdle of gold proclaims the voluntary sacrifice for His people (Mark 10:45) and His princely rank, for He is 'King of kings and Lord of lords'. The contrast between the towel with which He girded Himself to stoop to wash His disciples' feet, and the girdle of 'fine gold of Uphaz', fittingly represents the contrast between His tremendous stoop when He 'a servant's form assumed, beset with sorrow round', and His exaltation to priestly and princely service for His own at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Phil. 2:5-11).

(iii) The colour of the beryl, to which Daniel compares the appearance of His body, is not known with certainty. G. H. Lang in his exposition of Daniel, says that this precious stone probably suggests that lively tinted white which tells of perfect health, and adds: 'no element of sin had tainted the pristine beauty of this heavenly form'. Daniel saw the glorious form of God's Anointed before the Cross, so there were no scars yet to proclaim man's enmity, violence and cruelty, no spear wound yet in His side.

(iv) His face was like lightning, 'shining as the sun'. The three disciples who enjoyed a special place of intimacy with our Lord during His three and a half years of public ministry had a passing glimpse of this on the holy mount when, as one of the three tells us, they were 'eye-witnesses of His majesty' (2 Peter 1:16-17). The appearance of lightning symbolizes a radiant mien and a majestic manner.

(v) His eyes, brilliant as lamps of fire, suggest the piercing, penetrating glance that detects the strength and weakness of His people's condition, and sees their faults and failures.

(vi) His arms, strong to save the sinner from his sins and to sway the sceptre of the universe, and His feet, that are to tread the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God, had the appearance of burnished brass. Brass is the metal that can stand the fire; and He, the Sinless One, was to endure the fire of God's wrath on the sinful. His feet walk up and down 'amidst the stones of fire that pave the path to the throne of God', for all judgment has been committed to the Son.

(vii) His voice was mighty, 'like the voice of a multitude'. It is the voice that can awaken the dead, as at the grave of Lazarus, that can awe the rebel, and that announces the edicts of Heaven. Yet it was that same voice that was to proclaim in the tenderest of accents and the truest of words: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest'.

(3) *Preparation for his ministry*

The God of Heaven, Whom Daniel throughout his long life had glorified and honoured had still a service for His aged minister to do, a prophecy for him to communicate to the world. That prophecy—God's truth noted in the Scripture of truth—(Ch. 10:21; 11:2) is the theme of the two chapters that conclude this prophetic book. For this further ministry the prophet needed Divine strength, and this was granted to him after he realised his helplessness and confessed his weakness. This confession was the effect of the Vision glorious (v. 8). In similar circumstances, after a vision of God revealed in His Son, Job, Isaiah and Peter acknowledged their sinful and unclean state and their spiritual weakness.

Job's confession was: 'Now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself and repent'; Isaiah's was: 'Woe is me, for I am undone: for I am a man of unclean lips'.

Peter's was: 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'.

Daniel's was: 'My comeliness was turned into corruption'. What he had considered in himself as comely and commendable he found, as a result of the vision of the thrice holy One, to be absolutely corrupt. What better preparation for ministry than this? God's strength is made perfect in weakness, and to Daniel that strength was conveyed in the touch that bowed his knees in prayer (v. 10), the touch that opened his lips and gave him breath to witness (vs. 16-17), and the touch that strengthened him in his frailty and fitted his feeble hands to write the living words of truth.

The last prophetic utterance of the man greatly beloved must be left for the final chapter on 'the prophecies of Daniel'.