

From Battle to Victory



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Eph. 6:12, Daniel 10, Ezra 4:1–5, Josh. 5:13–15, Rev. 1:12–18, Col. 2:15, Rom. 8:37–39.*

Memory Text: “O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!” (*Daniel 10:19, NKJV*).

Daniel 10 introduces the concluding vision of Daniel, which continues in chapters 11 and 12. We are informed at the outset that this vision concerns a “great conflict” (*Dan. 10:1, ESV*). While Daniel 11 fleshes out some details of this conflict, Daniel 10 shows its spiritual dimensions and reveals that behind the scenes of earthly battles rages a spiritual conflict of cosmic proportions. As we study this chapter, we shall see that when we pray, we engage in this cosmic conflict in a way that has profound repercussions. But we are not alone in our struggles; Jesus engages the battle against Satan in our behalf. We shall learn that the ultimate fight we are engaged in is not against earthly human powers but the powers of darkness.

As the apostle Paul put it centuries after Daniel: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (*Eph. 6:12, NKJV*). Ultimately, our success in the conflict rests on Jesus Christ, who alone defeated Satan at the cross.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 14.

Fasting and Prayer, Once Again

Read Daniel 10:1–3. What do we again find Daniel doing?

Daniel does not spell out the reasons for his extended mourning period. But such a fervent intercession is most likely motivated by the situation of the Jews, who have just returned from Babylon to Palestine.

Read Ezra 4:1–5. What challenges are the Jews facing upon their return?

We know from Ezra 4:1–5 that at this time the Jews are facing strong opposition as they attempt to rebuild the temple. The Samaritans send false reports to the Persian court, inciting the king to stop the reconstruction work. In the face of such crises, for three weeks Daniel pleads with God to influence Cyrus to allow the work to continue.

At this point, Daniel is probably close to 90 years of age. He does not think about himself but about his people and the challenges that they face. And he persists in prayer for three full weeks before receiving any answer from God. During this time, the prophet follows a very modest diet, abstaining from choice food and even ointment. He is totally unconcerned about his comfort and appearance, but he is deeply concerned about the welfare of his fellow Jews in Jerusalem a thousand miles away.

As we look into Daniel's prayer life, we learn some valuable lessons. First, we should persist in prayer, even when our petitions are not answered immediately. Second, we should devote time to pray for others. There is something special about intercessory prayers. Remember that "the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends" (*Job 42:10, NKJV*). Third, prayer prompts God to do something concrete and real. So, let us pray always, all kinds of prayers. In the face of unbearable trials, big problems, and overwhelming challenges, let us take our burdens to God in prayer (*Eph. 6:18*).

Read Daniel 10:12. What does this tell us about prayer as an objective experience that moves God to do something, rather than it being just a subjective experience that makes us feel good about God?

A Vision of the Prince

Read Daniel 10:4–9. What happens to Daniel here?

As Daniel describes his experience, we can hardly imagine the overwhelming splendor of what he sees. That human appearance (*Dan. 10:5, 6*) harks back to the “Son of man” depicted in the vision of the heavenly judgment (*Dan. 7:13*). His linen clothing is reminiscent of priestly garments (*Lev. 16:4*), an aspect that likens this personage to the “Prince of the host” depicted in connection with the heavenly sanctuary (*Daniel 8, NKJV*). Gold also is associated with the priestly regalia as a sign of royal dignity. Last, the likening of this figure to lightning, fire, bronze, and a powerful voice portrays Him as a supernatural being. This is someone invested with priestly, royal, and military attributes. This figure also displays interesting similarities to the heavenly being who appears to Joshua shortly before the battle against Jericho (*Josh. 5:13, 14*). In the vision, Joshua sees the “Commander of the army of the LORD” (*NKJV*). Interestingly, the Hebrew word translated as “commander” (*sar*) here is the same word translated as “prince” in reference to Michael in Daniel 10:21. But a closer parallel occurs between Daniel and John, who received a vision of the risen Lord on the Sabbath day.

What similarities do we find between Daniel’s vision of the Son of God in Daniel 10 and those in Joshua 5:13–15 and Revelation 1:12–18?

According to Daniel, those who are with him are frightened off, and Daniel himself falls weak and frail to the ground. The manifestation of God’s presence simply overwhelms him. Yet, whatever his immediate fears, Daniel’s vision shows that God is in control of history. Indeed, as the vision unfolds, we will see that God provides Daniel with an outline of human history from the times of the prophet to the establishment of God’s kingdom (*Daniel 11 and 12*).

If, as we have seen again and again in Daniel, the Lord can keep human history under control, what can He do for our individual lives?

Touched by an Angel

Read Daniel 10:10–19. What happens each time an angel touches Daniel?

Overwhelmed with the radiance of divine light, the prophet falls. Then an angel appears to touch him and comfort him. As we read the narrative, notice that the angel touches Daniel three times.

The first touch enables the prophet to stand and hear the words of comfort coming from heaven: “ ‘Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words’ ” (*Dan. 10:12, NKJV*). Daniel’s prayer has moved the heavens. For us this comes as an assurance that God hears our prayers, which is a great comfort in times of trouble.

The second touch enables Daniel to speak. The prophet pours out his words before the Lord, expressing his feelings of fear and emotion: “ ‘My lord, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength. For how can this servant of my lord talk with you, my lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me’ ” (*Dan. 10:16, 17, NKJV*). So, God does not only speak to us; He wants us to open our mouths so that we can tell Him about our feelings, needs, and aspirations.

The third touch brings him strength. As Daniel recognizes his inadequacy, the angel touches him and comforts him with God’s peace: “ ‘O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!’ ” (*Dan. 10:19, NKJV*). Remember that the angel has been sent to Daniel in response to his prayers, in order to give him insight and understanding. In other words, the vision that follows in chapter 11 will be one that is intended to encourage Daniel in response to his mourning and meditation over the present situation in Jerusalem. With God on our side, then, we can have peace even as we face affliction. His loving touch enables us to look into the future with hope.

“To us in the common walks of life, heaven may be very near.”
—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 48. How often do you think about just how closely tied heaven and earth are? How might you live differently if you always kept this truth alive in your heart and mind?

A Great Conflict

Read Daniel 10:20, 21. What is revealed to Daniel here?

The heavenly messenger pulls the curtain aside and reveals to Daniel the cosmic war that transpires behind the scenes of human history. As soon as Daniel begins to pray, a spiritual battle starts between heaven and earth. Heavenly beings began a struggle with the king of Persia to let the Jews continue the reconstruction of the temple. We know from the opening of Daniel 10 that the king of Persia is Cyrus. However, a human king left by himself cannot offer significant opposition to a heavenly being. This indicates that behind the human king stands a spiritual agent who moves Cyrus to stop the Jews from rebuilding the temple.

A similar situation occurs in Ezekiel 28, in which the king of Tyre represents Satan, the spiritual power behind the human king of that city. So, it should not be surprising that the kings of Persia against whom Michael comes to fight include Satan and his angels. This shows that the human opposition to the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem has a counterpart in the spiritual realm.

Read Daniel 10:13. What kind of battle is described here?

“While Satan was striving to influence the highest powers in the kingdom of Medo-Persia to show disfavor to God’s people, angels worked in behalf of the exiles. The controversy was one in which all heaven was interested. Through the prophet Daniel, we are given a glimpse of this mighty struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. For three weeks Gabriel wrestled with the powers of darkness, seeking to counteract the influences at work on the mind of Cyrus; and before the contest closed, Christ Himself came to Gabriel’s aid. ‘The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days,’ Gabriel declares; ‘but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.’ Daniel 10:13. All that heaven could do in behalf of the people of God was done. The victory was finally gained; the forces of the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus, and all the days of his son Cambyses, who reigned about seven and a half years.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 571, 572.

A Victorious Prince

The most prominent character in the book of Daniel is the figure initially called “Son of Man” (*Dan. 7:13, NKJV*) or “Prince of the host” (*Dan. 8:11, NKJV*). Eventually we learn that His name is Michael (*Dan. 10:21*), which means “Who is like God?” He comes to help Gabriel in the conflict with the king of Persia (*Dan. 10:13*). The angel refers to this heavenly being as “Michael your prince” (*Dan. 10:21*), namely, the prince of God’s people. Michael appears later in the book of Daniel as the One who stands for God’s people (*Dan. 12:1*). From Jude 9, we learn that Michael, also called an archangel, fights against Satan and resurrects Moses. Revelation 12:7 reveals that Michael stands as the leader of the heavenly army, which defeats Satan and his fallen angels. Thus, Michael is none other than Jesus Christ. As the Persian Empire has a supreme commander, a spiritual force who stands behind its human leader, so God’s people have in Michael their Commander in Chief, who steps in to fight and win the cosmic war on their behalf.

Read Colossians 2:15. How has Jesus accomplished victory in the cosmic conflict?

As we face the forces of evil, we can have faith in Jesus our champion. He defeats Satan in the beginning of His public ministry. During His earthly life, He defeats Satan in the desert when assaulted with temptations, He fights demonic hordes, and He sets people free from the power of darkness. Jesus defeats evil even when it is disguised behind Peter’s attempt to dissuade Him from moving toward Calvary. In His final words to the disciples, Jesus speaks of His impending death as a battle, which will culminate in a decisive victory over Satan: “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (*John 12:31, 32, NKJV*).

Sometimes we look around, and things look really bad. Violence, immorality, corruption, and diseases crop up everywhere. An enemy, not made of flesh and blood, brutally attacks us from all sides. But no matter how difficult the battles we have to fight, Jesus fights for us and stands as our Prince and High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Read Romans 8:37–39. How can we make the promise of being conquerors a real experience in our own Christian lives?

Further Thought: “For three weeks Gabriel wrestled with the powers of darkness, seeking to counteract the influences at work on the mind of Cyrus. . . . All that heaven could do in behalf of the people of God was done. The victory was finally gained; the forces of the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus, and all the days of his son Cambyses.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 572.

“What great honor is shown to Daniel by the Majesty of heaven! He comforts His trembling servant and assures him that his prayer has been heard in heaven. In answer to that fervent petition the angel Gabriel was sent to affect the heart of the Persian king. The monarch had resisted the impressions of the Spirit of God during the three weeks while Daniel was fasting and praying, but heaven’s Prince, the Archangel, Michael, was sent to turn the heart of the stubborn king to take some decided action to answer the prayer of Daniel.”—Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life*, p. 51.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Though we are not the first people in Christian history to see this truth, as Seventh-day Adventists we are strong proponents of the “great controversy” motif, or the idea that the entire universe is part of an epic struggle between Christ and Satan. And we believe that every human being is, indeed, involved in this controversy. Others, even secular people, have talked about the reality of some kind of battle in which we are all immersed. What has been your own experience in the great controversy? How have you seen it manifested in your own life? What have you learned that could help others struggling, as well?
- 2 Read Ephesians 6:10–18. Notice the overt military imagery that Paul uses. What “battle instructions” are given here for us in the great controversy?
- 3 In Daniel 10:11, for a second time (see *Dan. 9:23*) Daniel is called *hamudot*—or “beloved.” What does this tell us about the close link, even an emotional link, between heaven and earth? Think about how radically different this reality is when compared to the common atheistic view of much of the modern world. What hope does this Bible view, as seen in this reference to Daniel, offer us?

Part I: Overview

Key Text: *Daniel 10:19*

Study Focus: *Eph. 6:12, Daniel 10, Ezra 4:1–5, Josh. 5:13–15, Rev. 1:12–18, Col. 2:15, Rom. 8:37–39.*

Introduction: Two themes in this week’s lesson deserve further comment. One is the invisible war that unfolds behind the scenes of the great conflict. The other theme that emerges is the assurance that in this war we are not alone. A victorious prince stands up to fight in our behalf.

Lesson Themes:

- 1. An Invisible War.** One of the most somber aspects of the great conflict between good and evil is the invisible war that takes place in the spiritual realm. We see a snapshot of this reality in the evil forces that were influencing the Persian king to thwart God’s plan to rebuild Jerusalem.
- 2. A Victorious Prince.** While the conflict rages, God’s people are not alone. A powerful and victorious heavenly prince stands up to fight the evil forces on behalf of God’s people and bring God’s plan to fruition.

Life Application: The biggest battle of our lives is not against visible enemies of flesh and blood, but “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (*Eph. 6:12, NKJV*). Although from a human perspective this battle can be an uneven conflict in which it appears that the odds are often against us, we have nothing to fear. Jesus fights this battle for us and alongside us and gives us the assurance of victory.

Part II: Commentary

Let us take a more in-depth look at this lesson’s themes as outlined above:

1. An Invisible War

Daniel 10 introduces the final vision of the book, which comprises chapters 10–12. It is 536 B.C., the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia. About fifty thousand Jews have returned to their homeland (*Ezra 2*), and as they set out to rebuild the temple, insurmountable opposition arises. When the

Samaritans are refused participation in the reconstruction project, they become bitter enemies of the Jews. They write letters portraying the Jews as a seditious people and so persuade the king to bring the construction work to a halt (*Ezra 4:6–16, 23, 24*). Informed of the situation of his fellow Jews, Daniel once again resorts to fasting and prayer. For 21 days, he prays and fasts on behalf of the returnees. God responds with the vision of a “great war” in which the curtain is lifted that veils the unseen realities from the seen. The prophet is allowed to catch a glimpse of the heavenly war that goes on behind the earthly battles.

As the vision unfolds, Daniel soon learns that the opposition to the reconstruction of the temple is not restricted to the idiosyncrasies of human rulers. Indeed, the political events involving the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Persians reflected an invisible war between the angels of God and evil powers. This close relationship between what happens in heaven and on earth is one of the distinctive features of apocalyptic prophecy. So, the angel discloses to Daniel that there has been a battle between Michael and the prince of Persia, a battle that will persist with Greece and, by implication, will continue amid the military conflicts between the kings of the north and the south (*Daniel 11*).

As we proceed with this study, let us consider some of the elements involved in this war. One of the heavenly beings, most likely Gabriel, tells the prophet Daniel that the prince of Persia resisted him for 21 days until Michael came to help him (*Dan. 10:13*). At this point, we have to determine whether the prince of Persia, who dared to stand against an angel of God, was a human ruler or a spiritual power. Some scholars argue that the prince of Persia was Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, who was the king of Babylon and coregent with his father during this time. Cambyses, known to be hostile to foreign religions, has been understood as the ruler who brought the reconstruction of the temple to a stop. However, it is difficult to conceive of a human king opposing an angel of God to the point that Michael must intervene. But a stronger argument for a supernatural prince lies in the parallel usage of the word for the “prince” (*sar*) of Persia and Michael, the “prince” (*sar*) who represents God’s people. So, because of this contrast and opposition, the prince of Persia must have been a malevolent being acting in opposition to Michael, the heavenly prince.

Therefore, the “great war” here described is a war between Satan, the prince of darkness—who represents the interests of the earthly enemies of God’s people—and Christ, the great prince who represents the people of God. This war lies at the heart of the great conflict between good and evil, which becomes visible in the political, social, and religious evils that befall the world. However, as the demonic forces increase their opposition to God’s angels and move earthly powers to attack God’s people, Michael, the “great prince,” steps in to protect and save God’s people (*Dan. 12:1*). To Him, we now turn.

2. A Victorious Prince

When Michael appears in the Bible, it is always in contexts of conflict. In Daniel 10, He is fighting against the malevolent prince of Persia; in Daniel 12, He stands up to deliver God's people in the closing scenes of the great conflict; in Jude, He contends with the devil for the body of Moses; and in Revelation 12, Michael fights with the dragon. So, it seems clear that Michael is the heavenly warrior who represents the forces of good against the powers of evil.

In order to have a better appreciation for Michael's nature and identity, one should bear in mind that one of the most striking depictions of God in the Bible is that of a warrior. He is called "the LORD mighty in battle" (*Ps. 24:8*) and the warrior (*Exod. 15:3*). Many psalms celebrate the Lord as a victorious warrior (*Psalms 68*). Thus, God fights the enemies of His people, such as the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians. He may even be seen as fighting against His own people by delivering them into enemy hands when they break His covenant. The picture of God as a warrior also brings eschatological hope, however, because in the future God will fight against the nations that have oppressed His people (*Zech. 14:3*).

It is instructive to note that in contexts in which God is depicted as a warrior, some form of the interjection "Who is like God?" appears (*Exod. 15:11; Jer. 50:44; Ps. 35:10; Ps. 71:19; Ps. 77:13; Ps. 89:6, 8; Micah 7:18*). So, it is not by accident that Michael means "Who is like God?" The meaning of His name suggests close identification with God, which coheres with the function of Michael as a divine warrior. As such, He resembles God to a degree that no other heavenly being or created angel could ever do. For this reason, Michael in Daniel must be identified with the preincarnate Christ, the eternal Son of God.

Significantly, John the Baptist upon first sight understood Jesus as a warrior with a winnowing fan in His hand who will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (*Matt. 3:12*). Later, John thought he was mistaken because Jesus was expelling demons and healing the sick instead of waging war against His people's enemies. But John got word from his disciples that confirmed his initial impression. Jesus was indeed the divine warrior who was battling the spiritual forces of evil. Later on, Jesus' fiercest battle took place on the cross, where He achieved the greatest victory over evil, not by killing but by dying. On the cross He "disarmed principalities and powers" and triumphed over them (*Col. 2:15, NKJV*). After His resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven as a victorious warrior showing the spoils of war in a cosmic parade (*Eph. 4:7, 8; Psalm 68; Psalm 24*).

We have the sacred duty to carry on the battle alongside our Supreme Commander. Like Jesus, we must fight this spiritual battle, not by killing

but by dying. Our weapons are not guns and bombs, but faith and the Word of God (*Eph. 6:10–18*). We battle not only external forces but also the sin that lies in our hearts. However, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (*Rom. 8:37, NKJV*). Let us continue to fight until the day when Michael will come and destroy evil in all its manifestations.

Part III: Life Application

Imagine this scene: as you visit a photo gallery, you see an awkward picture of a middle-aged man. His face is contorted. His lips are contracted. His fists are clenched. His face is full of wrinkles, not because of age but because of anger. As you look at that picture, you become absolutely convinced that whomever it may portray, it is someone you could never wish to be friends with. You just feel happy because that man is no more than a lifeless picture on display.

Then a guide approaches you, identifies that person, and explains the context of the picture. Actually, the picture shows a close-up of an attorney. He was in a court session defending an old widow. The woman was about to lose her only piece of land to a big company. By means of legal maneuvers, the lawyers of that company were attempting to take over her land. And the picture was taken at the very moment the attorney was using verbal and non-verbal arguments to convince the judge to decide in favor of that woman.

- 1. How does the information about the context change your view of the man in the picture? Would you feel comfortable in having him as a friend? Discuss.**

- 2. In what ways does the information about the great conflict between good and evil help you better appreciate the picture of the warrior that God presents in the Scriptures?**

3. If the Lord were not a “warrior God,” could we have any assurance that evil would be forever eliminated?

4. What difference does it make to have Jesus Christ as the warrior who fights on your behalf against the armies of Satan?

Notes


