

Lesson 27

When we ended last week, we were discussing Daniel 10:13-14, which are two of the strangest verses in the Bible, and we were working through a list of questions.

First, let's re-read those two verses.

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. 14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

And here were our questions:

- Who is speaking? That is, who is the "me" in verse 13? (An angel)
- What and who is the prince of the kingdom of Persia? (A fallen angel apparently assigned to fight God's plans with regard to Persia.)
- What happened during those 21 days?
- Who is Michael (that one is easy) and what did he do to help?
- Who are the kings of Persia?
- When are the "latter days"?

Let's continue with our discussion of the Prince of Persia.

Any time we find ourselves studying angels and demons, it is likely wise to recall what C. S. Lewis said on the subject of demons:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.

And I think that warning applies both to good angels and fallen angels. We should not become preoccupied with them. This was a problem in the first century with the Gnostics, and it remains a problem today with many.

God has told us what we need to know about angels, and there is much that we have not been told.

But as we read these verses in Daniel and get a glimpse of the unseen world, it causes some to be anxious and fearful about the role of Satan in the world. So let's take a short detour and look at that issue.

How does Satan work in the world? How does Satan work in the world today?

Those are different questions with different answers. Why? Because what we see in the Bible is that Satan has worked differently in the world at different times throughout history.

And that should not surprise us because God has also worked differently in the world at different times in history.

Hebrews 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

And I think the Bible shows us that God has placed different limits on what Satan can do in this world at different times.

We see that in the book of Job, for example, when God limits what Satan can do to Job. And I think we see that with demon possession in the first century, which we saw in Zechariah 13:2 was something that would pass away in the first century. There is no demon possession today.

So how does Satan work in the world today? I think we can make two errors in answering that question. It is an error to underestimate Satan's power, and it is also an error to overestimate Satan's power.

When I am asked how Satan works in the world today, I always respond with a question of my own: how does God work in the world today?

Why do I ask that question? Because perhaps if we can explain how God is at work in this world today it will help us understand how Satan is at work in this world today fighting the work of God and God's people.

And that, I think, is an especially good approach today when the age of miracles is over.

We know that the age of miracles came to an end after their purpose was accomplished and after God's word was fully revealed (1 Corinthians 13:10, Ephesians 4:13, Mark 16:20, Hebrews 2:4).

We know both from the Bible and from our own experience that the miracles we see in the New Testament are not being performed today. And that is not due to a lack of faith as the TV preachers tell us. In fact, the lack of faith is shown by those who seek a sign beyond the sign of Jesus' resurrection (Matthew 16:4).

So how is God at work today? We know at least three answers to that question from the Bible. God works in this world today through his providence (keeping the earth and the universe going and caring for his creation), through his people (the church, the body of his Son), and through his word (as his word is proclaimed and lived).

Does the work of God today involve miracles? Yes and no. No, in the sense we have already discussed - the age of miracles is over. But yes, in the sense that the creation of the universe was a miracle, the establishment of the church occurred with miracles, and the transmission of God's inspired word was a miracle.

But here is the main point - those miracles occurred long ago, but their effects continue to this day. Those miracles from long ago produced ripples that are still working today.

What we sometimes call the miracle of birth is a miracle that happened when God created us. And God's word is just as powerful and effective today as it was when the human writer's of that word miraculously received and wrote down the words of God.

Each time God's word is proclaimed, we see God at work in this world through the word that he miraculously provided long ago. Each time we are at work in this world as the body of Christ, God is at work in this world through the church that he miraculously established long ago and through Christ who miraculously rose from that tomb long ago.

What about Satan?

Don't we see Satan working in the world in a similar way? Don't we see Satan at work today through his own people? Don't we see Satan at work today through the confusion that was sown by him long ago? Don't we see Satan at work today from the ripples of what he did in the Garden?

In short, if God can be at work today through his people, then why can't Satan be at work today through his own people?

If God can be at work today through his word, then why can't Satan be at work today through the confusion he and his people have sown about that same word?

And yes, Satan is at work today, and yes Satan is powerful, but no, we don't need to worry that Satan will override our free will and force us to sin.

We know that is not possible. God has given us each free will, and that free will choice to obey him or reject his is at the heart of the gospel call.

The gospel is something that we obey (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Peter 4:17, Romans 10:16), and the gospel is for all (Mark 16:15). We all have the free will capability to obey it or reject it. Neither God nor Satan overrides our free will. Temptation appeals to our own desires (James 1:14), and there is always a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

But what is Satan doing today? I think the answer is that Satan is doing what he has always been doing using whatever tools are at his disposal, and I think we can see evidence of Satan's work all around us today.

- Satan is fighting against the work of Jesus (Genesis 3:15)
- Satan is tempting people to evil (Luke 4:13)
- Satan is using his power of death (Hebrews 2:14)
- Satan is blinding people's minds (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- Satan is contradicting God's word (Genesis 3:4)
- Satan is inciting disobedience (1 Chronicles 21:1)

- Satan is accusing the people of God (Revelation 12:10)
- Satan is sowing weeds (Matthew 13:39)
- Satan is lying (John 8:44)
- Satan is filling hearts with evil (Acts 5:3)
- Satan is harassing God's people (2 Corinthians 12:7)
- Satan is working in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2)
- Satan is hindering the spread of the gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:18)
- Satan is devouring people (1 Peter 5:8)
- Satan is throwing God's people into prison (Revelation 2:10)
- Satan is looking for opportunities (Ephesians 4:27)
- Satan is scheming against God's people (Ephesians 6:11)

But that's not Satan today, some might say. That's evil people. That's Hollywood. That's false teachers. Exactly! That is how Satan works!

Ephesians 2:1-2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, **the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.**

So, yes, Satan is organized. And yes, Satan is at work, as he has always been. But no, Satan is not all-powerful. And no, Satan cannot override our free will. We can resist him (James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:9), and God promises that Satan will flee from us.

And the best news of all? Satan has already been defeated. That happened at the cross.

John 12:31 - Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

Hebrews 2:14 - Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

1 John 3:8 - The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

This world will not end with some cataclysmic battle between good and evil. That battle was fought long ago, and Satan lost. There will be no battle at the end of the world, but only judgment and the bending of knees.

Next question: What happened during those 21 days?

We know from verse 12 that Daniel's prayers were heard from the very first day, but here in verse 13 we learn that it took 21 days for the answer from God to arrive.

What happened? Why the delay? The speaker in verse 13 says that "the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days." We are not told anything more. (I really wish Daniel had asked that question!)

We do know the significant role that Persia played in the plan of God, and Satan must also have known this.

Why? Because one thing we know about Satan is that he is a Bible scholar! We see that in Matthew 4, but I think we also see that here.

Cyrus had been mentioned by name in Isaiah over 100 years before Cyrus was even born! Satan knew that Persia was important to God, and so Satan set his sights on Persia, and he appears to have placed a powerful fallen angel in Persia to thwart God's plans.

Who is Michael, and what did he do to help?

In the KJV, verse 13 says "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." A better translation is "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia." That is, the final clause is describing what was going on before Michael arrived, not after Michael arrived.

Michael, of course, is also an angel, and we will see him again in Daniel 10:21 and Daniel 12:1.

Here Michael is called one of the chief princes. In Jude 9, Michael is called an archangel, and Michael also makes an appearance in Revelation, where again he is shown as a leader of other angels.

Revelation 12:7 - And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

One conclusion we can draw here is that apparently there is a hierarchy of angels in which Michael occupies a very high position. The word archangel in Jude 9 means first or chief angel. And I think we have already seen in these verses a hierarchy among the fallen angels as well.

We aren't told what Michael did to help, but he seems to have had no trouble with the prince of Persia. That the speaker in verse 13 needed help from Michael is further and absolute confirmation that the speaker in verse 13 is not Jesus.

These verses raise all sorts of questions that we can't answer, but they hint at great unseen events involving God's people.

We are reminded of the incident in 2 Kings 6:15-17 in which Elisha prayed that the eyes of his servant would be opened so that he could see the great angelic army that surrounded them. What would we see if our eyes were likewise opened?

We don't know, and we need to be careful with speculation. There is much that God has not revealed to us on this subject, and when we reach that wall, it is best that we not try to go much further.

One final point here is that anyone looking at the world at this time would have seen Persia as powerful and significant and the Jews as powerless and insignificant - their temple destroyed, their land desolate, and their people captive in Babylon.

But was that the case in the *spiritual* realm? No, in that realm, the Jews had a powerful archangel on their side!

If we are ever tempted to see ourselves as insignificant, we need to look at ourselves with spiritual eyes - we need to see ourselves as we appear to God in the spiritual realm. And God has told us what we look like to him! Read Revelation 21, for example.

Who are the kings of Persia in verse 13?

The kings of Persia mentioned here are most likely the actual rulers of Persia. The other option is that these kings of Persia are also fallen angels working against God, but I favor the simpler explanation.

So which kings are they?

They could just be the rulers of Persia, including the king himself (Cyrus) along with others that Cyrus had placed in positions of power. This is the most likely explanation if Darius and Cyrus were the same person as we have suggested might be the case.

But there is an intriguing possibility here - these kings (plural) of Persia could be Darius and Cyrus, and verse 13 could be confirmation of the view that Darius was the last king of the Medes, that Cyrus was the first king of Medo-Persia, and that for a time they both ruled as co-regents, or possibly as king and prince. I lean toward this explanation here just as I leaned toward this view of Cyrus and Darius earlier.

Why was Satan so interested in Persia?

The short answer is that Satan was interested in Persia because God was interested in Persia. Satan constantly seeks to thwart God's plans.

Another likely reason why Satan was focused on Persia was that Persia was not wholly evil and was not wholly opposed to God's plans. In fact, it was Persian rulers, beginning with Cyrus, who permitted the three returns we talked about earlier. And it was a Persian ruler who was married to Queen Esther and who eventually spared God's people from destruction. In short, Satan had some ground to make up when it came to Persia!

Satan, no doubt, was very interested in preventing or hindering those returns and rebuilding activities - and we see his efforts not only here with Persia but also with the Samaritans causing trouble and with some of the Jews themselves who quickly fell away after their return.

Satan's target has always been where God's people dwell - in the garden in Genesis, in Israel, in Jerusalem, away in exile, during the returns, and now in the church. Wherever the people of God are - that is where you will always find Satan hard at work.

When are the "latter days" mentioned in verse 14?

The phrase "latter days" could simply mean "later," or it could point to the latter days of the Jewish age, which fits the context of the closing verses of Chapter 9 better.

Even though there are a few years between Daniel 9 and Daniel 10, the context is the same. They are both focused on Daniel's own people, the Jews (Daniel 10:14 and Daniel 9:24).

Many commentators assume that the "latter days" must always refer to the end of the world, but we know that is not true.

In Acts 2:17, Peter quotes the prophet Joel about something that was to occur in the last days. Was that the end of the world? We know it was not because Peter tells us in the prior verse that Joel was pointing to that very day in Acts 2 when the church was established. "But **this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel.**"

The last days, the latter days, and the end. We cannot create a blanket rule that any of these phrases always means the end of the world. Why? Because we have examples of each of those phrases in the Bible that we know are not the end of the world. (In a prior lesson we looked at numerous such examples.)

So how do we know what those phrases refer to when we find them in the Bible? The context! We look at how they are used, and we look at what they are describing.

But what about here? Could the latter days in verse 14 refer to the end of the world? The answer is no. It could not. Why?

Because if we take the latter days here to mean the end of the world, then we have created a contradiction between these verses and other verses that we find in New Testament such as in Romans 10. And so, logically, if our view of Daniel 10 creates a contradiction with Romans 10, then our view of either Daniel 10 or Romans 10 must be wrong. And if Romans 10 is easy to understand, then the most likely source of our error is with the more difficult verse in Daniel 10. That is simply heremenutics 101.

So what is the contradiction here if we take "latter days" to be the end of the world?

Simple. Verse 14 states very clearly that this vision concerns the role of the Jews in the latter days. ("Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days.") We know

what befell the Jews in the first century - their temple and their city were destroyed just as Jesus had said would happen in Matthew 24, and it happened during their lifetimes just as Jesus said in Matthew 24:34.

But what about the end of the world? Is there something special that will befall the Jews at the end of the world? Is there some special plan for them as many today teach? No. There is not.

Sadly, there was a special plan for the Jews in the first century, but it was not a different gospel. Instead it was this prophecy from Daniel and elsewhere regarding those who rejected the gospel and who cut off the Messiah. And that special plan ended with the destruction of their city and temple in AD 70.

Does God have a plan for the Jews today? Yes, he does. God has a wonderful plan for the salvation of the Jews today, but it is the same wonderful plan that God has for the salvation of the Gentiles. There is one and only one gospel (Galatians 1:7). And there are not separate plans for Jew and Greek.

Romans 10:12 - For there is **no difference** between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Now there is a verses that is hard to misunderstand! No difference!

All of the promises to the Jews were fulfilled in Christ. What remains to be fulfilled for the Jews that is peculiar to them? Nothing.

Acts 13:32-33 - And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, **God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again;** as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

Jeremiah 33:14-16 - Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.

Notice the time frame in that prophecy from Jeremiah. When would all Israel be saved? When God causes the righteous branch to grow up among them - that is, in the first century.

Does God have a plan for the Jews today? Yes. Does God have a plan for the Jews today that is different from his plan for Gentiles? Absolutely not! There is no difference between Jew and Gentile in the church (Romans 10:12).

Finally in verse 14 Daniel is told that this vision is for many days. What does that mean?

We know what it means. Daniel received this vision in 535 BC, and what befell his people occurred in AD 70. So the "many days" in verse 14 was about 600 years.

#daniel