

LESSON 32

If Persia had its own (evil) angel, do we also have our own (good) angel? There is a great curtain between us and the spiritual world that surrounds us. Verses such as Daniel 10:13 give us a tantalizing glimpse behind that curtain.

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?

One thing seems very clear — there is an unseen spiritual war going on that is directly related to events occurring in this world.

Ephesians 6:10-12 — *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

So do we have our own angels? There are some very suggestive verses on that question:

Hebrews 1:14 — *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

Revelation 2:1 — *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write ... [and also for the other six churches]*

Matthew 18:10 — *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

Acts 12:15 — *And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.*

Daniel 12:1 — *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people...*

Daniel 10:20 — *And now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.*

As for whether nations have angels, we know from the book of Daniel that at least Persia and Greece had their own (apparently, evil) angels (Daniel 10:20), and Israel had the angel Michael (Daniel 12:1). Also, some point to Deuteronomy 32:8 to argue that every nation has its own angel.

Deuteronomy 32:8 — *When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.*

That last phrase, “the children of Israel,” in the KJV is better translated “the sons of God,” and it is the same phrase that we find in Job.

Job 1:6 — *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.*

The Living Bible (which I do **not** recommend for serious Bible study) has the following paraphrase:

When God divided up the world among the nations, He gave each of them a supervising angel!

That is hardly a translation, but it does give an idea of what some believe is being taught there. Others also point to Isaiah 24 to argue for a linkage between kings on earth and angelic beings.

Isaiah 24:21 — *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.*

What these and other such verses tell us is that there is a great deal going on that we know nothing or very little about because God has not revealed it to us. What is revealed gives us wonderful glimpses of the permanent spiritual world that surrounds our temporary physical world. We can only speculate — and there is nothing wrong with speculation so long as it is labeled as such and it does not violate the Scriptures. But we must be careful not to go too far and become preoccupied with demons or angels as many have done. C.S. Lewis said the following about the preoccupation that some have with 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.

That is also true for angels, as evidenced by the TV shows, books, movies, and shelf space at “Christian” book stores devoted to the subject.

So do we have guardian angels today? Matthew 18:10 suggests that children do, and Hebrews 1:14 may suggest that Christians do as well. What do children and Christians have in common? They are saved — children are saved because they have never been lost, and Christians are saved because they have obeyed the gospel. Perhaps God assigns guardian angels to all who are saved.

If so, then what do guardian angels do? We aren't told much at all about that question. Hebrews 1:14 says they "minister." Luke 16:22 may tell us that the angels provide an escort for us after death, and perhaps that is all they do. Perhaps God uses angels to carry out his providence. The specifics are not revealed to us.

What about the converse of that question? What do guardian angels NOT do? We can say much more about that question than we can about the other. We know many things that guardian angels do NOT do. For starters, they do not add or subtract from the word of God, because doing so would bring them under the curse of Revelation 22:18 — and besides that, what would they add? The word of God is complete and makes us complete — nothing needs to be added to it. Second, they do not bring another gospel, because doing so would bring them under the curse of Galatians 1:8. Third, they do not perform miracles, because the age of miracles has ended (1 Corinthians 13:10). Fourth, they do not violate our free will, because not even God himself does that (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). So, while we may have uncertainty about what angels are doing today, there is much less uncertainty about what angels are NOT doing today.

Do angels walk among us? Some argue they do based on Hebrews 13:2 — "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." But I think that verse is pointing us back to Genesis 18-19. I think that today, with the age of miracles having ended, the angelic host is an unseen spiritual host, not a physical one.

One last point on verse 13: 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.

When are the “latter days” that are mentioned in verse 14? The phrase could simply mean “later” or it could point to the latter days of the Jewish age. This latter interpretation seems to fit the context better. Many assume that the “latter days” refers to the end of the world, but as we saw in Acts 2, the “last days” occurred in the first century.

If we do take the “latter days” to refer to the end of the world, then we need to be aware of some consequences of that belief. Verse 14 states very clearly that this vision concerns the role of the Jews in the latter days. As I have already suggested, I think the “latter days” refers to the time when God’s special plan for the Jews would come to an end. This happened in the first century and fits nicely with how Peter described the last days in Acts 2. But could this vision also relate to events that will occur at the end of the world? We need to be very careful how we answer that question. To answer the question “yes” is to logically imply that the Jews still have a special role to play in the plan of God, which many today teach is true. If we take Daniel to refer to the end of the world in this vision, then the idea of a future Jewish role in God’s plan follows as a logical consequence of verse 14 — we cannot avoid it. Thus, we need to be careful about the time frame we choose for this prophecy.

What does the Bible have to say about the future role of the Jews in God’s plan?

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.*

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.*

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.

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!

Finally in verse 14 Daniel is told that this vision is for many days. In fact, the vision again takes us up to the first century, which means that “many days” was a little over 500 years. The first verse of Revelation says that it concerns things that must shortly come to pass. The third verse says that the time is at hand. Those statements are repeated in the last chapter of Revelation in verses 6 and 10. And why is it then that so many people tell us that Revelation is describing future events that have not yet occurred 2000 years after the book was written? If “many days” means 500 years in Daniel, are we really going to say that 2000 years is a short time in Revelation? (Yes, a thousand years is as a day in God’s sight, but Revelation was not written for God, it was written for us!)

Daniel 10:15-19

15 And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. 16 And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. 18 Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, 19 And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.

There are many similarities between the first half of Chapter 10 and the second half of Chapter 10.

- Daniel's strength was sapped (twice in 10:8 and twice in 10:16-17).
- Daniel's face was toward the ground (10:9 and 10:15).
- Daniel was roused by an angel (10:10 and 10:18).
- Daniel was called greatly beloved (10:10 and 10:19).
- Daniel was told not to fear (10:12 and 10:19).
- Daniel was told why the angel had come (10:12 and 10:20-21).
- The prince of Persia is mentioned (10:13 and 10:20).

Why did two such similar events occur back to back? We aren't told, but have you noticed how often the number two rises to the surface in the book of Daniel? How many people in this book have two names? How many languages are used in this book? (Two, Hebrew and Aramaic.) How many kings do we see that come in pairs? (Nabonidus and Beleshazzar, Cyrus and Darius) To what could this be pointing? The two covenants perhaps? Doesn't this book tell us a great deal about the transition between the two covenants? (It is also a very interesting study to investigate how often the number two appears in the book of Revelation.)

Daniel is unable to speak until "one like the similitude of the sons of men" touches his lips in verse 16. In verse 18 he will be touched by "one like the appearance of a man." Most likely these individuals are angels, and most likely they are the same angel — but we are not told that with certainty. (We do see the same angel as before speaking again in verse 20.)

What we do know with certainty is that Daniel seems to have been completely overwhelmed by what was happening to him in this chapter — and very understandably so when we step back and look at what happened to him here. He has certainly had an encounter with an angel, and possibly with more than one, and he very possibly began the chapter by having a vision of Christ.

We are reminded of Isaiah 6:5 where, after seeing the vision of “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up,” Isaiah said:

Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

His lips were also touched in that chapter. And we are reminded of another passage from Isaiah:

Isaiah 40:9 — *O Zion, that brings good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that brings good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!*

Isaiah is speaking there of Jesus, and I believe Daniel had just seen Jesus in verses 5-6. Is it any wonder that Daniel turned his face toward the ground and was unable to speak? Daniel’s responses to his visions and visitations are worth our careful study. Often he is overcome and unable to speak for a time. Indeed, he sometimes loses consciousness for a moment and must be revived. I think that we have sometimes been guilty of emphasizing that Jesus is our friend (which is certainly true) at the expense of also emphasizing that Jesus is the Sovereign Lord of the Universe who upholds the universe by the power of his word and possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. Listen again to what Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6:

Isaiah 6:1-4 — *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the*

door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Verse 1 tells us that Uzziah had just died — which meant there was no king, right? Hardly! Isaiah saw the true king — and I think that Isaiah was seeing Jesus on that throne rather than God the father. Why? Because John 12:41 says that Isaiah “saw his glory and spoke of him” (with reference to Christ). And we are also reminded of John’s vision of Christ in Revelation 1:13-16, which as we said is very similar to verses 5-6 of this chapter.

Isaiah 40:9 — *Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!*

Why does it matter how we see God? Of course there are many answers to that question, but one answer stands out in particular — our attitude toward sin is directly related to our attitude toward God. Our view of sin is directly related to our view of God. How we behold God is directly related to how we behold ourselves.

Isaiah 6:5 — *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*

How often do we find ourselves saying that? If not often, then perhaps it is because we have not seen the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up — and we should see that each time we open the word of God.

If we have become lax about sin, then perhaps it is because we have tried to lower God down to our level instead of seeing God sitting upon that throne, high and lifted up. John Calvin said:

Hence that dread and amazement with which, as Scripture uniformly relates, holy men were struck and overwhelmed whenever they beheld the presence of God. ... Men are never duly touched and im-

pressed with a conviction of their insignificance, until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God.

And we can add that men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their sinfulness until they have contrasted themselves with the holiness of God.

Think again about Isaiah 6 — “Holy, Holy, Holy.” That is the only attribute of God that is repeated three times. You never read that God is love, love, love or mercy, mercy, mercy. But you do read (and we do sing) that God is holy, holy, holy — and when we really understand that, we will see ourselves and our sin in a whole new light, just as Isaiah did. When we see that God is holy, holy, holy, we understand that we are guilty, guilty, guilty — and we understand our need for a Savior.

Voltaire said that “God made man in His image, and man returned the favor.” Instead of coming up with new gods, I fear we have often been guilty of trying to re-fashion the one we have. And the result? One author has said that we are like Lancelot in search of the Holy Grail who finds himself at the end of his quest at a Tupperware party. The world has tried its best to trivialize God.

Our so-called Christian society has tried to reduce God to some catchy phrase or fish symbol we stick on our bumpers. Some even parade around in so-called “Christian T-shirts” with slogans such as “This Blood’s For You,” which brings Christ’s atoning sacrifice down to the level of a beer commercial.

When Isaiah saw the Lord on his throne and when Daniel saw Christ they were not driven to put a new slogan on their clothing or a catchy phrase on the bumper of their chariot. They were driven to their knees.

We have already learned much in this book of Daniel about the eternal kingdom of God. Let’s read what the book of Hebrews tells us about that kingdom.

Hebrews 12:28-29 — *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may*

serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.

Our God is a consuming fire. You don't contain a consuming fire. You don't trivialize a consuming fire. You aren't casual around a consuming fire. You don't daydream in the presence of a consuming fire. You aren't bored by a consuming fire. You don't turn your back on a consuming fire. You ignore a consuming fire at your peril.

If there is one message that our world needs to understand it is that God is a consuming fire. No one will obey the good news, until they understand the bad news. And the bad news is that apart from Christ we all stand guilty as charged in front of a consuming fire.

The world fears terrorists. The world fears disease. The world fears war. The world fears poverty. Those things are nothing when compared with the consuming fire.

Matthew 10:28 — *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Daniel is strengthened by the angel in these verses, and for good reason. There is bad news ahead! His people are going to undergo serious trials. Daniel has already been shown that, but soon he will learn more about those trials that lie ahead.

Daniel 10:20-21

20 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. 21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and

there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

The question here in verse 20 is rhetorical. The angel had already answered it in verse 14 when he told Daniel that he had come to help Daniel understand what would befall his people in the latter days.

Although we have a picture of spiritual warfare involving the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece, it is important to note that the outcome of the battle was never in doubt. God had already told us how the battle was going to end!

Persia and Greece were a part of God's plan, yet Persia and Greece were supported by demonic powers. The faithless Jews that rejected Christ were also critical to God's plan yet they were also acting on the side of Satan in their rejection of the Messiah. Is that a contradiction? No. Paul dealt with that problem in Romans 9–11. The Jews' rejection of Christ allowed God to bless the whole world. Thus, they might ask, how could God hold them responsible for rejecting Christ? Paul's answer was that just because God is able to use evil people to further his own good aims does not mean that those evil people are no longer responsible for their actions. What evil man could possibly say to God, "You are not allowed to use my evil to accomplish something good unless you give me credit!" That idea, as Paul points out in Romans, is ludicrous.

Daniel was very important to God. Indeed, God's dealings with the powers of the world were put on hold for a moment so that this angel could answer Daniel's prayer. Verse 21 says that the angel would show Daniel "that which is noted in the scripture of truth." That is a beautiful description of God's word — and perhaps one that we should use more often.

Again we see that the book of Daniel was part of the Bible as soon as it was written. There was no need for any counsel of men to vote on it. God assembled the Bible, not man.

The scripture of truth shows God's control and knowledge of the future. The future that God is about to tell Daniel about is so certain that it is already written down. It is as if it had already happened.

This angel and Michael appear to be outnumbered. They are contending by themselves against the demonic powers of Persia and Greece. But, of course, no one is outnumbered when God is on his side.

Romans 8:31 — *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

Yes, there will be conflict. Yes, we are at war. But no, we are not alone. And that is the central message of Chapter 10. Before we study Daniel 11, I think it will be helpful to look with some detail at the general subject of prophecy in the Bible.

SPECIAL LESSON ON PROPHECY

How does prophecy work? How is prophecy related to our free will? Let's look at some questions about the prophecies in the Bible, before we study one of the Bible's most amazing predictive prophecies — Daniel 11.

I use the "tent peg" method of Bible study. With that method, you study difficult passages of Scripture by first planting firm tent pegs from Scripture for things that you know are true and that will not change. You can then build your tent around these tent pegs as you study the difficult passage. Much of the religious confusion in the world comes from people who put up their tents without having first planted firm tent pegs into the ground.

As we begin our study of prophecy and how it works, we should start with a very important tent peg — and that tent peg is man's free will. If we build a tent in which I do not have free will to choose my actions, then that tent will collapse. Why? Because we know that man has been given free will.

Genesis 2:16-17 — *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

Joshua 24:15 — *Choose you this day whom ye will serve.*

That verse would seem to be definitive on the question of whether man has free will. If we were not able to choose, then *how* could God command us to choose? And if our choices were compelled rather than free then *why* would God need to command us to choose?

Deuteronomy 30:19 — *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*

2 Peter 3:9 — *Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

1 Timothy 2:4 — *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

We know that it is not God's will that any should perish, but we also know that many will perish. What is thwarting God's will? Our will. Our free will.

Ezekiel 18:20 — *The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the*

righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Ezekiel 18:32 — *For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.*

The message in Ezekiel 18 is that each person is responsible for his own sin and not for the sin of another. How could that be true if we do not have free will? If we don't have free will, then wouldn't it logically follow from Ezekiel 18 that we are not responsible for our own sins?

James 1:13-14 — *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

But aren't there examples in the Bible where God overrode man's free will? Let's consider that question next by looking at two examples: Pharaoh and Peter.

One of the most commonly cited examples for that proposition is Pharaoh, and particularly the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

Romans 9:17-18 — *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.*

In this quote from Exodus 9:16, God makes it clear that Pharaoh had served God's purpose in refusing to let the Israelites leave Egypt. What was that purpose? Pharaoh allowed God to demonstrate his power to the entire earth. God used a wicked man to manifest his power.

But why did God choose this particular Pharaoh and not his father or his son? Because God has the sovereign right to do whatever he wants to do! David in Psalm 115:3 reminds us that God does whatever he pleases.

Now we need to be careful here. In 1 Timothy 2:4, Paul tells us that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” So if God wants all men to be saved and if God does whatever he pleases, then why aren’t all men saved?

The answer is that God does whatever he pleases, but what he pleases will never violate his nature. For example, God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). So, it will never please God to tell a lie.

God desires that all men be saved. Thus, it pleased him to provide a plan by which all men could be saved. But it could not please God to choose some people to be lost before they are even born. Why? Because that action by God would cause his statement in 1 Timothy 2:4 to be a lie.

What then does the Bible mean when it says that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart?

First, let’s recall the setting for this event. Moses was not conducting a Bible study with Pharaoh when God suddenly rushed in and hardened Pharaoh’s heart. Pharaoh had arrayed himself against God right from the start — in fact, he considered himself to be a god.

Nowhere in the Bible is there a single example of God hardening the heart of someone who is seeking him. To those people God says, “seek and ye shall find” (Matthew 7:7). God hardens only those who have actively chosen to reject him. In 2 Thessalonians 2:11, we read that God sent on some a strong delusion that they would believe a lie. To whom did he send this delusion? He sent it to those who had refused to believe the truth but instead had pleasure in unrighteousness. Pharaoh was not seeking the truth when God hardened his heart; Pharaoh was standing in opposition to the plan of God.