

Manna for Your Soul

Of Troubled Prophets, Angels, and Saints

Monday, February 20, 2006

"I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me. ¹⁶ I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. ¹⁷ These great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings, *which* shall arise out of the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." **Daniel 7:15-18**

Looking at the Word:

To be entrusted by God with His revealed Word is an honor—but it is also a weighty responsibility. Several Old Testament prophets spoke of this in terms of bearing a "burden" (Isaiah 13:1; Ezekiel 12:10; Nahum 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1). God's message through Jeremiah and the consequences to Israel for not listening to the Word of the Lord made the prophet weep (Jeremiah 13:17; 31:16). The Apostle John discovered it was not always pleasant to receive and minister the Word of God (Revelation 10:8-11). Daniel was troubled by his vision.

- **Daniel's Troubled Question (7:15-16):** Daniel had just witnessed four increasingly powerful and vicious beasts achieve successive dominance. The fourth beast had been the most powerful and frightening of all, yet in the end, it was disposed of by the Ancient of Days in summary judgment. Daniel had never before seen such a fierce and awesome unleashing of spiritual power. Surrounded as he was by spirit beings, Daniel was acutely aware of his own fleshly limitations. The words Daniel chose to describe his emotional state pictures his spirit like a sword that's been notched and marred by battle, but is now sheathed in a scabbard. Daniel felt beat up and troubled in spirit by the vision God sent. In order to relieve his alarm, Daniel approached "one of those who stood by" (presumably an angel) to ask the "truth of all this." Daniel was known in Babylon as a man of wisdom and gifted in interpretation (Daniel 5:11-12; Ezekiel 28:3). In the first six chapters, Daniel interpreted the dreams of others; but in the last six chapters of the book, he needed to receive an angelic interpretation for his dreams. It wasn't that Daniel couldn't have figured things out under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, but because the visions recorded in the last half of Daniel were foundational for understanding God's prophetic timetable, God granted his servant assurance as to the certainty of the vision so that all doubt might be removed as to the reliability of the interpretation.
- **Daniel's Angelic Answer (7:17-18):** There was a double entendre for the four beasts. They represented four kings, yet each beast also represented a kingdom (Daniel 7:17, 23). Some critics have argued that the statement of these beasts arising out of the earth contradicts Daniel's vision of them coming out of a storm-troubled sea; but no contradiction exists. The Hebrew prophets often used the sea to represent the ungodly nations of the earth (Isaiah 17:12-13; Jeremiah 6:23; Revelation 13:1; 17:1). They are earthy in origin and character in contrast to that which is heavenly. While earthly kingdoms may have their day in the sun, it is heaven's kingdom that shall ultimately rule on the earth. The kingdom will belong to the "saints" (literally the "holy ones"). While angels were referred to as "holy ones" (Job 15:15; Psalm 89:5, 7; Daniel 4:13, 17, 23), God's design has always been for all His people to be known for holiness. Israel was called to be a holy nation (Numbers 15:40; Deuteronomy 7:6). The term "saint" may be applied to individual Jewish believers (Psalm 16:3; 34:9), to Christians (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 6:2), or to the tribulation faithful (Revelation 13:7). In the kingdom of heaven, there is an intimate connection between the Most High God (the Holy One) and His people (the holy ones). When the Son of Man establishes His kingdom on earth, all God's people will reign with Him as heirs of the kingdom (Romans 8:17; Revelation 2:26-27; 20:4-6).

Application and Meditation:

Like Daniel, other OT prophets struggled in their understanding of God's Word. Reflecting on this Peter writes, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you: ¹¹ Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:10-11). When Daniel was troubled, he asked an angel for clarity of interpretation. Today, the believer has the privilege of asking the Holy Spirit to help in understanding His Word (1 John 2:27). We may not hear an audible voice, but the same God who breathed out Scripture has chosen to take up residence within a believer's heart. If we but ask, He stands ready to enlighten a believer's understanding and to enable a believer's living.