

The Companion of the Way

by

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CHAPTER NINE

THE LIGHT OF EVENING (Daniel 10) - Daniel

I. THE SETTING -- THE UNBLEMISHED YEARS

The story of Daniel is given to us in Scripture in a series of character studies exquisitely drawn. These begin with a youth standing with three companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, at the crossroads of life, and making choice of the path of the will of GOD irrespective of earthly loss (chap. 1). The next three scenes show us the interpreter of dreams and of hard sentences standing before the monarchs of Babylon (chaps. 2, 4-5). Whether as a young man before Nebuchadnezzar, unfolding to him "**what shall be in the latter days**," or in the vigor of settled manhood, telling him of that which will humble his pride, or as an old man pronouncing Belshazzar's doom, Daniel exemplifies the words of the psalmist that "**the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him**" (Psalm 25:14).

The closing glimpses of Daniel remind us that the righteous "**bring forth fruit in old age**" (Psalm 92:14). In his early years, he will have no compromise with idolatry; in the ripeness of age he fears not to kneel and make his prayer to the living GOD alone. In the royal palace Darius the king spends a miserable and sleepless night; in the lion's den Daniel the Hebrew is at rest in the protecting care of GOD (Chap. 6). Again, he appears as the intercessor, who with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes confesses the sins of his people, seeks the mercies of GOD for them, and is answered "**about the time of the evening oblation**" with the visit of Gabriel and the greeting, "**Thou art greatly beloved**" (chap. 9). Finally, his yearnings for his people are rewarded by the vision which crowns his days, wherein his eyes beheld the glory of the Lord.

Daniel, like Joseph, the earlier revealer of secrets, exhibited a blameless life. Like him, also, he knew the desolation of being torn in youth from the ties of home and of being a prisoner in a strange land. Both men stood scatheless in temptation and attained to high office in a foreign court. They knew the testing of hatred and the subtler testing of high honor, but neither could be reproached with any sin. Nothing was able to turn them from the steadfastness of their ways or rob them of their insight into the purposes of GOD for the ultimate blessing of their people. Thus

they came to the end of the journey, full of days, and full of honor.

As the sun of his life began to set, a greater Sun rose before Daniel's sight. Throughout the events that crowded his memory there had been manifested the power and faithfulness of GOD. he had walked *alone and yet not alone*. Behind the varied scenes of his path the Lord had stood, leading His servant on from strength to strength and ever appreciating the constancy and fidelity of his testimony. As the Lord had promised in Isaiah's day, so He was to Daniel. "**Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, . . . even to your old age I am he; and even I will carry, and I will deliver you**" (Isaiah 46:3-4). Far from failing His aged servant, He drew even closer to him, till His presence was revealed in surpassing splendor. He had given to Daniel many unfoldings of things to come, but to the last of these He added that which excelled them all, the unveiling of His own majesty.

II. THE REVELATION -- SURPASSING GLORY

"In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; . . . In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled" (Daniel 10:1-3). Daniel had lived till the decree of Cyrus had enabled Zerubbabel and his company to return from Babylon to Jerusalem. GOD had kept His word by the mouth of Jeremiah; He had stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to make the necessary decree and had stirred the returning exiles to lay the foundation of His house at Jerusalem. But Daniel had been shown that beyond the commandment for the rebuilding of the city there would be troublous times, that MESSIAH the Prince would come and be cut off, and that the utmost desolation would befall the city. His exercise concerning Israel deepened till he spent three whole weeks in mourning and fasting. He saw the path of sorrow that lay ahead of Israel, and for their sakes he chastened himself before GOD.

"And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude" (Daniel 10:4-6). In its details the vision bears close likeness to that given to John in Patmos. The golden girdle, the radiant face, the blazing eyes, the feet like unto gleaming brass, and the voice of incomparable fullness tell of the same glorious person in both scenes. In either case, the sight presented was one of *surpassing grandeur*. That the Lord's presentation of Himself to Daniel in appearance as a man, though in excelling brightness, should remind so much of that to John after His ascension and glorification in actual manhood, shows the underlying unity of all His unveilings of Himself. While some of His appearings in the Old Testament anticipated the lowly grace of the days of His flesh, the appearance vouchsafed to Daniel pointed forward to His revelation to earth in the glory of His kingdom.

The linen garment, in accordance with the frequent usage of Scripture, indicated the purity of all His ways. He is "**the Holy One and the Just**" (Acts 3:14). The girt loins proclaimed His ministry as the mighty One, the omnipotent Toiler, whose activities are beautiful with the excellence of Deity, even as the girdle with its fine gold. The body like to the beryl, with its

amber light, the face with its intense brilliance, and the eyes as lamps of fire, all told of One who is the brightness of GOD's glory. **"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all"** (I John 1:5); and that pure light streams forth unchanged and undiminished in the person of the Son. In the presence of that light nothing is hidden; from the gaze of those all-seeing eyes nothing can be concealed. **"O Lord,"** said the psalmist, **"thou hast searched me, and known me . . . If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee"** (Psalm 139:1, 11-12). Deep as was the perplexity of Daniel as he considered his people's welfare, all their way was understood by the Lord. No bewilderment lay upon that omniscient mind. The end was sure. In spite of Israel's failure, their conflict would end in peace, and the night of sorrow, in cloudless day.

"And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision: but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength" (Daniel 10:7-8). Upon the prophet's companions there came such a sense of fear that they trembled and fled. GOD was in the place, though they knew it not. There had been a day when **"the earth shook . . . at the presence of God"**; how much more should puny men tremble in such a circumstance? But to Daniel the presence was revealed, and he sank to the ground in utter weakness. All his strength was gone. Nothing was left of the personal vigour, the nobility of manhood, which had characterized him. There was only the corruption, the ruin of our poor race.

"Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground" (Daniel 10:9). So overpowered was he by the vision, and by the voice of the Lord, that he lay prostrate, unable to act and unable to think until strength was ministered to him by the touch of an angel's hand. That voice was more than mortal frame could bear, and Daniel lay insensible on the ground. Nor yet could he know the bliss of eternity and exult in the voice like the voice of a multitude -- the voice of Him in whose majestic utterance would be blended the countless expressions of His heart toward each of His redeemed.

III. THE BLESSING -- THE BELOVED

The love with which the Lord looked on His servant by the river Hiddekel was not less than that with which He would look on him in the better country -- the hungry. So the angel was sent to rouse him from his sleep, and to speak of that true love. To his aroused consciousness there came the words of tender greeting, **"Daniel, a man greatly beloved."** Such was the mind of Heaven; such was *the Lord's appraisal* of His aged servant. All his path had been watched with unremitting care, all his exercise had been valued with unerring wisdom, and all his years had been compassed with unceasing love. Dear to the Lord was that long life of purity and honor, of witness and devotion. Some time before, in the first year of Darius, Daniel had been saluted as the **"greatly beloved"** (Daniel (9:23), but now his life must be crowned by this token of divine approval.

Roused by this greeting, Daniel stood trembling, to be told that from the first day of his mourning his words had been heard. They had been words which drew forth the succor of

Heaven's throne, and the messenger had been sent to him to answer his heart's longing. When Daniel spoke to the angel of the effect of the vision upon him, he was further strengthened, and the message was repeated and amplified. "**O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong**" (Daniel 10:19). As in the case of John in Patmos, the sight of the glory was followed by the words of comfort, "**fear not.**" There was no cloud between the Lord and His faithful servant. For long years they had walked together, and the vision, so overwhelming in itself, was granted, not because of shortcoming on Daniel's part, but because the unseen FRIEND of the way would give *full answer* to the desire of Daniel's heart for the welfare of his people. The purposes of GOD would not fail. The ministry of intercession is in the current of the mind of GOD, and the prophet's unselfish prayer for the sinful nation brought the approval manifested in the vision. With such an almighty One overruling in the affairs of men, nought would hinder the fulfillment of every promise concerning Israel.

Once more the "**man clothed in linen**" is before us in this scene by Hiddekel. "**And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished**" (Daniel 12:7). The portrait of the Lord in this passage is paralleled by that in Revelation 10, when He appears as a mighty angel, yet in such majesty as only the occupant of the heavenly throne could bear. In both passages is declared His solemn oath that to all the sorrow of those dread days of Jacob's trouble there shall be an end. Dark will be the night, but the coming in glory of the King of Israel, the King of Kings, the King in His beauty, will bring the longed-for day.

Daniel's prayer was answered, his work was done, and his path was complete. The record ceases, but without mention of the withdrawing of the presence. Daniel is last seen in the wonder of its revelation. Long since he has left the scenes of his toil, and now he is at home with the Lord. Soon, not in mortal weakness, but robed in the dignity and power of the resurrection body, he shall walk with the Lord and rejoice evermore in communion face to face. The experience vouchsafed to him in his last years shall be his perpetual portion. Forever beloved, he shall gaze without fear on that transcendent face, and listen to the music of that exelling voice.

~ end of chapter 9 ~