



## The Victory is Coming Soon!

*Daniel 12:1-3*

*At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.*

In Jesus' name, dear brothers and sisters who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ,

This past week in our fourth grade classroom there was a discussion about why there is trouble in the world. Why doesn't God just take away sickness or pain from a family member? Why doesn't God just end war? Why does he allow someone we love to die?

It isn't just fourth graders who struggle. We claim to worship a God who is able to do all things. He is the creator of heaven and earth. We claim to worship a God who loves us and has adopted us as his children. Then why isn't it obvious by some special treatment that we receive that we are his children?

The appointed text for this Sunday gives us a chance to examine that question. Why is there so much trouble in the world for Christians? Why aren't we victorious? The truth is that **The Victory is Coming Soon**. To help us look forward to that victory lets consider:

- 1. The Battle – both the one that we can see and the one that we can't see, and**
- 2. The Victors – both the ones that we can't see and those that we will see.**

If you have recently read Daniel 11, you know that it is a confusing chapter. Daniel is given a vision of the future. The world power of Daniel's day, about 530 B.C., is Persia (present Iran). He foresees that 200 years later, about 330 B.C., the Greek empire under Alexander the Great is going to destroy the Persian Empire. But Alexander the Great died in his early thirties, so his great empire was parceled out to four of his generals. They each founded their own kingdom. The two that are the focus of the rest of Daniel 11 is the king of the North, the Seleucid Empire centered in modern Syria and Lebanon, and the king of the South, the Ptolemies of Egypt.

There is so much detail in Daniel 11 that it is hard to keep straight. But what I want you to recognize is that God was using each of these kingdoms, the Seleucids to the north and the Ptolemies to the south, like a vise: in between was "the Beautiful Land," the land of Israel. These centuries of warfare between these two empires would devastate the Holy Land.

His [the king of the North] armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.

Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them. Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time (Daniel 11:31-35).

The battle that the Israelites experienced was a terrifying one. Not only the horror of war, but the almost irresistible temptation to compromise their faith because of persecution. Even many of the “wise,” the believers, would stumble because of the violence that was threatening them. And as you read on chapter 11, it only gets worse. It looks like the believers will surely be wiped off the face of the earth.

This is the battle that we can see. We can see similar battles yet to this day. Sometimes they are real battles with bullets and guns and bombs. How the Christians in places like Iraq or Indonesia, North Korea or communist China must wonder, “Where is this loving and powerful God? Why do these governments have so much power to torment and attack us?”

There are the battles that we see in our own nation. Our children are taught in public schools that we have evolved from animals and not created in the image of God. If it were not for a very few pro-life Democrats in the House of Representatives, the health overhaul bill passed by the House would have included the funding of the killing of the unborn. Our youth are bombarded with temptations to experiment with drugs and alcohol, and once addicted, find it nearly impossible to overcome. Our attitudes toward sex are being attacked – so that sex becomes a casual encounter in a 30 or 60 minute TV program with no long-term consequences. Recently I read that Christian divorced men and women are just as likely to live with another partner as the unchristian world around them. Even though we are told to not give up meeting together in worship, our society has so filled our calendars that “regular” worship is redefined as once-per-month worship. And our children are watching and learning that we really don’t believe Jesus when he says, “Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

These are the battles that we see. And we are losing these battles over and over. Not just in society in general. They are being lost in our individual lives. We who should be known as “the wise,” those who have known Jesus since our youth, are being led astray by the battle going on around us.

That’s the battle that we can see. But Daniel was given the privilege of seeing into the battle that we cannot see. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:12 tells us of this battle: “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Daniel also saw this otherwise unseen battle for our souls.

The vision begins in Daniel 10 where “a man” appears to Daniel.

I looked and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude (Daniel 10:5-6).

Daniel isn't told who this man is, but as we look at other visions in the Bible it becomes clear. The apostle John saw a similar vision:

Among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters (Revelation 1:13-15).

The descriptions are very similar – the gold belt, the brightness of his face, his blazing eyes, his glowing legs and feet, his thunderous voice. The next part of John's vision in Revelation makes it clear who this is: "I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever" (Revelation 1:17,18).

In that vision in Daniel 10, the Son of God himself appeared to Daniel in his heavenly glory.

He goes on describe the spiritual battle going on behind the scenes.

The prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia... Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.) (Daniel 10:13, 20, 21)

This is part of that spiritual battle that is going on the heavens that is also depicted in Revelation 12:7-9:

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Friends, we can't see this battle in the spirit world. But by eyes of faith we see that the angels, those who are battling for us are victorious. God is with them. And God is able to use what appears to be Satan's victories in our lives to squeeze us so that we see our own weakness and sin and cling to his power.

Now here is some more bad news. It is only going to get worse as the last day draws nearer. Jesus warned that it would get so bad, that if it were possible, even the elect, God's chosen ones, would be deceived and lose their place in heaven (Matthew 24:24).

But friends, it is not possible that the elect be lost!

Look at Daniel 12:1

“At that time” – just when it seems that the church and we as individual believers are never going to be able to persevere until the end of the world, just when it is bleakest...

“Michael, the great prince who protects your people,” – Michael, the only archangel mentioned in the Bible (Jude 9), this powerful leader of God’s angel armies is here to protect us. God sends him to keep the jaws of the vise of destruction from crushing in on us.

“Michael will arise.” The Lord will send this powerful archangel to announce the coming of the Lord Jesus. “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

“At that time” – just when things look bleakest for God’s church and for each of us, just in the nick of time, “everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.”

That’s the key to this victory isn’t it! Is my name found written in the book of life? Am I one of those whom God has chosen before creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4)? Where do you turn to know that your name is written there? You won’t find a tattoo on our body that guarantees it. You won’t find your name written in the margins of a Bible that guarantee it. You can’t see it. You can only know it by faith. You look at God’s saving message, “God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), That means he wants you. “Jesus is the anointing sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours but for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). You are part of the world. Jesus paid for your sins. “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

You see, right now you can’t see yourself as a victor. That’s the way God wants it to be. He has hidden your victory in Christ. It won’t be evident until Jesus comes back. So that makes us constantly look away from ourselves – we have certainly shown that we don’t have the strength to change ourselves and protect ourselves in this life or keep ourselves from death. We look only to the cross—that is my only guarantee. Jesus died for sinners. I am a sinner. He died for me. Jesus overcame my sin and my death by rising from the dead. That’s my only guarantee that I’m going to overcome sin and death.

But Daniel in this vision assures us that the victors will clearly be seen.

“Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life; others to shame and everlasting contempt.”

On the last day, everyone in their graves will rise, both believers and unbelievers. Jesus said, “A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to lives, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:28,29). Every soul will be reunited with his or her body. But not everyone will enjoy that resurrection. Those who have given in to this battle, who have decided that the battle was too hard and not worth fighting, those who chose to make peace with the temptations of this world so that they would not be put to shame by this world – well they will suffer everlasting shame and contempt. Isaiah says it in very graphic terms: “Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched” (Isaiah 66:24 and Mark 9:48).

But those who are victorious, those who are wise, even though we have to admit that under the pressure of the vise of persecution and temptation, we have often been cracked, we look only to Christ as the cause of our salvation. The very fact that we see our falls into sin is used by the Holy Spirit to make us focus all the more and only on Christ. I can't save myself. But Christ can.

Yes, we who are wise, will awake to everlasting life. We will shine like the brightness of the heavens. Our lowly bodies of this existence will be changed to be like Jesus' glorious body (Philippians 3:20). And those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Isn't that an encouragement as we are going through this horrible battle here on earth? For example I know a man who battled a heroin addiction. He deals with the powerful urge to go back to using drugs.

But it is just when the fight is fierce, the warfare strong, that steals on the ear the distant triumph song. The victory is ours. See it by faith. We shall rise with glorified bodies. And in the midst of the battle is just when people are watching us most closely. In the midst of the battle, when it is the most difficult in our lives, the Lord can use us to lead many to righteousness.

What joy is ours to look forward to that last great day, when we arise with glorified bodies and rejoice as we see that the Lord used our trials and troubles to display his saving glory, and many are there with us because they came to know Jesus through us.

Friends, no battle is easy. The battle we can see is terrifying. We fall over and over again. But take heart, there is a battle that you can not see. Michael and his angels are doing battle with Satan and his evil angels. Satan does not have free reign over you. Even now in Christ you are victorious. He has chosen you. "I know my sheep and I give them eternal life, and no one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28). In his hand you are safe! In Christ you are victorious. It is a victory you can only see now by faith. But it is a victory that you will see clearly when Jesus returns. You are triumphant. Amen.

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