

Land Forces, Air Forces, Spirit Forces

'A military cargo plane, flying over a populated area, suddenly loses power and starts to nose down. The pilot tries to pull up, but with all their cargo, the plane is too heavy. So he yells to the soldiers in back to throw things out to make the plane lighter. They throw out a pistol. "Throw out more!" shouts the pilot. So they throw out a rifle. "More!" he cries again. They heave out a missile, and the pilot regains control. He pulls out of the dive and lands safely at an airport. They get into a jeep and drive off. Pretty soon they meet a boy on the [roadside] who's crying. They ask him why he's crying and he says "A pistol hit me on the head!" They drive more and meet another boy who's crying even harder. Again they ask why and the boy says, "A rifle hit me on the head!" They apologize and keep driving. They meet a boy on the sidewalk who's laughing hysterically. They ask him, "Kid, what's so funny?" The boy replies, "I sneezed and a house blew up!"

Only a small boy could think that his sneeze caused a house to blow up! What he wasn't aware of was the missile that fell from a low-flying plane that hit that house and blew it up. And that very kind of scenario aptly describes our own lives on earth. For the vast majority of our lives, we live a totally materialistic existence. But as I've said many a time, what we perceive with our basic five

senses is but a caricature of the physical world we live in. There is far more to this physical world than what is readily apparent. Far beyond this physical world are the even greater realities that actually provide the “foundation” on which the physical world maintains its own existence. Even Hebrews 8:4-5 imply this: ‘If [Christ Jesus] were here on earth, He would not even be a priest, since there already are priests who offer the gifts required by the law. They serve in a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven. For when Moses was getting ready to build the Tabernacle, God gave him this warning: “Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain”.’ So we know from this that the glorious Temple in Jerusalem was at best a mere “shadow” of the reality that already exists, and continues to exist in Heaven. Since we humans, living in our physical bodies, normally can not see, can not perceive, with our physical senses, even Heaven, we take these truths on faith. They defy explanation, based as they are on realities beyond our physical realm.

There are multiple spiritual realms that exist alongside of, or within, our physical world. Some might call them other dimensions, or in many trending superhero movies these days, other universes, “the multiverse”, that often, somehow inhabit the same “space”, or space-time continuum, as our own. The best, supposedly scientific, explanations are ultimately vain and serve more to distract us from the salient truths of existence than to help

us live abundantly and rightly, into the purposes for which our Creator designed us. But what we do need to know, can be discerned through diligent study of the Holy Bible, which is God's Word written down in physical form. And is this not what we are all supposed to be doing, all the time? That is, diligently studying the Bible? Yet, most Christians rarely open the Bible on their own, pretending that just hearing the Scripture lessons and a sermon on Sundays is enough. None of you are like that, are you? For these same Scriptures command us, not suggest, not ask, but command us in II Timothy 2:15: "Study and do your best to present yourself to God approved, a workman [tested by trial] who has no reason to be ashamed, accurately handling and skillfully teaching the word of truth" (AMP). You don't have any reason to be ashamed, right?

As we saw the last few weeks, Daniel diligently studied the Bible, for he had read Jeremiah and knew for sure that the 70 years of exile were soon coming to an end. We also know how devout and committed he was to God by his refusal to bow down to pagan statues and pray to idols. Despite national laws passed requiring praying to the king, he did not comply. Not unlike today's vaccine mandates, forced use of certain pronouns and not others, coerced promotion of aberrant, abominable lifestyles, compelled taxes to pay for others' sex-change surgeries and surgical killing of preborn and just-born baby humans, Daniel also never complied with his government's ungodly dictates. Nor

should we. Even if means jail time. Because unless someone stands up, evil will triumph. It may take time, and cost great sacrifices, but good, that is, God will undoubtedly triumph in the end.

Daniel's love of God did not go unnoticed by the Lord. Notice what the archangel Gabriel says to him, right here in chapter ten, not once but twice, and earlier in chapter nine as well. Gabriel tells Daniel that he is "very precious", or "highly esteemed" by God. And because of Daniel's constant devotion, even when it was illegal and could have resulted in jail time, or summary execution, and Daniel's unfailing daily prayers and fastings to draw nearer to God, his humbling himself before God, the Lord entrusted him with the very plans God had ordained for the present and the future.

Here in chapter ten, Daniel is again visited by the archangel Gabriel. But this time, this final vision of the archangel is the most clear and vivid of all. Daniel not only speaks of the angel as looking like a man, but describes him in great detail. The details are strikingly similar to the description that the Apostle John wrote in the opening chapter of the Book of Revelation of the Risen and Eternal Lord Jesus. So similar is it that many commentators think that Daniel didn't see Gabriel, but rather the pre-incarnate Christ Himself. This can not be because just a few verses later, the manlike angel speaks of being detained by the spirit-prince of Persia. The Son of God, even before taking on human flesh as Christ Jesus, was, is and is forever God. And nothing can "de-

tain” God. No, this vision was of Gabriel, but of Gabriel in his full, ceremonial “dress” uniform, as it were. When one thinks about it, the more Christlike any of God’s creatures become, the more they take on the appearance of Christ. Isn’t this right? Why is it that husbands and wives who live decades upon decades with each other begin to look like each other when they’ve grown old? Have you never heard comments like that? I’ve come across multiple career missionary couples who have identical blood pressure readings, mannerisms, who not only look, but sound alike!

But more important than Gabriel appearing in his full “regalia”, as it were, is what the archangel tells Daniel. From his words, we are taught that there is an entire, invisible to most, spiritual dimension corresponding to everything physical we can see and touch. Over major nations and people groups, evil spirit princes are assigned by the devil. And these “principalities” are tasked with furthering satan’s devilish agenda. Daniel is told the principality over Persia successfully resisted Gabriel for three weeks! Until, in His perfect providence, God dispatched the archangel Michael to come to Gabriel’s aid. With Michael engaging the spirit prince of Persia, Gabriel was then able to complete his assignment to answer Daniel’s prayers for understanding.

Indeed, similar to good angels, these evil spirits also vary in power and authority. Records from missionaries working with Tibetan Buddhist monks in the 1930s tell of the monks reporting that a whole horde of the spirits that they worshipped had sudden-

ly, en masse, took leave of Tibet and flew to Nazi Germany in the early days of the Third Reich. For when people reject God, they automatically open themselves up to the influence of evil spirits, the principalities, powers, rulers and authorities, as their hierarchical ranks are named in Ephesians 6:12. Indeed, there are a host of such evil spirits deployed to Washington, D.C., and have been for almost a century. As more and more politicians have sinned, falling under the sway of the lure of money and power, these evil spirits have gained increasing influence and power. Only in recent years has their presence become increasingly evident. But they are no match for God's angels when God's people pray. That's us. When we pray, God strengthens them so they can strengthen us. For they are "ministering spirits", as Hebrews 1:14. As Gabriel here touches and strengthens Daniel, as another angel strengthened Christ Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, angels are here to strengthen us when we need it.

And yes, they are strengthening the believers in Afghanistan, the martyrs in Nigeria, the faithful in North Korea, Haiti, in all the countries we'll be focussing on in prayer on this annual International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Indeed, not just they, but all followers of Christ are comforted and encouraged by our Lord's words in the Beatitudes, which we just read. Thus all who are persecuted, including us, look eagerly to the greater, permanent reality of everlasting life in the very bosom of Him Who created all life to being with. So love all people, but hate all evil.

