

I. INTRODUCTION – NEW YEAR, NEW WINESKIN FOR CFG – 2023

- A. As we step into 2023, it is increasingly clear that Jesus is taking his church into a dramatic transition as he prepares for his return. This transition may take one or two decades to complete.
- B. Jesus is preparing to engage the “Battle for Canada” (not the ministry but events lead by His direct activity) and by the time he is done the Canadian church will not look the same nor be the same. The preamble to this battle was COVID and the financial crisis it spawned.
- C. CFG can find its present story in the narratives of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and several of the Post-exilic Restoration Prophets (Haggai, Habbakuk, Zechariah, Amos, etc).
- D. We would do well to pay attention to the narratives and prophecies of the post-exilic restoration period as we are embarking on such a trajectory.
 - 1. Daniel’s Intercession for the release of God’s people from captivity, and the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple. – Dan. 9-10
 - 2. King Cyrus decrees the release of God’s people 3 years later. Sends Zerubabel, Joshua, eventually Ezra, Nehemiah to restore the city and temple.
 - 3. Significant spiritual warfare and pressure is applied to the exiles as they return home to start the task of rebuilding and restoring Jerusalem and the temple.
 - 4. God sends the restoration prophets to inspire the people to complete the task of rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple. God sends Haggai, Zechariah, to help rebuild and restore.

II. FOUR-FOLD STRENGTHENING FOR THE END OF THE AGE REVELATION

- A. As we begin 2023, I want us to set our discipleship in Christ based on two events; one past (The Cross of Christ) and one future (The 2nd Coming of Jesus). Both of these events have huge implications for our lives as disciples of Jesus at the present moment. To do this is part of thinking and living “apostolically”.
 - 1. “Apostolically” in this case means “living as called out, sent ones disciplined by Christ”
- B. Daniel and his lifestyle is a template for us in this season as we live in light of the Cross preparing for God’s end-times purposes in his 2nd Coming.
- C. There are four realities that are vital for Daniel to be strengthened in the midst of the revelations he has seen. Four realities will strengthen his heart and move him beyond fear and offense into fervent sustained love and understanding.
 - 1. Daniel saw good and evil crescendo with such glory and such wickedness that it will produce the conflict of the ages and will be the precise context for the purifying of the saints, the judgment of the wicked, the salvation of Israel, and the return of the Son.

- D. Before Daniel can move beyond fear and beyond accusation, he must first go through a four-fold strengthening that Daniel 10 reveals to us.
1. ***prayer and fasting*** – This is Daniel’s only contribution.
 2. ***divine strengthening by angels*** – we are dependent on God’s help.
 3. ***the reception of divine love*** – Daniel must anchor his life to what God says to him not men.
 4. ***divine understanding*** – God gives his perspective that empowers us with grace.
- E. Daniel 10 is the preparation of Daniel for the reception of the revelation in chapters 11 & 12. If Daniel needed this four-fold strengthening to receive the vision, how much more will we need the strengthening to live through the vision.
- F. Fasting and Prayer
1. The first act that brings strengthening can only be chosen by Daniel through voluntary weakness. This seems like a contradiction. How can one be strengthened through weakness? In an hour when God is reducing the strength of the nations to nothing, fasting and prayer sets our hearts towards understanding in a posture of humility. This guards us from offense. When we do not understand God’s actions and are left distressed, the flesh moves us to rise up in offense and ask, “How can God do this? I thought you were just? Why do you get to decide? Why do you lead the way you do? It is much easier to accuse God from a place of strength. Whereas, fasting and prayer sets us in a place of voluntary weakness where we cast ourselves upon God alone. We may not fully understand, but we refuse to accuse. Rather, we seek for understanding in the context of worship.
 2. We alone must initiate the first strengthening, and it is the key to receiving the other three, of which only God can provide. Fasting and Prayer is the doorway and the escort into the final three strengthenings.
 3. Hear Jesus’ last words of the Olivet Discourse in Mark 13. We find his pastoral exhortations necessary to walk victorious at the end of the age scenario.

Mark 13:32-37 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. 34 It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. 35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming -- in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning -- 36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

4. Pray and Fasting while physically weakening one's body, expands the heart to receive God's revelation and breaks off spiritual dullness. In fasting and prayer the spirit is sharpened and focused on the things of God. A sensitivity to the things of God arises and lifts the soul into God. Here are two examples of this from Jesus.
- G. Divine Strengthening by the angels of God
1. Three times Daniel is touched by an angel to receive strength from the Lord (vs. 10, 16, 18)
- H. The Reception of Divine Love – greatly beloved
1. Twice Daniel is told by the angel of his identity before the Lord. More is going on here than addressing Daniel by a title. Daniel is receiving supernatural strength through the revelation of his belovedness/preciousness before God.
 2. Examples of the strengthening of Jesus through the revelation of His Belovedness. At the greatest times of spiritual warfare in Jesus' ministry the Father strengthens Him with His own voice speaking of Jesus' belovedness.
 - a. Temptation. Matt 3:16-4:1 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
 - b. Temptation. Matt 17:5-8 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" 6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. 7 But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid."
 - c. John 15:9-10 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.
 - d. John 17:22-23 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.
 - e. John 17:24-26 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. 26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." NKJV

- f. Rom 8:31-39 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- g. 1 John 4:17-19 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 We love Him because He first loved us.

I. Divine Understanding

1. The angel stresses twice that he has come for this very purpose. Understanding helps us endure the fiery trials. It guards our hearts from offense, deception, and fear.

Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, And the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD is His treasure. (Isa 33:6)

2. Knowing Beforehand

- a. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants -- things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, (Rev 1:1)
- b. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 23 But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand. (Mark 13:22-23)
- c. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:17-18)

- J. The nature of prophecy in the Bible teaches us clearly that God reveals specific warnings concerning His coming judgments in order to prepare His people and bring salvation to the multitude of unbelievers. **Every major biblical calamity was prophesied with detailed accuracy to the generation it affected.**

Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. 8 A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy? (Amos 3:7-8)

III. THE PURPOSES OF THIS FAST

A. ***To personally encounter the Lord.*** As He does His work *in us*, He works more *through us*. We are fasting to personally encounter God and His love and for a renewal in our spiritual life.

³***I set my face toward the Lord God...by prayer... (Dan. 9:3)***

¹²***“You set your heart...to humble yourself before your God...” (Dan. 10:12)***

1. To confess and renounce our compromises and recommit our life to fully obey Jesus.

²⁰***I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin... (Dan. 9:20)***

¹⁹***“Repent...that times of refreshing may come from God’s presence...” (Acts 3:19)***

2. To receive insight into God’s love—Daniel gained understanding that he was beloved.

¹¹***He said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you”... ¹⁸Then again...¹⁹he said, “O man greatly beloved, fear not!” (Dan. 10:11, 19)***

B. ***To pray for a breakthrough for our families, churches, and nation.*** Many of the principles employed in praying for a breakthrough for Jerusalem can be applied in praying for others.

1. Angels are released through prayer with fasting for personal and national issues.

¹²***“Your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.” (Dan. 10:12)***

²³***“At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come...” (Dan. 9:23)***

2. We are crying out for a greater release of power for healing, and to see God’s power break in upon our families and upon national and international crises.

²¹***“This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” (Mt. 17:21)***

3. We are crying out for a greater release in financial provision for God’s kingdom purposes through CFG.

The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. Dan. 9:25d

C. ***To remember our corporate and individual prophetic history.*** Daniel was reading the scrolls of Jeremiah in Daniel 9 when the Spirit of God revealed to him that the 70-year period of captivity in Babylon was nearly finished. Commentators consider that the events of Daniel 9 took place in the 67th year of Judah’s captivity in Babylon. Daniel’s response to *prophetic timing* was to seek the Lord with an increased intentionality through prayer and fasting.

1. It is important for God’s people to remember the promises God has made in order to inspire and empower faith and hope.

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—² in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years [timing] specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. ³ Then I set my face [gave my attention – NASB] toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. (Dan. 9:1-3)

2. Daniel was a student of the Word of God and the prophetic seasons of his people.

³² ... *the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do... (1 Chron. 12:32)*

3. Often we imagine that the promises of the Lord will simply happen because someone prophesied they would. There is a temptation to *sit back* and *passively* wait. This is the wrong mindset. In reality, the prophetic messages are given so that the people of God don't sit back passively in the delay, but rather, actively engage with all *faith* and *hope*.

D. ***Seeking greater understanding*** of God's heart and end-time plan. The four visions in Daniel give insight into God's plan for Israel and for transitioning the earth to the age to come.

²²***"O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand." (Dan. 9:22)***