

THE KINGDOM VISION SPECIAL REPORT

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Chariots over Persia: The Prince of Persia?

On 20th September a large and bright UFO was recorded over the city of Tehran at 7:20 in the evening. Daniel in scripture describes the battle of the Prince of Persia an angelic being who rules Persia. Is he making his presence known in the sky's of Tehran before the coming battle?



On the evening of 20 September 2026, over the city of Tehran, shortly after half past seven a silent cluster of lights. Blue, white, green, red, and violet points hung in a shallow arc against the cloud.. Within hours the video of that strange craft in the sky had crossed the border of the Iranian internet and entered the wider argument the world now conducts about unidentified objects in the sky. Further clips were claimed from Mashhad the same night. No Iranian aviation or defence authority has named the lights. No independent measurement has been published. Analysts have offered ordinary causes. A capital whose air has been fought over is a poor laboratory, and a fourteen-second video is a poor instrument.

The heavens over Persia have never been empty in the witness of Scripture. Daniel was told that a prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood a heavenly messenger for twenty-one days, and that the fight would resume when the message had been delivered. The lights of 20 September, whatever their proximate cause, fell almost fifty years to the day after the best-

documented aerial incident in Iranian military history: the night of 19 September 1976, when controllers at Mehrabad reported a brilliant object and two Imperial Iranian Air Force F-4 Phantoms were scrambled. A United States Defense Intelligence Agency evaluation of that night was never closed. Between a disputed phone video and an unresolved intercept lies a capital whose air has been contested, since the days of Cyrus.

I take the reports seriously about UFO's without proclaiming every light in the sky a UFO. I believe four things the church has reason to say. Unexplained aerial phenomena are not a modern invention. Scripture already names fiery horses, chariots, and wheels, and the historians of Jerusalem's fall recorded armies in the clouds. Daniel locates a territorial spiritual prince over Persia, and the present hour over Iran is a fitting moment to reread that chapter as a visual stirring of a claim already filed. Ezekiel's prince of Tyre and Isaiah's lament over the morning star give the church a grammar for a rebellious heavenly ruler who weakens nations and is at last exposed to the astonishment of the earth. And the age now talking of disclosure is the age Paul warned would be handed a strong delusion, in which the rulers of the darkness of this world are unmasked, and the saints overcome them not by curiosity but by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.

I. A long memory in the heavens

The modern habit is to treat the unidentified object as a twentieth-century problem, born with radar and the Cold War. The older habit of the church is to notice that men have been looking up, and naming what they could not classify, for as long as they have kept records. The forms change with the vocabulary of the age. A shepherd says horses. A prophet says wheels. A priest in the temple says a multitude departing. A Roman historian says hosts joining battle in the skies. A video in Tehran says lights without sound.

Scripture is not embarrassed by an inhabited heaven. When the servant of Elisha rose early at Dothan and saw the Syrian host compassing the city with horses and chariots, he cried the cry of every generation that can see only the lower army. Alas, my master, how shall we do? The prophet did not deny the Syrian horses. He denied that they were the only horses on the field.

Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. — 2 Kings 6:16–17

The chariots were not a metaphor introduced after the fact to soothe a frightened aide. They were the prior reality, hidden until sight was given. The Bible's first lesson about aerial wonders is not that every light is an angel. It is that the visible order is not the whole order, and that the unseen host is mustered around the servants of the Lord before the servant can see it. The Syrians came with horses. Heaven had already come with horses. The difference was allegiance, and the prayer that opened the difference was not a technique for contact. It was a request for true sight in the presence of a true enemy.

Elijah's departure is told in the same idiom. As the two prophets walked and talked, a chariot of fire and horses of fire parted them, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven (2 Kings 2:11).

The psalmist counts the chariots without embarrassment: ***the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, and the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place*** (Psalm 68:17).

Zechariah sees four chariots come out from between two mountains of brass, spirits of the heavens sent to walk to and fro through the earth, and is told that those which go toward the north country have quieted the Spirit of the Lord in the north (Zechariah 6:1–8). The chariots are not ornaments. They are dispatched. They have directions. They have errands. A church that sings these texts on Sunday and then insists, on Monday, that the sky is administratively empty, has not yet let the scripture teach her cosmology.

Ezekiel, a priest by the river Chebar in the land of the Chaldeans, is given the most elaborate aerial vision in the Old Testament. Living creatures with four faces. Wings joined to wings. Wheels within wheels, their rings full of eyes. A firmament above them, the colour of the crystal. And above the firmament the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it (Ezekiel 1:4–28). Whatever else the church makes of that chapter, she may not make of it a vacant sky. The glory of the God of Israel comes and goes in storm, brightness, and living motion. The creatures are attendants, not gods. The throne is occupied.

The ancient world outside the scripture history kept its own troubled history. Chroniclers from the Mediterranean to China noted battles in the air, shields in the night, and fires that moved against the wind. The church is not required to certify every medieval account. She is required to notice that the report is older than the camera, and that her own Scriptures had already supplied the governing names: horses, chariots, wheels, princes, and a Lord among them. When a generation that has forgotten those names meets a light it cannot class, it will invent a new religion to house it. The work of the Church, in such a season, is to hand back the older names before the new religion hardens.

A pastoral caution belongs here, and it will belong throughout. The opening of Elisha's servant's eyes is not an invitation to hunt signs. It is an answer to fear. The chariots of fire were already there in mercy before they were seen. Curiosity that wants a craft, a being, and a message, without the fear of the Lord, is not the sight Elisha prayed for. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God (1 John 4:1). The test is Christological. Every true unveiling confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and bows to the throne Ezekiel saw. A light that will not name that Lord is not a chariot of the holy host, however ancient the report or bright the lamp.

II. Armies in the clouds before the fall

The apostles' generation was not left without a historian's witness to aerial armies. Flavius Josephus, a priest of Jerusalem who crossed to Rome and wrote the Jewish War, set down the

portents that preceded the destruction of the city in AD 70. He is careful. He knows the story will be called a fable. He tells it anyway, because those who saw it told it, and because what followed was terrible enough to deserve such signals.

Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the one and twentieth day of the month Artemisius, a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. — Josephus, Jewish War 6.5.3, Whiston

The feast he has just mentioned is the season of unleavened bread. The day falls in the spring, in the year of portents before the revolt, commonly reckoned to AD 66, four years before Titus's legions finished the work. Josephus places the vision before the rebellion, not in the smoke of the siege itself. He is describing a sign in a still-functioning city: a gathering in the air while the markets were open and the temple service had not yet been interrupted by famine and fire. Readers sometimes compress the scene into the year 70, as if the chariots arrived with the Tenth Legion. The historian is more precise, and the precision matters. The aerial army was a warning ahead of the war, not a decoration of the victory. Judgment was signalled before it was executed. The cities were surrounded in the clouds before they were surrounded by Roman legions.

He does not stop at the chariots. A star resembling a sword stood over the city, and a comet held for a year. At the Passover season a light shone around the altar and the holy house for half an hour at the ninth hour of the night, so that it appeared to be day. At Pentecost the priests going by night into the inner court felt a quaking, heard a great noise, and then a sound as of a great multitude, saying, ***Let us remove hence***. Jesus the son of Ananus, a plebeian and a husbandman, walked the streets for seven years and five months crying a voice from the four winds against Jerusalem and the holy house, until a stone from a Roman engine struck him down in the siege and his last word was Woe. The aerial army is one sign in a cluster. Josephus reads the cluster as the withdrawal of divine protection and the approach of a destruction the city would not escape.

The Roman senator and historian Tacitus, writing in the Histories early in the second century, preserves the same memory from the Gentile side, and he is no friend to the Jews. There had been seen hosts joining battle in the skies, the fiery gleam of arms, the temple illuminated of a sudden by a fire from the clouds. The doors of the inner shrine were suddenly thrown open, and a voice of more than mortal tone was heard to cry that the gods were departing. At the same instant there was a mighty stir as of departure. Tacitus has compressed Josephus's separate occasions, and he has translated the departing presence into the plural gods of a Roman ear. He may have had Josephus open before him, or a briefing that depended on Josephus. The core is the same on both sides of the war. Before the city fell, witnesses said that armies had been seen contending in the air, and that a presence had left the house.

The church should handle this text as she handles any extra-biblical prodigy. Josephus is not canon. Tacitus is not canon. A report can be enlarged in the telling and still bear a true core, and a true core can be misread by the men who set it down. What the church may not do is pretend the report was never made, or smile it away as the superstition of a pre-scientific age. Our Lord had already stood over that same city and wept, because she knew not the time of her visitation. He had said that her enemies would cast a trench about her, and compass her round, and lay her even with the ground, and her children within her (Luke 19:43–44). He had spoken of powers of heaven shaken, and of men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth (Luke 21:26). When Josephus later described chariots in the clouds, he was not inventing a category unknown to Israel. He was writing, in the vocabulary of his priesthood and his war, what the prophets already knew how to see: that the contests of nations are accompanied, and sometimes preceded, by a muster the eye does not ordinarily catch.

Set the Tehran lights beside that memory and the proportion becomes clear. A phone video of coloured lights in the sky is not the Pentecost vision in the inner court. It is not required to be, in order to remind a church that Persia's sky has a biblical file, and that aerial signs in Scripture cluster around judgment, withdrawal, and war, not around entertainment. The useful question is not whether a single clip will survive a laboratory. The useful question is whether the God who opened a servant's eyes at Dothan, and who permitted a city to see armies before she fell, is again allowing the natural eye to see a conflict it cannot name. Josephus thought his readers would call the chariots a fable, and he told them anyway, because the events that followed deserved such signals. We are not in the aftermath yet. We are, if Daniel is any guide, in the kind of season when the angelic forces over nations are making their presence seen..

III. The prince of the kingdom of Persia

Daniel supplies the name.

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long, and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision (Daniel 10:1). He was mourning three full weeks. He ate no pleasant bread, neither flesh nor wine came into his mouth, neither did he anoint himself. On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, by the side of the great river Hiddekel, he lifted up his eyes and saw a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body was like the beryl, his face as the appearance of lightning, his eyes as lamps of fire, his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. Daniel alone saw the vision. The men that were with him saw not the vision, but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. There remained no strength in the prophet. His comeliness was turned in him into corruption, and he retained no strength (Daniel 10:2–8).

This is not the posture of a man collecting aerial anecdotes. It is the posture of a man undone by holiness. Any reading of Daniel 10 that ends in excitement about objects, and does not pass through the loss of strength, has not yet stood in the presence of the supernatural. The

messenger had to touch him, and set him upon his knees and upon the palms of his hands, and tell him that he was greatly beloved, before Daniel could hear why the answer had been slow. Love, in this chapter, does not cancel awe. It restores a man enough to bear the report.

Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. — Daniel 10:12–13

Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince. — Daniel 10:20–21

A few observations.....

First, the prince of Persia is not Cyrus, and not any satrap. Cyrus is named in the chapter as the earthly king in whose third year the vision came. The opposing prince is distinguished from the kings of Persia, beside whom the messenger remained once Michael had come to help. An earthly monarch does not withstand a linen-clothed messenger of God for twenty-one days in a contest that requires Michael, one of the chief princes. The church has read this, across the centuries, as a territorial spiritual ruler, a principality set over a nation. Paul will later give the church the same map without the proper name. ***We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*** (Ephesians 6:12). Daniel gives one of those rulers a post and a people. Persia.

Second, the contest is real and prolonged. The messenger was sent on the first day Daniel set his heart to understand. He was heard at once in heaven. He was hindered for three weeks on the road. Prayer in Babylon was not a private mood. It was a dispatch into an occupied air. The delay was not divine indifference. It was opposition. Believers who have learned to pray past the felt silence of a room will recognise the texture of the chapter, and they should take courage from the order of the sentences. Heaven had already answered. The road was held. The answer's lateness was not a verdict on the prayer. It was evidence that the prayer had entered a jurisdiction where a prince was prepared to spend twenty-one days refusing passage.

Third, the fight is not finished when the message is delivered. Now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia. The revelation to Daniel is an interruption of a campaign, not the end of one. And the next prince is already named. When the Persian principality's season gives way, the prince of Grecia shall come. Earthly empires succeed one another in Daniel's visions, the ram and the rough goat, the bear and the leopard, the image of gold and silver and brass. Behind the succession stands a succession of princes. The Medo-Persian ram is pushed by the Grecian goat, and the great horn of the goat is broken, and four notable ones come up toward the four winds (Daniel 8:5–8). The prince of Persia is engaged, and the prince of Grecia is waiting his hour. National history, in this book, is never only national. The visible crown

changes when the invisible post changes, and the invisible post is not vacant between the coronations.

Fourth, Michael is your prince. Israel's prince is not a peer of the prince of Persia in allegiance. He is one of the chief princes, the great prince which standeth for the children of Daniel's people, who shall stand up in the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation (Daniel 12:1). The contest over Persia is not a duel of equals with God as referee. It is a rebel holding a province against a messenger who serves the God of heaven, until Michael comes to help. The throne is not in play. The province is. This is the correction to every dualism that the aerial subject tempts. There are two hosts. There are not two thrones. The Lord is among His chariots. The prince of Persia is among his withholdings. Only one of them will be standing when the scripture of truth is finished.

Fifth, the chapter is given to a man who has already been told the end of the empires. Daniel is not hearing of the prince in order to be impressed by him. He is hearing of the prince in order to understand why a word about his people, and about the latter days, was costly to deliver. The prince matters because the message matters. A church that becomes more interested in the angel than in the scripture of truth has been successfully delayed, which is the prince's whole method. He does not need to win the argument with Michael. He needs the saints to stop asking what was written, and to start asking what hovered in the sky.

This is the biblical file on Iran. Not a file of ethnic contempt, and not a file that baptises any modern policy as if it were the linen-clothed messenger. Persia in Daniel is a real kingdom, heir of Cyrus, who had been called the Lord's shepherd and anointed to build Jerusalem and to let the captives go (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1–4), and also the seat of a withstanding prince. The same land can carry a decree of restoration and a spirit that resists the message. The church that prays for the Iranian believer in the house church, for the ancient churches of the region, and for the millions who have never heard the gospel in their own tongue, is not praying into a neutral sky. She is praying into a jurisdiction Daniel was told about by name. That knowledge should deepen intercession. It should not license contempt. Flesh and blood in Tehran are not the principality. They are, many of them, the reason the message is worth the twenty-one days.

IV. A visual affirmation before the attack

What, then, shall a watchman say about lights over Tehran on 20 September?

He should say first what he does not know.. Capitals under threat are full of lights, craft, decoys, and rumours, and the air over Iran has been contested in open war. What is known is that nations are mystified by the UFO phenomenon. The last thing they will acknowledge is that they have no defense against these craft and have no idea what their occupant want.

He may say, second, what the hour is fit to illustrate. The clips circulated within a day of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1976 Mehrabad incident, the night two Phantoms were sent up after a brilliant object and a defence evaluation entered an archive unresolved. Anniversaries do not prove identities. They do gather attention, and attention is the condition in which a principality

prefers to be considered. The prince of Persia in Daniel does not hide from the heavenly messenger. He withstands him, openly, for twenty-one days. A ruler who contests a domain has an interest in being felt. He does not require a press office. A showing in the air of a claim already filed in Scripture is enough to thicken the prayers of those who can read, and enough to thicken the fear of those who cannot.

My theme that this report offers the church is therefore not that a photograph has identified a prince. It is that Daniel's prince has a reason, in this hour, to make himself felt again over the domain he claims. Persia is not at rest. The land Daniel knew as the seat of that prince is again a capital men speak of in the language of impending strikes, widened war, and the fate of straits and nations. Scripture's pattern is that the heavenly contest thickens before the earthly one becomes obvious to the servant at the door. The messenger was already engaged for three weeks before Daniel knew why his prayer had seemed to go unanswered. The chariots were over the cities of Judea before Titus's engines were at the wall. Elisha's mountain was full of horses while the servant could see only Syrians. The order is consistent enough to be a doctrine of watchfulness. What breaks into the natural eye is often the late edge of a conflict that has already been underway in the high places.

A visual affirmation, if the language may be used with care, would be exactly that. Not a press conference from a principality, and not a craft with a flag. A showing, in the open air over a capital, of a claim already written beside the Hiddekel. The prince withstands. He returns to the fight. He does not intend to vacate the province because foreign aircraft, or foreign decrees, or foreign sermons, have entered his sky. If lights hang over that capital in a season when men are openly discussing an attack upon the domain, the church is free to read the sign in Daniel's grammar without waiting for a laboratory to baptise it. Something that claims Persia is stirring because Persia is again in play. The affirmation is not for the curiosity of the internet, which will have forgotten the clip by the next outrage. It is for the intercessor, who needed to be told that the delay had a prince's name on it, and that the fight, once the message is through, is to be resumed.

Consider the fitness of the place. Daniel's prince is not the prince of a vague East. He is the prince of the kingdom of Persia, and the messenger remained there with the kings of Persia after Michael came to help. The jurisdiction is territorial. It is exercised where the kings are. A stirring over the seat of government is more like the biblical pattern than a stirring over an empty desert, because the prince's business is with the decisions of the kings: war and peace, the opening or the shutting of the house of prisoners, the reception or the refusal of the message. Josephus's chariots surrounded cities, not dunes. The Pentecost voice was heard in the inner court, not in a ravine. When the powers show themselves, they show themselves over the places where worship and policy are decided. A highway in the south of a capital is not the holy house. It is still the air of a seat of kings. That is enough for a watchman to mark the date and open the tenth chapter again.

Two guards keep this reading from becoming a spectacle.

The first guard is the sovereignty of God. No principality shows itself except within the leash of the throne Ezekiel saw. Satan asked leave to sift Peter as wheat. The lying spirit in the mouths

of Ahab's prophets was sent, and said how he would persuade the king (1 Kings 22:20–22). The locusts of the Revelation ascend when the shaft is opened, not when they wish. If the prince of Persia is permitted a showing, the permission is itself a word. The God who times the unveiling is the God who has already written the end of the campaign in the scripture of truth. A light in a hostile sky is not evidence that the prince is winning. It may be evidence that his season of hidden administration is being shortened, and that the church is being invited to notice the fight she has been in since the first day she set her heart to understand.

The second guard is the distinction between a people and a prince. The men and women of Iran are not the principality. Many of them call upon the name of the Lord under real cost. Others are bound in a story they did not write. The prince withstands the message. He does not constitute the nation. A church that speaks of the prince of Persia and then despises the Persian is reading Daniel without Paul, and without the Cyrus oracles, and without the Magi who came from the east to worship. The wrestling is not against flesh and blood. Prayer for the domain includes prayer for the captive, the house church, the weary mother, the young man who filmed a light and did not know its name, and the ruler who may yet, like Cyrus, be turned as the river of water to water a city he did not build. To see a prince and hate a people is to have been recruited by the prince.

V. The prince of Tyre, and the question of the nations

Daniel names a prince and does not describe his fall. Ezekiel, prophesying against a merchant city, is given a lament that will not stay within the biography of a man.

To the prince of Tyre the prophet is told to say: ***Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God*** (Ezekiel 28:2). The prince, in this first oracle, is a man. He is proud with the pride of trade, of wisdom counted better than Daniel's, and of a rock-throne in the sea. Strangers are to be brought upon him, the terrible of the nations. He will die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas. The word is political, economic, and fatal. Tyre's ruler has sat too long in a seat he mistook for a throne.

Then the word shifts register, and the shift is the glory and the difficulty of the chapter.

Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering... Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. — Ezekiel 28:12–15

A king of Tyre was not in Eden. He was not created as the anointed cherub that covereth. He did not walk among the stones of fire on the holy mountain of God until iniquity was found in him. By the multitude of his merchandise the oracle says the covering cherub's heart was filled with violence, and he sinned; therefore he is cast as profane out of the mountain of God, and

the covering cherub is destroyed from the midst of the stones of fire. His heart was lifted up because of his beauty. He corrupted his wisdom by reason of his brightness. He is cast to the ground. He is laid before kings, that they may behold him. He has defiled his sanctuaries by the multitude of his iniquities, by the iniquity of his traffic. A fire from the midst of him devours him, and he is brought to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold him (Ezekiel 28:16–18).

The church has long heard, under the earthly prince, the heavenly patron of his pride. The man said, I am a god. The power behind the saying had once stood where only God gives standing. The oracle holds both, and this report does not need to collapse them into a single biography. Territorial pride in a ruler is the echo of an older pride in a cherub. Merchandise is the method by which the echo becomes policy: traffic, splendour, a wisdom that no longer serves the mountain, a beauty rearranged as a claim. Tyre is a coast. Persia is a plateau. The posts differ. The gesture is the same. A created excellency sits in the seat of God and administers a people as if the administration were its own.

Isaiah's taunt over the king of Babylon runs on the same double register, and it supplies the sentence the nations will eventually speak.

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? — Isaiah 14:12–17

Here is the amazement of the earth, and it is not a compliment. Is this the one? The weaken-er of nations, the shaker of kingdoms, the maker of wilderness, the jailer who would not open the house of his prisoners, is looked upon narrowly, and the looking undoes the myth. He is brought down. The public that feared him examines him. The question Art thou he? is the astonishment of a world that has discovered how much of its history was bent by a power now exposed and cast out. Isaiah puts the question in the mouth of the kings of the nations, risen from their thrones in Sheol to meet the arrival they had not expected to be so small. The one who weakened the nations does not look, in the pit, like the story told about him in the capitals.

Read Daniel 10 beside Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, and the map gains relief. The prince of Persia is one such holding, a withstanding ruler over a named kingdom, engaged even now, to be replaced in his season by the prince of Grecia and by whatever posts the latter days still contain. The king behind Tyre is the pattern of the cherub who covers and then profanes, perfect until iniquity is found, cast out in the sight of beholders. The morning star of the lament is the one whose work, across many thrones, is the weakening of nations. They are not three interchangeable names for one biography, and a careful church will not flatten them to win an argument on the internet. They are the biblical way of saying that rebellion has administration. It has posts. It has beauties it uses as cover. It has a method, which is to weaken the nations,

shake kingdoms, destroy cities, and keep the prison closed. And it has an end, which is to be cast out, looked upon, and answered with the question the earth has been preparing, without knowing it, for a long time.

Our Lord saw the trajectory in a single sentence during the mission of the seventy. I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven (Luke 10:18). He said it when the disciples returned with joy and reported that even the devils were subject unto them through His name. The fall is not only future in that saying. It is something He has beheld, and something the mission enacts in advance, wherever the name is used in faith and the strong man finds his goods spoiled. The Revelation will show the same movement at the scale of the age. There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Revelation 12:7–9). Michael, who came to help against the prince of Persia, is at war with the dragon. The princes do not keep their sky. The woe that follows is real, because the devil is come down with great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time. Exposure is not the same thing as quiet. A cast-out ruler can still weaken nations on the way down. The church that celebrates the casting without watching the wrath has read only half the chapter.

VI. Disclosure, strong delusion, and the unmasking

The world has begun to use a word the church should not be too proud to understand. Disclosure. Governments have held hearings. Pilots have testified under oath and been dismissed as mistaken. Archives have been declassified in part and mocked in part. A public that once laughed at the subject now argues about retrievals, non-human intelligence, and the ethics of telling the truth. Some of this is fashion, and fashion is a harsh god that eats its priests. Some of it is the ordinary reluctance of militaries to describe a sensor return. Some of it, a believer may soberly hold, is the early weather of an unveiling Scripture already scheduled, not as a gift to curiosity, but as a test of whether the truth is loved.

Paul did not use the word disclosure. He used a heavier one.

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. — 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12

The lie is not a small rumour about a light on a highway. It is the lie that accompanies the lawless one, resourced by Satan, furnished with signs and lying wonders, and judicially confirmed upon those who would not love the truth. A strong delusion is not merely a mistake that better footage would correct. It is a handing over. God sends it. The sending is just, because the truth was offered and refused, and the pleasure of unrighteousness was preferred. A church that treats the coming deception as a puzzle for clever people, rather than as a

judgment on the refusal of the gospel, will prepare the wrong defence. The elect are not kept by their ability to spot a composite video. They are kept by a love of the truth.

Set that text beside the present fascination, and a pastoral reading offers itself. The UFO phenomenon, taken as a cultural event rather than as any single clip over Tehran, is fit material for a lying wonder. It offers a salvation without the cross: visitors who made us, visitors who will mend the climate, visitors who will scold the religions and then replace them, visitors in whose light the particularity of Israel and the incarnation become a provincial story told by a young species. It offers an authority without holiness. It offers, above all, an explanation of the powers that replaces the biblical one. Where Daniel says prince, the new story says pilot. Where Ezekiel says anointed cherub, the new story says an engineer from a nearer star. Where Isaiah says the one who weakened the nations, the new story says a misunderstood civilisation that has been trying, across the centuries, to help. The exchange is the delusion. The phenomena may be real, and this report has argued that the heavens are not empty. The interpretation that saves no one is the lie.

This is why the kindness of the new story should not reassure us. A delusion that arrived snarling would be refused by the decent. The working is with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. It will look like rescue. It will speak the language of peace, of disclosure in the public interest, of an end to the wars the visitors claim to regret. Isaiah's prisoner-house stays shut in the meantime. The nations keep weakening. The cities keep being destroyed. And the story told about the lights grows kinder, because a kind story is the one a generation without the love of the truth will pay to hear. The prince of Tyre was perfect in beauty. Beauty is not a character reference. It is, in Ezekiel's lament, the reason the heart was lifted up.

The claim of this report is therefore sharper than the claim that objects have been seen. It is that the church should be ready to recognise, in the day of disclosure, the fallen administration Daniel and Ezekiel and Isaiah have already described. Rulers over nations. Instigators of wars they do not fight in bodies of their own. Beauties that cover iniquity. Powers that weaken peoples, set kingdom against kingdom, and keep the prison closed. Cast, in the end, out of the place they occupied, and examined by an earth that asks, in contempt and in a strange relief, whether this is really the one who shook the kingdoms. A disclosure that stops at the sentence We are not alone will have told the truth about the population of the air and the lie about its allegiance. The saints are not waiting to discover that the heavens are inhabited. They have known it since Elisha prayed and since Ezekiel fell on his face. They are waiting for the allegiance to be published, and they have been told in advance whose name the true host will confess.

The Lord Jesus warned that false Christs and false prophets would show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect (Matthew 24:24). The elect are not immune by intelligence or by a diet of alternative briefings. They are kept by a love of the truth, and by the Spirit who sanctifies. The test in the day of lights and landings and official announcements remains the test of the apostle. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God (1 John 4:2–3). A wonder that will explain

the nations, the wars, and the future, while remaining silent about the Son, or while recasting Him as one illuminated teacher among visitors, has already failed the only examination that matters. The incarnation is the scandal the delusion cannot absorb. A power that will talk of cosmic childhood and will not kneel at Bethlehem and Golgotha has named itself.

There is a mercy hidden in the judicial word, and a Pentecostal church should not walk past it on the way to the warning. The delusion is sent upon those who received not the love of the truth. It is not sent to embarrass the bride or to trick the watchful. The same chapter that warns of the lie tells the Thessalonians that God hath from the beginning chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, and calls them to stand fast and hold the traditions they were taught (2 Thessalonians 2:13–15). Disclosure, if it comes as a world-story, will sort. It will fascinate those who wanted any light but the Light of the world. It will confirm those who already knew the names of the princes and the name that is above every name. The sorting is not a reason for pride. It is a reason to keep the love of the truth warm in ordinary congregations, on ordinary Sundays, before the signs become impressive enough to tax it.

VII. The saints cast them down

What, then, is the church's part, if the prince of Persia is stirring and a disclosure of fallen rulers lies on the horizon of the age?

Not panic. The servant who saw only Syrians was the one who said alas. The servant whose eyes were opened saw that the mountain was already full, and that the host on his side was the larger. Panic is a failure of sight, not a proof of discernment. A congregation that spends its midweek meeting in dread of a light over a foreign capital has not yet prayed Elisha's prayer. Fear not. They that be with us are more than they that be with them. The sentence was true at Dothan while the Syrians were still in the road. It is true over Tehran while the arguments about the footage are still online. The chariots of God have not been reduced by the invention of the phone.

Not partnership. The princes are not sources. Saul died for asking a familiar spirit for what the Lord would not give him, and the chronicle sets that enquiry beside his failure to keep the word (1 Chronicles 10:13–14). A church that opens a session to whatever answers over a capital has already changed masters, however loudly it uses the language of discernment. The linen-clothed messenger came to Daniel because Daniel had set his heart to understand and had chastened himself before his God. The method was fasting, mourning, and the scripture of truth. It was not a technique for contact, and it was not a hunger to be the first congregation with a story. Heaven initiates the true unveiling. The saint initiates the prayer. Those two motions must not be reversed, or the prince who specialises in delay will specialise, instead, in counterfeit reply.

The part given to the saints is warfare of a definite kind, and victory of a definite kind.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing

that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. — 2 Corinthians 10:4–5

The high thing that exalts itself is the same gesture as the cherub who said he would be like the most High, and the prince of Tyre who sat in the seat of God, and the morning star who would ascend above the stars. The saints cast it down. They do not do so by altitude, or by a better camera, or by a seat in a hearing room. They do so by the knowledge of God, against which the high thing was raised. Truth is the solvent of a principality's glamour. Where Christ is known, the covering story thins. An imagination that the visitors are our parents, or our judges, or our coming rescue, is precisely the kind of high thing the apostle says can be cast down. The casting down begins in the mind of the church, before it is ever visible in the air. A saint who has brought that thought captive has already begun the battle Daniel's messenger was fighting on the road.

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. — Colossians 2:15

The open showing has already happened, in the cross. Whatever disclosure the age thinks it is arranging, the principalities have already been exhibited, disarmed, and triumphed over in the body of the crucified and risen Lord. He made a shew of them openly. The verb belongs to the Roman triumph, in which a defeated enemy was walked through the city for the citizens to see. Isaiah's kings, looking narrowly and asking whether this is the man, are late students of a triumph Christ has already led. The church does not fight for a victory she hopes to secure if the intercession is fervent enough. She fights from a victory her Lord has published. Michael's war in the Revelation is the heavenly register of a triumph the Lamb has accomplished, and the saints' part in it is named without ambiguity.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. — Revelation 12:11

Blood. Testimony. A life not clutched. These are not the instruments of an arms fair, and they are not the instruments of a documentary. They are the instruments that principalities cannot copy, because the blood is not theirs to shed for others, and the testimony is a name they will not confess, and the loosened grip on one's own life is the opposite of the heart lifted up because of beauty. A Pentecostal reading of this text will not be ashamed of the power in it. The same Lord who spoils principalities still confirms the word with signs following, still fills rooms with the Spirit, still heals, still speaks. The signs of the kingdom are not the rivals of this overcoming. They are its accompaniment, and they are marked with the name. A sign that will not preach the blood is not a sign of this victory, however bright it hangs above a highway.

In practice, for a congregation that has read this far, the battle looks like Daniel's three weeks more than like a headline. Set the heart to understand. Chasten the body. Remain until the answer, which was sent on the first day, arrives through the opposition. Pray for the Persian, not against the Persian: for the believer in Tehran and Mashhad and the provinces, for pastors under pressure, for rulers to be turned, for the withstanding prince to be bound away from the message, for the house of the prisoners to be opened. Refuse the lie in advance, by loving the truth on ordinary Sundays, in ordinary sermons, with ordinary bread and wine. Teach the

young what a principality is, so that a future announcement cannot sell them a saviour in a craft. Sing the psalm that counts the chariots, so that the imagination is already occupied when a new imagination is offered. And when the powers of heaven are shaken, and men look at the things coming on the earth until their hearts fail them for fear, lift up your heads. The same Lord who described that fear described the redress. Your redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21:26–28).

VIII. A closing watch

Persia has a prince. He withstands the messenger. He is returned to the fight when the message has been delivered. He is not the last prince, for the prince of Grecia comes after him, and the latter days have their own battles. He is not the great prince. Michael stands for the people of God. The cherub that covered has been cast as profane from the mountain of God, and will be brought to ashes in the sight of all them that behold. The one who weakened the nations will be narrowly looked upon, and the earth will ask its astonished question, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble? A disclosure is coming that can save no one who does not love the truth. A triumph has already been published, in which the saints overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and love not their lives unto the death.

Until that day the prayer at Dothan is still the right prayer, and it is a prayer for the church as much as for the highway. Open his eyes, that he may see. Not every light. Not every rumour dressed as a revelation. The mountain full of horses and chariots of fire. The Lord among His thousands. The Prince of princes, who does not withstand His own messengers, and who will not share His throne with the ruler of any coast or any plateau. The servant may still say alas when he looks at the lower army. He is not left with alas. He is given a mountain.

Even so. Come, Lord Jesus.