

LESSON 31

CHAPTER 10

Chapter 10 is a prelude to the final vision in the book of Daniel. Although only 21 verses long, Chapter 10 shows us some of the most puzzling and intriguing events in the Bible. This chapter, perhaps more than any other, lifts the curtain on the unseen spiritual world that surrounds us. It would be easy to go over a cliff of speculation in this chapter, so we will try to stay well-grounded with what has been revealed to us, realizing that much about these issues has not been revealed.

Daniel 10:1

1 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.

The third year of Cyrus would be the third year of his reign over the Chaldeans, not the third year of his reign over Persia — which would have been twenty years earlier.

Each of the four visions in Chapters 7–12 is dated, and the visions appear in two groups of two: the first and third years of Belshazzar and the first and third years of Cyrus (with the first year of Darius' reign being the same as the first year of Cyrus' reign over Babylon).

We know that this vision occurred *after* Cyrus's decree that the Jews could return to Palestine because Ezra 1:1 tells us that decree went out in the *first* year of Cyrus. Cyrus' third year would have been 536 or 535 BC, two years after Gabriel's appearance to Daniel in Chapter 9 and a short while after the first return of the Jewish exiles to Palestine. The timing here is important because Daniel, who was obviously concerned about the exiles, may have just heard that work on the temple had been halted. This news may explain why will see Daniel mourning in verse 2.

Daniel was now close to 85 years old, having been in exile for over 70 years. Perhaps Daniel's Babylonian name (Belteshazzar) is used in verse 1 to remind us that he is still in exile.

Why didn't Daniel return with the others? It may have been because of his age, or perhaps he felt that he could be of more use remaining behind and continuing his service for the king.

What does Daniel tell us in verse 1 about the word that was revealed to him? He tells us three things.

First, Daniel tells us that the word was true.

Daniel received this vision and this word from God, and thus he knew that the word and the vision were true. The vision contained prophecies that would certainly be accomplished.

The liberals do not approach this book from that perspective. Instead, they determine what they think the vision must mean, and then they check to see if the events in their interpretation ever occurred (and, no surprise, they hardly ever have!). They then conclude that the author of Daniel was mistaken since the events he predicted never came true. For an example of this liberal approach to Biblical

interpretation, consider the following excerpt from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* commenting on Daniel 11:40–45.

Predictions that Ptolemy will provoke another war with disastrous results, so that Antiochus will conquer Libya to the west of Egypt and Ethiopia to the south, but on his way back will perish somewhere along the coastal route. None of these predictions was fulfilled.

You can sense the glee as the author makes that final comment. “Here is what Daniel said would happen, but it never happened. So much for those fools who think the Bible is always right.” But notice that the commentator himself is never in any doubt with regard to his own conclusions. He couldn’t be wrong, could he?

If instead we believe that the word of God is true, then the situation is different. If we make some conclusion about the Scriptures that later turns out to be in conflict with historical or scientific truth, then we must be the ones in error — not God. It is our fault for misunderstanding his word. God’s word is truth no matter what we have to say about it.

Romans 3:4 — *Let God be true, but every man a liar.*

John 17:17 — *Thy word is truth.*

Not just that God’s word is *true*, but God’s word is *truth*. Just as 1 John 4:8 tells us that God is love, John 17:17 tells us that God’s word is truth. And John 14:6 tells us that Jesus (the word made flesh) is truth. We have nothing to fear from truth. Truth is on our side!

Second, Daniel tells us in verse 1 that the word involved great conflict.

The King James Version translates this phrase as “the time appointed was long.” The Hebrew word translated “time appointed” in the KJV is more properly translated “army” or “host” going forth to war. The ESV translation is better — “And the word was true, and it was a great conflict.”

The “conflict” here is the warfare that we will see in Chapter 11. That is, the vision will involve conflicts between many different peoples and nations. The world would love to reduce the word of God down to something you might find on a greeting card — something like “be good to feel good” or “let God, and let live.” In fact, judging by the sad state of Bible bookstores these days, many self-professed Christians care more about pithy statements on wall plaques and bumper stickers and pictures of angels than they do about the Bible or books about the Bible. The peace at any price crowd would like us all to just ignore any statements in the Bible that they deem offensive or non-inclusive; any statements that involve conflict. Can’t we all just focus on the happy verses? But no one who makes it his primary goal to avoid all conflict will ever be pleasing to God. We are called to live in conflict with the philosophies of this world. We are at war, and we have been given weapons for that warfare.

2 Corinthians 10:4 — *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*

What sort of soldier is it who seeks to avoid all conflict? Not a very effective soldier. The word of God involves great conflict — not just here in the closing chapters of Daniel, but all throughout the Bible. In fact, the great conflict begins in the opening chapters.

Genesis 3:15 — *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

The only way to avoid conflict is to stop doing what we have been called to do — but that will just bring us into conflict with God, which means there is no way to avoid all conflict. The only question is with whom we will be in conflict.

Religion is a deadly serious business. The world wants to put it on the sideline, out of mind and out of the public square, but we can never let that happen. We are to

be the salt of the earth and the light on the hill — and doing those things will always create conflict.

Matthew 10:34 — *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

Third, Daniel tells us in verse 1 that he understood the word and the vision.

In Daniel 8:27, Daniel confessed that he did not fully understand the vision that he received in that chapter even after an angel appeared to help him understand it. How is this vision different? The primary difference is that the vision in Chapters 11 and 12 is longer and contains more details. This extra detail seems to have helped Daniel understand what was in store for his people. Also, the vision in Chapters 11 and 12 is largely historical narrative, and in that sense it is more straightforward than the earlier visions.

Daniel 10:2-3

2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3 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.

Once again we see the extent of Daniel's spiritual preparation. Daniel prepared himself to seek God and study his word. Daniel got results when he prayed. God heard his prayers and acted to answer his prayers. If we want similar results, then perhaps we should prepare ourselves as Daniel did.

For easterners, anointing oneself with oil was a daily ritual except for those who were sick, who were mourning, or who were facing a crisis. Here, Daniel abstains from the oil because he is mourning.

Note also that Daniel abstained during this time from meat and wine. The inference of course is that normally Daniel did *not* abstain from these foods. Thus, the dietary changes he made when he first arrived in Babylon seem to have been just temporary. (Some have said that Daniel was a vegetarian all of his life, but this verse casts serious doubt on that idea.)

Why was Daniel mourning? As we have suggested, Daniel may have heard bad news from the exiles who had left several years earlier for Palestine. As we know from the book of Ezra, the news was not all good. His people were facing hardships back in Jerusalem. Also, he may have mourned because he was left behind — he had not seen his homeland since he was 13.

Also, the vision in Chapter 8 had described the horrors that lay in store for God's people under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The vision in Chapter 9 had told Daniel that one day the Messiah would come, only to be cut off, and that soon afterward the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed — and this would be God's last word with regard to the Jews. The vision in Chapter 11 that Daniel is about to receive will have even more to say about the horrors that would soon face God's people. What else could Daniel do but mourn? Daniel knew that there was a time to mourn, and he knew that that time was now! (When we look at the depths of the depravity and sin that surround us on all sides today, perhaps we should also mourn more often.)

Daniel 10:4-6

4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; 5 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: 6 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 received this vision on the twenty-fourth day of the first month. The first month of the Jewish calendar was Nisan. The Passover celebration took place on the fourteenth day of that month, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day. Thus, Daniel received his vision ten days after Passover. While traditionally this was a time of feasting, Daniel had instead spent the time fasting and mourning.

Daniel was standing on the banks of the great river Hiddekel, which the Septuagint identifies as the Tigris River. It was the third river that went out of Eden in Genesis 2:14. Earlier Daniel had a vision next to the River Ulai, which flows into the Tigris River. As you recall, it was unclear if Daniel was actually at the River Ulai or rather was just seeing the river in his vision. The wording here, however, seems to suggest that Daniel was actually present at this river when these events occurred.

Daniel was not the only prophet to receive a message from God next to a river. Ezekiel received several visions by the River Chebar, which may have been a canal connecting the Tigris with the Euphrates. In fact, what Daniel witnesses here has some other similarities to Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 1. Daniel 10:6 mentions beryl, lightning, lamps of fire, polished brass, and the voice of a multitude. Ezekiel 1 mentions burnished brass in verse 7, burning coals of fire, lamps, and lightning in verse 13, beryl in verse 16, and "the noise of an host" in verse 24.

Who is Daniel seeing here in verses 5 and 6? The description in verse 6 is very similar to the description of Christ found in Revelation 1.

Revelation 1:14-16 — *His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

This similarity has caused some to conclude that Daniel was seeing the preincarnate Christ, a so-called Christophany, which we have discussed as a possibility several times earlier in this book, including with regard to the fourth person in the fiery furnace. Others argue that this could not be Christ because, as we will soon see, the man in this vision fought with the prince of Persia for three weeks until he was helped by Michael. Could that be true of Jesus? I agree with those who think not. Others solve the problem by arguing that the person in verses 5-6 is not the same person who lifts Daniel up in verse 10 and starts speaking to Daniel in verse 11. We will say more about this theory when we get to verse 10.

In short, we can't say with certainty, but I agree with those who don't think the person we will see later in verse 10 is Jesus. I don't think it would take Jesus three weeks to deal with the prince of Persia, and Jesus would not need any help to do so! So if this man in verses 5-6 is the same person we see in verse 10, then I also don't think this man in verses 5-6 is Jesus.

Daniel 10:7-9

7 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. 8 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. 9 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.

The word that the angel brings is also called a vision in verse 14, but this vision in verse 7 occurs before the angel says anything. So the vision in verse 7 is the vision of verses 5-6, not the vision that follows in Chapters 11 and 12.

Daniel's companions are not able to see the vision, but they experience a great quaking that causes them to be afraid and to flee, leaving Daniel alone. Daniel's experience is similar to that of Saul on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:7 and 22:9 tell us that Saul's companions could not see Christ or understand his voice, but they did sense enough to be frightened.

Daniel's appearance changed when he saw the vision in verses 5-6. I love the KJV in verse 8 — "my comeliness was turned in me into corruption." I also like verse 8 in the New English Bible: "My strength left me; I became a sorry figure of a man."

As we saw before, Daniel again appears to faint dead away as a result of the vision, and specifically in verse 9 as a result of hearing the voice of his words, which verse 6 tells us was like "the voice of a multitude."

Daniel 10:10-12

10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.

11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. 12 Then said he unto me, 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.

Who lifts Daniel up in verse 10? I think we can make a good argument that this person in verse 10 is **not** the same person we saw in verses 5-6. Why? Because verses 5-6 was a vision as verses 7-8 tell us three times. Daniel faints as a result of the vision, and in verse 10 someone physically touches him and physically sets him upon his knees. Verse 11 tells us this person was sent to Daniel. In short, verses 10-12 do not sound like a vision to me. If verses 5-6 are a vision, but verses 10-12 are not a vision, then we have two different people and our problem is solved.

The description in verses 5-6 is similar to the description of Christ in Revelation 1 because verses 5-6 are also describing Christ — and the man who appears in verse 10 and who we later learn fought with the prince of Persia is an angel. (If that is not the case, then again I think the best explanation is that Daniel was seeing an angel in both verses 5-6 and also here in verses 10-12.)

Again, Daniel is said to be greatly beloved by God in verse 11. A literal translation is “man of preciousness.” Daniel was precious in God’s sight. Do you want to be precious in God’s sight? If you are in the Lord’s church, then you already are. Revelation 21 contains the most beautiful description of the church found anywhere in

the Bible, and verse 19 says that “the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones.” The church is precious in God’s sight!

Why were Daniel’s prayers so effective? What was his secret? Verse 12 says that Daniel set his mind to understand, and he humbled himself before God. Thus, the angel says, God heard his words.

James 4:6 — *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*

It is a sad fact that although God is always able to hear us, sometimes God chooses not to hear us. Why? Because of our sinfulness.

Isaiah 59:1-2 — *Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear.*

That was not Daniel’s problem! When Daniel prayed, angels were dispatched!

Daniel 10:13-14

13 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. 14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

One commentary described these verses well when it said: “One of the strangest accounts in the Bible is now unfolded.” Several questions arise immediately from verse 13:

- Who is speaking? (We have already answered this one. It is almost certainly an angel and not Christ, even if Christ was seen in the vision of verses 5-6.)
- Who is the prince of the kingdom of Persia, and, a related question, **what** is the prince of the kingdom of Persia?
- What happened during those 21 days?
- Who is Michael (that one is easy) and what did he do to help?
- Who are the kings of Persia?

Who is the prince of Persia? Let’s start with the related question — **what is the prince of Persia?** It seems certain that he was not just a man. What man could withstand an angel on a mission from God and cause Michael to have to come to that angel’s rescue? Almost all commentaries agree that the prince of Persia was an angel.

Was the prince of Persia a good angel or a fallen angel? Again, most commentaries also agree on this point — this prince withstood an angelic messenger from God, which strongly suggests that this prince was an evil angel.

Jude 1:6 — *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*

The prince of Persia is apparently the satanic agent assigned to work with Persia in fighting the will of God. Jesus referred to Satan as the “prince of this world” in John 12:31, 14:30, and 16:11. The prince of Persia was most likely a servant of the prince of

this world. It is possible that the prince of Persia was Satan himself — “the prince of this world,” as Jesus called Satan, was certainly the prince of Persia as well.

We would be foolish to think that Satan is not organized in his fight against God and against the people of God. Satan has a plan, and Satan is working to carry out that plan. And that was particularly true at this time when the plan of God was beginning to unfold as God was preparing the world for the coming of Christ.

What happened during the 21 days? We know from verse 12 that Daniel’s prayers were heard from the very first day, but here we learn that it took 21 days for the answer to arrive. What happened? The angel in verse 13 says that “the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days.” We are not told anything more.

We do know the significant role that Persia played in the plan of God. Satan also knew this. Cyrus had been mentioned by name in Isaiah over 100 years before he was even born! One thing you can say for sure about Satan — he is a Bible scholar! Satan knows the word of God inside and out! We see that, for example, in Matthew 4. Satan knew Persia was important to God, and so Satan set his sights on Persia, and he appears to have placed a powerful fallen angel there to thwart God’s plans.

An interesting question to consider is how much Satan knew about the plan of God. Satan obviously knew that the Jews were part of God’s plan, and so he sought to frustrate their efforts at every turn. Satan, of course, knew that Jesus as the Son of God was the focus of God’s plan, and so he put temptations before him at every opportunity. But what about the death of Christ? Did Satan see that as a victory? If he did, then as we know he was badly mistaken, because as John 12:31 and Hebrews 2:14 tell us, Satan was defeated at the cross. I think that Satan first saw the cross as a victory, but later realized his mistake at the last moment. Why? Because Matthew 27:19 tells us that Pilate’s wife sought to have Jesus released because of a dream she had. Who was behind that dream? I think Satan was. I think Satan thought he was about to win his greatest victory — but discovered too late that he

was about to experience his greatest defeat. Is it any wonder that he then turned on the Lord's church with such fury?

Revelation 12:12 — *For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

Satan may have used an underling to handle Persia, but I think we see from Revelation that Satan was in personal charge of Rome in its efforts to destroy the church. Satan himself seems to have been the prince of Rome.

Who is Michael, and what did he do to help? In the KJV, verse 13 says "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." A better translation is "Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia." That is, the final clause is describing what was going on before Michael arrived.

Michael, of course, is also an angel, and we will see him again in Daniel 10:21 and Daniel 12:1. Here he is called one of the chief princes. In Jude 9 he is called an archangel. He also makes an appearance in Revelation 12:7. One conclusion we can draw is that apparently there is a hierarchy of angels in which Michael occupies a very high position. The word archangel in Jude 9 means first or chief angel.

We aren't told what Michael did to help, but he seems to have had no trouble with the prince of Persia, which would seem to conclusively answer the question of whether the other person rescued by Michael is Christ. We know that Michael is not above his Master.

Who are the kings of Persia in verse 13? The kings of Persia are most likely the actual rulers of Persia. It could include Cyrus himself, as well as those given power to rule by Cyrus, such as Darius, who is called a king in Daniel 9:1, even though as a governor he was subject to Cyrus. The other option is that these kings of Persia are also fallen angels working against God, but I favor the former option.

Why was Satan so interested in Persia? The short answer is that Satan was interested because God was interested. Satan constantly seeks to thwart God's plans. But, unlike some of the other earthly kingdoms of the world, Persia was not wholly evil and was not wholly opposed to God's plans. In fact, it was Persian rulers, beginning with Cyrus, who permitted the three returns we talked about earlier. Satan, no doubt, was very interested in preventing or hindering those returns and rebuilding activities — and we see his efforts not only here with Persia but also with the Samaritans and with some of the Jews themselves who quickly fell away after their return.

Do we think Satan is any different today? On what is Satan focused today? Where is the spiritual battle ground today?

Ephesians 3:10-11 — *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The manifold wisdom of God is today being made known to principalities and powers in heavenly places **by the church**. And Satan knows that very well. Satan began trying to destroy the church as soon as it was established, and he is still trying to do that today. He attacks the church from within with false teachers (Acts 20:29) and from without by creating religious confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Satan's target has always been where God's people dwell — in the garden in Genesis, in Israel, away in exile, during the returns, and now in the church. Where the people of God are — that is where you will always find Satan hard at work.

What is our role in this great conflict? Our job is to take up our position in God's army and remain faithful and true to his word.

Ephesians 6:13-18 — *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil*

day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

Those are our weapons and our armor — truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, prayer, and supplication. You mean to say that prayer is a weapon? Absolutely! I would say just ask Rome — but prayer took them out long ago!