

The Vision of Glory

Scripture: Daniel 10:1–21

Code: 27-27

INTRODUCTION

Of the four great revelations recorded in the book of Daniel, the last stretches from Daniel 10 through 12. Chapter 10 introduces the vision, chapter 11 gives the prophecy, and chapter 12 adds an epilogue. Those chapters deal with the same time period as the prophecy of Daniel 8: from Daniel's day to the second coming of Christ. However Daniel 10-12 gives greater detail about the tribulation than any other prophecy.

A. Daniel's Prayer

Daniel 9 records that Daniel had been reading Jeremiah's prophecies and was aware he had prophesied the captivity of Judah would last seventy years. Daniel realized that those seventy years were nearly over. He therefore began to pray and fast. He confessed his sin and that of his people and asked God to fulfill His promise in allowing the Jewish people to return to their land.

God's answer to Daniel's prayer came in the form of a tremendous prophetic revelation given in the first year of Cyrus, king of the Medo-Persian Empire. In that year Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jewish people to return home (Ezra 1:1-4). Thus Daniel's prayer was answered in the same year he prayed.

B. Daniel's Disappointment

Daniel 10 opens "in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia" (v. 1). That's two years after Daniel received the revelation given in Daniel 9. During that time he experienced terrible discouragement: most of the Jewish people had not returned to their homeland. They were comfortable, paganized, prosperous, and enmeshed in Babylonian society. As a result few cared about the Promised Land, rebuilding Jerusalem, or restoring the Temple.

Of the hundreds of thousands of Jewish people who were in Babylon, a few did return--but only 42,600 (Ezra 2:64). Daniel's dream was that after seventy years of captivity all the Jewish captives would return. He wanted the worship of God reestablished, along with the nation itself. But because so few returned to the land, those goals weren't being accomplished.

C. Daniel's Situation

Two years prior to the vision in Daniel 10 Daniel retired from being one of the prime ministers of the Persian Empire. He had also served in that capacity under the Babylonians. He was about eighty-five years old when he left office in the first year of Cyrus. I believe Daniel didn't return to Judea because

of his disappointment that so few returned to the Promised Land. I think he felt responsible to motivate the people to shake off their sinful complacency and return to their country.

D. Daniel's Revelation

Though Daniel would surely have loved to return to his homeland, his burden for his people and the crisis of his disappointment led him to do what he always did in such situations: pray. God's answer came with another revelation: "In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel . . . and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long; and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision" (Dan. 10:1).

"The time appointed was long" (KJV) is better translated "one of great conflict" (NASB). The obscurity of the words tsavah gadol in the Hebrew text accounts for the difference. They can also be rendered "a great warfare" or "a great army" (whether of men or angels). Since Daniel 10-12 speaks of great conflict among armies--from holy angels and demons in space, to conflict between Russia and Israel on earth--the context points toward the reading of the New American Standard Bible.

LESSON

I. THE MOURNING OF DANIEL (vv. 2-3)

"In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. 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. "

A. The Time of Mourning

Daniel began the account of his vision with the words "I, Daniel," a phrase he used five times to emphasize the testimony is his. He tells us he mourned for three weeks of days (the Hebrew text specifies that to distinguish them from the weeks of years in Daniel 9). His mourning took place in the third year of Cyrus (v. 1) and ended with an angelic visitation on the twenty-fourth day of the first month (the month of Nisan; v. 4). Since he had been mourning for three weeks, he must have started on the third of Nisan. The Passover always falls on the fourteenth of Nisan, so that means during the festive celebrations of Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread (the week following Passover) Daniel mourned, prayed, and fasted. Yet for that whole period heaven remained silent.

B. The Extent of Mourning

During his mourning Daniel "ate no pleasant bread. " The Hebrew words mean "bread" or "food of delight. " He didn't eat fancy foods, which was one way of fasting--abstinence from certain foods while eating only what was necessary to stay alive. Beyond that "neither came flesh nor wine in [his] mouth" (v. 3). That means he didn't eat normal foods either.

Daniel also refrained from using skin oils during that time. It was customary to anoint one's self with oil for protection from the sun, to keep the skin soft, and to add fragrance to the body. Those

privations were a significant undertaking for an eighty-five-year-old man.

C. The Reason for Mourning

At first it may seem strange that Daniel mourned. Only two years previously Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jewish people to return to their homeland, and 42,600 had returned. Yet as we touched on before, that was the problem: though all could return, only a small fraction did. In his selflessness Daniel longed for all his people to return to their land.

II. THE MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE GLORY (vv. 4-6)

"In the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel, 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; his body also was like the beryl, and his face like the appearance of lightening, and his eyes like lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet in color like to polished bronze, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. "

Daniel's attitude and spirit were of the kind God responds to.

A. The Place

"Hiddekel" is the Hebrew name for the Tigris River. It is derived from idigla, the ancient Babylonian name for the Tigris. There were two great rivers in ancient Mesopotamia: the Euphrates, on which the city of Babylon was built, and the Tigris, located sixty miles east of Babylon. We don't know why Daniel was at the Tigris--he may have been on official business or he may have gone to encourage a group of Jewish people to return to their homeland.

B. The Person

1. His specific identity

"Behold" in verse 5 expresses the amazement and shock Daniel experienced when confronted by his heavenly visitor. Some think it may have been Gabriel, Michael, or another angel of equal rank. I believe it was a preincarnate appearance of the Second Person of the Trinity--the Lord Jesus Christ (often referred to as a Christophany).

a) Determined from elsewhere in Scripture

The description of Daniel's visitor is paralleled in Revelation 1:13-15, where John describes "one like the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girded about the breasts with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were like a flame of fire; and his feet like fine bronze, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice like the sound of many waters. " That description is almost identical to Daniel's (except Daniel says nothing of his visitor's hair). John's visitor identified Himself as the "Alpha and Omega" (Rev. 1:8) --the Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 17-18). John saw Christ in His post-resurrection glory, Daniel in His preincarnate glory. Jesus Christ was not created when He was born--He existed eternally.

b) Determined from His clothing

(1) His garment

Fine white linen was the garment of priests (Ex. 28:39-43) and heavenly visitors such as the angels that appeared at Jesus' tomb (Mark 16:5). It is associated with the representatives of God and seems to symbolize God's foremost attribute: His holiness.

(2) His belt

The waist of Daniel's visitor was "girded with fine gold of Uphaz" (Dan. 10:5). While we don't know what Uphaz signifies, Daniel's description indicates a belt overlaid with fine gold. As a valuable, pure, and beautiful metal gold here perhaps symbolizes the sovereignty of God.

(3) His body

The body of the preincarnate Christ "was like the beryl" (v. 6) --a transparent, flashing jewel called a chrysolite in the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament). Some think it refers to the topaz. As a flashing transparent jewel I think it symbolizes God's glory.

(4) His face

His face was "like the appearance of lightening" (v. 6). In Revelation 1:16 John described Christ's face as being like the sun. That brilliant light brings to mind His omnipotence.

(5) His eyes

The eyes of Christ were "like lamps of fire" (v. 6). Lamps search out and throw light on what they are aimed, exposing things as they really are. That pictures God's omniscience.

(6) His arms and feet

They were "in color like to polished bronze" (v. 6). Bronze, commonly used of armaments at the time, hints of the judgment and wrath of God.

(7) His voice

His voice was "like the voice of a multitude" (v. 6). Revelation 1:15 describes it as "the sound of many waters. "

Daniel saw the Almighty revealed in a vision representing of His holiness, sovereignty, glory, omnipotence, omniscience, and judgment.

2. His extensive authority

Since Christ is the Commander in Chief of the angelic army and has all authority (Matt. 28:18) , it was fitting that He appear to Daniel at this time. Daniel was about to receive a prophecy concerning angelic warfare that would stretch from his own time to the battle described in Revelation 12, in which Michael and the holy angels defeat the demonic forces.

This vision must have been a source of great hope for the aged prophet. His heart had been heavy but God Himself appeared to him.

III. THE REACTION OF THE VISION (vv. 7-9)

A. Of Those with Daniel (v. 7)

"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. "

When heaven invades earth it always leaves man in awe. Though those with Daniel saw no vision they knew something was happening and began to shake. They fled to hide from the presence of

God because it was more than they could bear--a natural response of sinful man, as seen many times in Scripture.

1. Compared to Job

When a good man like Job saw God he was forced to declare, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6).

2. Compared to Isaiah

Isaiah was a godly man, yet when he saw God he said, "Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5).

3. Compared to Peter

When Peter saw the power of Jesus displayed he responded, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8).

4. Compared to mankind in the tribulation

When mankind realizes the great day of God's wrath during the tribulation, they will cry out "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16). The unholy are devastated in the presence of absolute holiness.

B. Of Daniel Himself (vv. 8-9)

"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. 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. "

Daniel was left alone and experienced severe distress--he too wasn't able to handle much of God's presence. That his "comeliness was turned . . . into corruption" (v. 8) means he lost his strength and acquired the death-like pallor of one in absolute panic.

On top of that he "heard the voice of [God's] words" (v. 9). That caused him to faint. He was shattered by the muffled roar of the voice of God's Son--completely mastered by the awe of His presence. Christ then departed and Daniel saw Him no more.

IV. THE MESSENGER FROM HEAVEN (vv. 10-13)

"Behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words I speak to thee, and stand

upright; for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. He said 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. 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. "

A. He Revived Daniel

Almost immediately an angel in the form of a man helped Daniel, who was eighty-five years old and weakened by fasting. The angel enabled him to rise shakily to his hands and knees.

Are You Awed in the Presence of God?

Daniel's reaction to the presence of God ought to cause us to examine our own attitude towards His presence. Are we awed in His presence? I find myself rushing in and out of God's presence with no thought for His majesty. When I come to worship Him, too often it seems when I ought to be drained of strength because of overwhelming thoughts of God, my thoughts are instead focused on the world or some project completely unrelated to God. How about you?

B. He Reassured Daniel

God doesn't make personal appearances to everyone. But Daniel was "greatly beloved. " He was a special man, like others named in the Bible: David was called "a man after [God's] own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14) , Abraham was called God's friend (Isa. 41:8) , the apostle John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:7) , and Mary was "highly favored" by God (Luke 1:28). Those who especially delight in God and obey Him become greatly beloved by Him. The angel may have told Daniel he was beloved by God to relieve his fear--he wasn't going to be judged but blessed.

C. He Was Temporarily Hindered from Seeing Daniel

Daniel had set his heart on understanding why his people had not returned to the land so he fasted and prayed for a lengthy period of time (vv. 2-3). God's messenger first reassured Daniel not to fear. He wasn't to think God didn't care about his prayers because of the twenty-one days it took to send an answer. In reality, from the first day Daniel mourned he was heard, but delivery of God's answer was delayed.

The angel explained that he--a holy angel from God's presence--had been detained by the "prince of the kingdom of Persia" (v. 13). The ruling kingdom at that time was Persia, but the prince spoken of here was not a man: he was a demon. His position was to influence the events in Persia so God's plans for the future of Israel would be hindered. Therefore he must have been evil. He must have been an angelic being to be able to fight the archangel Michael (v. 13) , and his relationship with

Persia was of an ongoing nature since the angel speaking to Daniel would be fighting him again (v. 20).

The Demons and World Power

Satan has a sophisticated world organization: an unseen network of demons influencing the events of human history. Just as there was a demon assigned to Persia (v. 13) , there was another assigned to Greece (v. 20). Psalm 96:5 says, "All the gods of the nations are idols," and demons are behind the false gods people worship (1 Cor. 10:20). Throughout world history demons have been active behind the scenes in an attempt to thwart God's plans.

God sent Michael--a super-angel--to release His messenger from conflict. Michael is mentioned three times in Daniel (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1) and two times in the New Testament (Jude 9; Rev. 12:7). He is called "the archangel" (Jude 9) which means "first angel. " The name Michael means "one who is of God. " In Revelation 12:7 he appears with a host of angels during the Great Tribulation to destroy all demonic forces and win the final battle.

After his struggle with the prince of Persia Daniel's angelic messenger remained "with the kings of Persia" (Dan. 10:13). He remained as an influence for God with the kings of Persia. That indicates God has assigned holy angels to nations to carry out His purposes. In this continual warfare I often wonder what's happening behind the scenes in our own nation.

VI. THE PURPOSE OF THE VISION (vv. 14-21)

A. To Prepare Daniel to Receive Extensive Revelation (vv. 14-20a)

"I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days; for yet the vision is for many days. And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth, and spoke, and said unto him who stood before me, O my Lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this, my lord, talk with this, my lord? For as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not. Peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me. Then said he, Knowest thou why I come unto thee?"

According to Daniel 10:14 the angel came to give Daniel a vision that would cover a lengthy time span. Specifically, it goes from the time of Daniel to the reign of the Antichrist in the tribulation. That

caused Daniel to lose his strength and voice and fall to the ground for a second time (Dan. 10:15). Such was the effect of so grand a revelation.

In response to Daniel's physical collapse another angel appeared and touched Daniel's lips, which enabled him to speak (v. 16). Daniel told his angelic messenger that he didn't think he would be able to receive a revelation in his weakened condition (v. 17) , so another angel came and miraculously strengthened him (v. 18). Daniel then willingly received the revelation (v. 19).

Daniel needed to be strengthened--he had stood before the living God. He may have been the most godly man living at that time, but was devastated when personally confronted by God. We can expect even worse when we face God unless we are protected by the blood of Jesus Christ through faith in Him.

Once Daniel had been strengthened the angelic messenger asked, "Knowest thou why I come unto thee?" (v. 20) --a question that implies Daniel didn't realize the extent of revelation he was to receive. Daniel had spent twenty-one days asking about the immediate future of his people, but was going to receive a revelation of their future to the end of the age!

Plumb the Depths!

Daniel prayed for an answer to an immediate dilemma but was given an answer that went far beyond his current focus. He was shown that demons and holy angels carry on warfare, and experienced the majestic presence of the uncreated Christ--the commander of the angelic hosts. Daniel's summation that the revelation was one of great conflict was accurate (Dan. 10:1, NASB).

Sometimes Christians forget the great works and eternal truths of God and focus on petty things. While God wants us to focus on His kingdom, we too often focus on the mundane (cf. Matt. 6:33). Some Christians never seriously study their Bibles. They become caught up in churchianity--which isn't Christianity at all. We need to be committed to plumbing the depths of God's Word. Then, like Daniel, we'll receive more than we ask for.

B. To Reassure Daniel of the Truth of Revelation (vv. 20b-21)

"Now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Greece shall come. But I will show 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. "

After delivering his message to Daniel the angel was to return to fighting the prince of Persia on Israel's behalf. God uses angelic conflict to accomplish His will. And once that conflict ended the angel would begin fighting the prince of Greece--the next great world power. Yet the angel reassured Daniel that the message he was about to give was true and that though only Michael was with him,

they were sufficient to handle any opposition. What a comfort! Michael must be a magnificent being, for he's the prince of God's people.

CONCLUSION

Daniel 10 is a rich portion of Scripture. It gives us insight into God's holiness, majesty, and glory; the preincarnate Christ; and the reality of angelic warfare. Before us are laid open the heart and life of a man without equal: Daniel, the man of prayer. We see that the core of intercessory prayer is a broken and selfless heart, and that the first response to any crisis ought to be prayer. We also see the condescension of God in willingly revealing His truth to man. We see the grace of God in taking a weak and frail man and with a touch making him speak as a prophet. That ought to give us all great comfort. God can use any of us. He is able to take our greatest weaknesses and lift us from uselessness to strength. What a glorious blessing!

Focusing on the Facts

1. What time period do Daniel 8 and Daniel 10-12 deal with?
2. How was Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 answered in the same year he prayed?
3. What discouraged Daniel?
4. Why might Daniel not have returned to Judea?
5. Why is it best to translate Daniel 10:1 as referring to a time of great conflict or warfare?
6. Through what special season of celebration did Daniel mourn and fast.
7. Where did a vision similar to the one recorded in Daniel 10:5-6 occur? Whom were they of?
8. Describe the appearance of the person in Daniel's vision. What do Daniel's representations of that person's appearance seem to symbolize?
9. Why was it fitting that the Commander in Chief of the angelic army appear to Daniel when He did?
10. What reaction did the men with Daniel have when the vision began? What was Daniel's reaction?
11. In what form did the angel appear who revived Daniel?
12. What reassurance did the angel give Daniel?

13. Who detained the holy angel that appeared to Daniel and why did he do so?
14. Who came and released God's messenger from conflict?
15. According to Daniel 10:14 why did the angel come to Daniel?
16. What are some important insights contained in Daniel 10?

Pondering the Principles

1. Do you automatically face difficulties by persistent prayer as Daniel did, or do you immediately seek human solutions based on human wisdom? Beyond praying for answers in your own trials, do you respond with prayer for others when they are in difficulty? Daniel's prayers were typified by a selfless concern for others. Take time now to pray for those you know who are in difficulty and need God's answer for what they face.
2. It's easy to become distracted by details and lose one's sense of purpose and direction. The same is true in our understanding of Scripture: when we become interested in only small portions or issues in Scripture, we won't see the panorama of God's purposes displayed by a view of the whole. Make it a point to read through the Bible at least once a year to maintain your view of the Bible's "big picture."
" To assist you, find someone you can be accountable to on a daily basis to accomplish that goal.

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