

The Book of Daniel

Lesson 10: A Vision of the Glorious One; Kings of North and South -- Daniel 10:1–11:35

Daniel is an old man near the end of his life, and he is grieving. For three weeks he has been mourning and fasting, eating no rich food, drinking no wine, his heart heavy over the future of his people. And then, standing on the bank of the great river, he lifts his eyes and sees something that empties him of all his strength. A man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold, his body like gleaming beryl, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and feet like burnished bronze, his voice like the sound of a multitude. The men with Daniel do not see it, but a great trembling falls on them and they flee. Daniel is left alone, and the sight drains the life out of him until he falls on his face, undone.

It is one of the most glorious appearances of God in the Old Testament, and anyone who has read the first chapter of Revelation will feel a shock of recognition, because the risen Christ appears to John in almost exactly these terms: face like the sun, eyes like fire, feet like burnished bronze, voice like many waters. Whether this is the pre-incarnate Son or a glorious angel sent in His likeness, the effect is the same. Daniel, the man of unshakable courage, the man who faced lions without flinching, is reduced to a trembling heap before the glory of heaven. There are sights before which even the bravest saint can only fall down.

And then a hand touches him, and a voice says the words Daniel needs to hear: “O Daniel, man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.” Three times in this vision he is told he is greatly loved. And then the messenger tells him something astonishing, that he had been dispatched the very first day Daniel began to pray, but that he was withstood for twenty-one days by “the prince of the kingdom of Persia,” until Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help him. Behind the visible world of kings and empires, there is a war we cannot see, and our prayers are caught up in it in ways we do not understand.

Then the messenger unrolls the future, and what follows in chapter eleven is the most detailed predictive prophecy in all the Bible: kings of Persia, a mighty Greek king whose empire is broken and divided, and then a long, intricate account of the wars between the kings of the north and the kings of the south, the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, struggling back and forth over the centuries with the holy land caught between them. The detail is so precise that skeptics insist it had to be written afterward. But it is prophecy, and it leads to a fierce persecutor who will profane the temple and turn against the holy covenant, while the people who know their God stand firm and take action. This lesson is about the unseen war behind our world, the God whose hand holds all of history, and the call to stand firm in a hard and shaking age.

Group Discussion: The messenger tells Daniel that his prayer was heard from the first day, but that the answer was delayed by an unseen spiritual conflict (10:12–13). What does this glimpse

behind the curtain teach us about the reality of spiritual warfare and the significance of our prayers? How should it shape the way we pray and persevere when answers seem slow?

Personal Reflection: Daniel, a man of great courage, was undone by the glory of God and needed to be strengthened and reassured that he was loved (10:8–11, 10:18–19). When have you felt small, weak, or overwhelmed before God or before life's demands? How does hearing God call you "greatly loved" and "be strong" meet you in those moments?

Read Daniel 10:1–11:35

Study Questions

1. Daniel's vision of the glorious One, with face like lightning, eyes like flaming torches, and body like beryl, left him without strength (10:5–9). What does this overwhelming appearance, so like the vision of the risen Christ in Revelation 1:13–17, reveal about the glory and majesty of God? Why is a right sense of God's greatness essential to true worship and humility?
2. When confronted with God's glory, Daniel did not feel proud or self-assured but fell down emptied of strength. How does a true vision of God's greatness affect the way you see yourself? Where do you need a deeper sense of God's majesty to humble your pride or steady your fears?
3. The messenger reveals that he had been sent on the first day Daniel prayed, but was withstood by "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" until Michael came to help (10:12–13, 10:20). What does this teach about the unseen spiritual realities behind the visible world, and about the real conflict in which God's purposes advance (Ephesians 6:12)? Why is it important to remember this dimension without becoming preoccupied or speculative about it?

4. We are tempted to live as though only the visible, material world is real. How does this glimpse of unseen spiritual conflict change the way you view your prayers, your struggles, and the importance of perseverance? Where do you need to take the spiritual dimension of your life more seriously?
5. Daniel was told three times that he was “greatly loved,” and he was strengthened precisely when he was weakest (10:11, 10:18–19). What does this reveal about how God meets His people in their weakness rather than despising it (2 Corinthians 12:9–10)? Why does God so often strengthen us at the very point of our frailty?
6. Many of us hide our weakness, afraid that God or others will think less of us for it. Where are you tempted to pretend you are stronger than you are? What would change if you brought your real weakness to God, trusting that His strength is made perfect there?
7. Chapter eleven unfolds an astonishingly detailed prophecy of the kings of the north and south, fulfilled in the wars of the Greek successor kingdoms over the centuries (11:2–35). What does the precision of this fulfilled prophecy reveal about God’s sovereign control over the smallest turns of history? How does it confirm that nothing in the rise and fall of nations escapes His rule (Proverbs 21:1)?
8. It is easy to feel that the great movements of history, and even the events of our own lives, are random or out of control. How does the truth that God governs the smallest details of

history strengthen your trust in His care over your own circumstances? What worry could you surrender to His sovereign hand this week?

9. In the midst of this turbulent history a fierce ruler arises who profanes the temple and turns against the holy covenant, yet “the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action,” even though some fall in the testing (11:31–35). This detailed prophecy is set firmly within its historical horizon, the Persian and Greek eras and the persecution under Antiochus, rather than being a coded calendar of modern political events. How should we read such a passage faithfully, resting in God’s sovereignty over history and the call to stand firm, rather than forcing it into newspaper headlines? And how does the promise that those who know God will stand firm encourage God’s people to faithfulness in every age, looking finally to the victory secured in Christ?

10. Look back across the whole vision, from the glorious One who overwhelmed Daniel to the people who know their God and stand firm. Name one specific way the truth that God is glorious, that He governs all history, and that He strengthens His loved and weak people is reshaping how you will live, pray, and stand firm this coming week.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Revelation 1:13–17, the risen Christ in glory, before whom John falls as though dead; Ephesians 6:10–18, the spiritual armor for our struggle against unseen powers; 2 Corinthians 12:9–10, God’s power made perfect in our weakness; Proverbs 21:1, the king’s heart a stream in the hand of the Lord; Romans 8:37, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

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