

The Great Cosmic War

Interplay between Heaven and Earth

ESV Daniel 10:1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision.

² In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks.

³ I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.

⁴ On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris)

⁵ I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist.

⁶ His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.

⁷ And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves.

⁸ So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength.

⁹ Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground.

¹⁰ And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

¹¹ And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.

¹² Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.

¹³ The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia,

¹⁴ and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come."

¹⁵ When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute.

¹⁶ And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, "O my lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength.

¹⁷ How can my lord's servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me."

¹⁸ Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me.

¹⁹ And he said, "O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage." And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

²⁰ Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come.

²¹ But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.

(Daniel 10:1-21)

As in Heaven, So on Earth

The **tabernacle** of Israel along with all of its furnishings was built, as Moses tells us, “**according to the pattern**” God

gave him (Ex 25:9, 40; Num 8:4). That “pattern,” Hebrews explains, caused the tabernacle to “serve as a copy and shadow of heavenly things” (Heb 8:5). The temple design, likewise, was given by the LORD to David according to “the plan” (1Chr 28:15), meaning that it was built upon a celestial, heavenly model.¹ The city in which the temple is built, Jerusalem, also has a heavenly archetype which Paul calls “Jerusalem above” (Gal 4:26; cf. Rev 3:12; 21:2). So here we have earth mirroring heaven and somehow there is interplay going on between the two.

This is hardly unique to Israel. Prince Gudea ruled the state of Lagash in the old Sumerian kingdom near Babylon 200 years before Abraham. In a dream he sees a goddess who shows him a tablet upon which is written the names of the benevolent stars and a god who reveals the plan of a temple he is to build.² This now cements the idea of stars or gods (same thing in the ancient mind) interacting down here. This becomes quite tangible for them too. For example, all the Babylonian cities were patterned upon the constellations: Sippara after Cancer, Nineveh after Ursa Major, Assur after

¹ There are rabbinical traditions given in Raphael Patai, *Man and Temple* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, 1947), 130ff, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.128282/page/n1/mode/2up>.

² Unless otherwise noted, the following facts are found in Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 6-11.

Arcturus, Babylon in Cetus-Aries.³ The word Babylon tells you what this means. It is literally “the gate of the gods” (Babilani).⁴ We also find this in India, Egypt, Iran, South America, Cambodia, China,⁵ even in Washington D.C.⁶

This extends to other things as well. **Rivers** like the Euphrates and Tigris were said by the Sumerians to be modeled after star-gods and constellations. **Mountains** have prototypes in the sky. **Districts** were named after celestial “fields.” An Iranian tradition summarizes this when it teaches that every terrestrial phenomenon, whether abstract or concrete, corresponds to a celestial, transcendent invisible term. Everything has a double aspect. The visible sky corresponds to the invisible. The earth corresponds to a celestial earth (Plato was hardly the first to think of this).

What are the ancients doing? They are telling us in their art, their stories, their architecture, their religions, their science, their cities that **heaven and earth interact with one**

³ The Babylon reference is in **Paul Wheatley**, “The Ancient Chinese City as a Cosmological Symbol,” *Ekistics* 39:232 (March 1975): 155. He has a n. 111 which is not presently readable.

⁴ **Elemér Hankiss**, *Fears and Symbols: An Introduction to the Study of Western Civilization* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 117.

⁵ The Beijing reference is in a review of Ovason (see note below). **Jeffrey F. Meyer**, “The Secret Architecture of our Nation’s Capital: A Review,” *Washington History* 13.2 (Fall/Winter 2001/02): 90-92, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40073386?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

⁶ On D. C. see **David Ovason**, *The Secret Architecture of our Nation’s Capital: The Masons and the Building of Washington, D.C.* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000). For much more on all this see **Doug Van Dorn**, “War Against the Powers: A Sermon on Ephesians 6:10-23,” rbcnc.com (Sept 7, 2019), <https://www.rbcnc.com/Ephesians%206.11-12%20Powers%20and%20Weapons%20Part%20I%20WITH%20PICTURES%20Big%20Font.pdf>.

another in profound and intimate ways. The way it was put was “As below so above, and as above so below,” which Jesus thought was so important that he put it into his famous Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...”

A different way of thinking about this is by learning how close heaven and earth are to one another. From the Celtic **Samhain** (which we turned into Halloween), where they believed the veil between the physical world and the spiritual world was at its thinnest, to the **doubting servant of Elisha** named Gehazi who had his eyes open, “and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around” (2Kg 6:17), to the Jewish rabbis who thought that **heaven was just a few miles from earth** at the place where the temple was placed, to modern ideas of **parallel universes** such as in the TV shows *Fringe* or *The Flash*, there is an understanding that different realms overlap one another.

Structure and Setting of Daniel 10 (Dan 10:1-4)

This idea is seen in perhaps no better or more important place than Daniel 10. In the structure of the book, this chapter **parallels most of chapter 9**. There we saw a prayer of Daniel that received a response from a heavenly being. So also,

chapter 10 is a kind of prayer of Daniel that receives a response from heavenly beings.

While we break them down into three chapters, chs. 10-12 are actually a lengthy **single unit** that makes up the last quarter of the book. We can outline it this way:

1. Introduction to the Vision (10:1–11:1)
2. The Vision (11:2–12:3)
3. God’s Instructions to Daniel (12:4–13)⁷

Its unity is demonstrated in a very long chiasm that has its center 11:22 with **a prince of the covenant** being destroyed.

- A. “in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia” (10:1)
- B. “three weeks” (10:2-3)
- C. “a man dressed in linen” (10:5)
- D. “Your people” (10:14)
- E. “saw the vision” (10:7)
- F. “speak, my lord” (10:19)
- G. “Book of truth” (10:21)
- H. Michael, one of the chief princes” (10:13)
- I. The first year of Darius the Mede”
- J. Persia, Greece (11:2)
- K. He will stir up everyone against Greece (11:2)
- L. Rule with great power (11:3)
- M. They will become allies (11:6)
- N. His fortress (11:7, 10)
- O. Seize their gods, silver and gold, into captivity (11:8)
- P. Filled with pride (11:12)

⁷ Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 245.

- Q. Slaughter thousands (11:12)
- R. “will come” (11:15)
- S. “beautiful land (11:16)
- T. Tax collector for royal splendor (11:20)
- U. A contemptible person (11:21)
- V. Its people feel secure (11:21)
- W. The prince of the covenant will be destroyed (11:22)**
- V¹. Time of peace (11:23)
- U¹. He will act deceitfully (11:23)
- T¹. Plunder, loot, and wealth (11:24)
- S¹. His own country (11:28)
- R¹. “will invade” (11:29)
- Q¹. His fury, fall by the sword, fall, stumble (30-35)
- P¹. Exalt himself (11:36)
- O¹. Captured, a god, gold and silver, costly gifts (11:33, 38, 43)
- N¹. Fortress (11:31, 38, 39)
- M¹. The covenant (11:30, 32, 39)
- L¹. Storm out against him with chariots and a great fleet of ships (11:40)
- K¹. The king will engage him in battle (11:40)
- J¹. Edom, Moab, Ammon, Egypt, Libyans, Nubians (11:41-43)
- I¹. He will come to his end” (11:45)
- H¹. “Michael, the great prince” (12:1)
- G¹. “the words of the scroll” (12:4)
- F¹. “My lord, what will the outcome be” (12:8)
- E¹. “understand” the vision (12:10)
- D¹. “your people” (12:1)
- C¹. “the man clothed in linen” (12:6-7)
- B¹. “a time, times, and half a time ... 1,290 days ... 1,335 days” (12:7-12)
- A¹. “... go your way till the end ... at the end of days” (12:13)⁸

⁸ Frank W. Hardy, “Notes on the Chiastic Structure of Dan 10-12,” (2009), <http://www.historicism.org/Documents/Jrnl/ChiasticStructureDan10-12.pdf>. This chiasm is not perfect, but it is impressive enough to convince me that that the chapters are a single unit that moves towards the center in a person who is related to a covenant and is destroyed. Hardy has a discussion that goes along with it. Christine Miller’s chiasm for chs. 11-12 is here: <https://www.alittleperspective.com/daniel-10-through-12/>.

But chapter 10 can also be looked at as its own **stand-alone unit**. In many interesting ways, its chiasm parallels the longer one, even to its own center. When we come to that, we see that a new figure—or perhaps *not such a new figure*—is introduced to us for the first time in the Bible. His name is **Michael** and he is called in the verse “**one of the chief princes.**” This means in both the shorter and longer units, a prince is the focal point, and this actually takes us to the heart of what we want to look at today:

- A. Cyrus king of Persia ... the word was true (10:1)
- B. Fasting three weeks (10:2-3)
- C. A man clothed in linen, his appearance like fire (10:4-6)
- D. Trembling, no strength was left in me (10:7-8)
- E. My face to the ground, a hand touched me (10:9-10)
- F. Spoke to me (10:11)
- G. You set your heart to understand; I have come because of your words (10:12)
- H. The Prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me (10:13a)
- I. Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me (13b)**
- H¹. I was left there with the kings of Persia (13c)
- G¹. I came to make you understand; the vision is for days yet to come (10:14)
- F¹. Spoke to me (10:15)
- E¹. My face toward the ground, touched my lips (10:15-16)
- D¹. I have no strength (10:16-17)
- C¹. One like the appearance of a man (10:18)
- B¹. He spoke to me and I was strengthened (10:19)
- A¹. The prince of Persia ... the book of truth” (10:20-21)⁹

⁹ I have added a couple of letters to the basic chiasm found at the *Biblical Chiasm Exchange* for Daniel 10. <https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2015/11/02/daniel-101-21/>.

The setting of the chapter is “the third year of Cyrus king of Persia” (Dan 10:1). Cyrus sacked Babylon with his vassal Darius in 539 B.C. Darius (aka, Cyaxares II) ruled Babylon for two years until about 537 B.C. This would put us around the year 534 B.C. (Cyrus would himself die in 530). That makes this the last of all the visions that take place in the book of Daniel, even as it is the last vision we learn about in the book.

Vs. 1 is the introduction to the final portion of the book. The verse tells us that a “word” (*dabar*) was revealed to Daniel and we will see in the next chapter that this “word” was perhaps the most detailed prophecy ever given in human history. We learn that the word Daniel hears is “true” and it concerns “a great conflict,” a coming war or series of wars. This true future history is reinforced in the last verse of the chapter which is parallel. There it talks about “the book of truth” that an angel came to explain to Daniel. Daniel understood it (1), and it greatly troubled him, as we will see.

This first verse also reminds us that this Daniel is the same Belteshazzar who so many years earlier was renamed by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel is quite old now (perhaps 80 or 90), having lived most of his life in Babylon during the entire 70 years of captivity. Some of the captives have now begun returning to Israel under the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1-2). I

think calling him Belteshazzar hints at the focus of the coming prophecy, for it will tell much of the pagan nations that will come in the future. Also, remember, this name reminds us of **the god Bel** (Marduk), and we will see even in this chapter how that is relevant, for Bel is the Patron god of Babylon, the deity that presided over it.

Vs. 2 says that Daniel began **mourning for three weeks**. There are at least five reasons for this. **First**, he understood the future. That tells you that what we will see is troubling. **Second**, since this is parallel with ch. 9, we are probably to associate his sadness with the sins of Israel that he has been confessing in the previous chapter. **Third**, this is accompanied with **fasting** (“**I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth**”) and **depriving himself** (“**nor did I anoint myself at all**”) (3). You do this when you are distressed. **Fourth**, the time of year of the vision is “**the twenty-fourth day of the first month**” (4). The first month begins with **Passover** and the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** (the 14th-21st of the month), when all Israel is supposed to deprive themselves of regular food. Daniel is taking this a step further. It is quite possible that he is doing this for a **fifth** reason; he is preparing himself physically for a visionary experience,¹⁰ perhaps hoping for

¹⁰ Cf. 4 Ezra 5:13; 5:20; 6:35; 9:24; 12:51; *2ApocBar* 9:1; 12:5; 20:5–6; 21:1; 47:2.

more information concerning the fate of his people who have just recently begun returning to Israel and were immediately met with hostility, as Ezra tells us.

On the day of his vision, we learn that he was **standing on the bank of the great river** (that is, the **Tigris**), one of the four rivers of Eden. Daniel had a vision earlier which took place farther east, in the land of **Elam** while on the banks of another river (**Dan 8:2**). Now he is back in Babylon, the home of Babel, the place of the Ziggurat where man tried to merge heaven and earth. He is standing along the Tigris, which Daniel would have known the ancients believed was modelled in the star Anunit, that is Venus or Ishtar, the daughter of the moon god, Sin. I'm simply trying to remind you here of what we began thinking about here. The heavenly and earthly realms are deeply overlapping. This is relevant to what he is about to see.

The Man Clothed in Linen (Dan 10:5-6)

In his heightened spiritual state by the river, Daniel lifted up his eyes and looked, “**And behold, a man clothed in linen**” (5). He sees **an angel**. This is what he looked like. “**With a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like**

beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude” (6). The appearance is highly unusual, not what we have seen before in Daniel. There are a couple of interesting things to point out.

First, “gold from Uphaz” or “gold of Uphaz.” Uphaz appears to be a place, but no one knows where it is. Therefore, ancient manuscripts tried to harmonize this with the word Ophir, which was a place known for its gold. If it is a place, then we have something most unusual. An angel has a golden belt made from a city on earth. This is certainly not impossible, but it is strange. The word derives from (*wh*, וַחַ) to desire or draw near and (*paz*, פַּז) finely grafted gold.¹¹ And so, perhaps it is part of the series of metaphors simply describing the angel who got this highly desired golden belt from some heavenly place.

Second, many people assume that this is a description of Gabriel, who we’ve seen in the last two chapters. But he has never been described this way. Nor is he named. So, we have to take notice of the entire description.

¹¹ *Abarim Publications’ Biblical Dictionary*, <https://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Uphaz.html#.X6wudpNKgWM>.

He is *clothed in linen*. This material is most often associated with *priests* on ceremonial occasions (**Lev 6:10; 16:4; Ezek 44:17**). If this is related to this heavenly counterpart, then it is not Gabriel. It could be *the High Priest of Heaven*, the angelic counterpart to the high priest on earth.

The rest of what he sees is similar to a vision that Daniel's contemporary Ezekiel sees. After seeing *lightning* (**Ezek 1:13**) and hearing a *tumultuous sound* (**24**), Ezekiel 1 describes someone above the throne of heaven, seated, “*with a human appearance*” (**26**). “*The appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him. Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around*” (**27**). He then says, “*Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking*” (**28**). Ezekiel is describing Christ.

John uses this exact same imagery to describe the glorified Jesus in Revelation 1. He is *clothed in a long robe with a golden sash* (**Rev 1:13**). *His eyes are a flame of fire* (**14**). *His feet like burnished bronze*, refined in a furnace (**15**).

His voice is like many waters (15). His face is like the sun (16). This is almost exactly like the vision Daniel saw. Is Daniel seeing a glorified Christ? Let's see what happens to Daniel.

Daniel's Reaction to the Vision (Dan 10:7-9)

“I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves” (Dan 10:7). This reminds me of when Saul sees the risen Lord. “The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one” (Acts 9:7). They “saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking” (22:9).

Daniel continues, “I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground” (Dan 10:8-9). This change of appearance reminds me of the divine encounter that Moses has with the Angel of the LORD where his face shone and the people were terrified (Ex 24:29-30).

But more than this, it reminds me of **Daniel 8:15-16** where a man over the river had **sent Gabriel** to speak to Daniel and bring him back to a right state of mind after he fell into a deep sleep with his face to the ground. The appearance, the garb, the reaction, it all leads us to conclude that this angel is of a higher rank than Gabriel and is therefore not Gabriel.¹² From all these parallels, **I am confident that this person Daniel sees is none other than Jesus himself.**

Gabriel Appears to Daniel (Dan 10:10-11)

Vs. 10 now says, “**And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.**” Who is *this*? It is tempting to see this as the same person Daniel has just seen. But I believe this is incorrect. Daniel has just fallen asleep. Now, a hand touches him and wakes him up. Still trembling, this one who has just touched him begins to speak. “**And he said to me, ‘O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you.’**” Daniel then gets up, still trembling (**11**). “**You are greatly loved**” is language that Gabriel said to Daniel in the previous chapter (**9:23**). I believe what is

¹² **Charles**, 258 in **Collins**, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*.

happening is the same as ch. 8. A created angel, perhaps Gabriel (although he is not identified by name) has been sent to Daniel, just as before, because the sight of the Son of God is too awesome, and his voice too thunderous.

Heavenly War (Dan 10:12-21)

This angel continues speaking. “Then he said to me, ‘Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words’” (12). The most basic application of this verse is that in fact Daniel has been contrite during these three weeks. He has been seeking God’s face. He has been humbling himself, just as before. He has been praying, confessing sin, all that he was doing before. But he did not stop until he received an answer. Now, he is hearing from the Angel that he is still loved by God, that God still hears his prayers, and that in fact he heard those prayers the first day they went up. But something happened during those 21 days.

“The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia” (13). The heavenly being now speaking to Daniel had been

dispatched on the first day of Daniel's fast (see vs. 2). But it took him these 21 days to arrive. This verse introduces us to a series of theological challenges that few modern people understand, but desperately need to.

The first is that God uses angels in his will to answer the prayers of his people. Most people implicitly recognize that these angels are created beings who are able to interact with both our realm and the heavenly realm. But it is more difficult to think that God uses other created beings to answer prayers. Why wouldn't God just do this directly? Of course, he often does. But we are dealing here with something much larger than the prayer of a simple believer. We are dealing with cosmic forces and governments and nations and prophets of God and dire prophecies that must be heard and transmitted for future generations. Daniel needed a created angel to speak to him about these things.

But this angel of God could be delayed. Angels are not omnipotent. Angels have to deal with the created order of things, just like humans and animals do. In this case, the angel is being delayed by someone called "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" and is left there "with the kings of Persia" for a time. Who is this "prince of Persia?"

In 2010, Hollywood made a movie called *The Prince of Persia*. Its prince was a street urchin named Dastan who later rises to become prince. This has nothing to do with real history but was instead based on a video game series of the same name. Don't do theology via Hollywood.

There are **three options** for who this prince of Persia might be. The first is held by Calvin who believes it is Cyrus' son, **Cambyzes**. As son of the king, he is the crowned prince.¹³ The idea is that Cambyzes had defied the edict of his father regarding the Jews and the rebuilding of their temple and was raging against them. So, God sent this angel to put a stop to it, to prevent him from raging more fiercely against God's people. Somehow, Cambyzes fought against this angel.

The **second** option is the oldest and seems to have been held by every Church Father who mentioned it.¹⁴ This is that

¹³ This view has been argued by modern scholars as well. See **William H. Shea**, "Wrestling with the Prince of Persia: A Study on Daniel 10," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 21:3 (Autumn 1983): 225-250, <https://www.andrews.edu/library/car/cardigital/Periodicals/AUSS/1983-3/1983-3-04.pdf>. Summarized in David E. Stevens, "Daniel 10 and the Notion of Territorial Spirits," *BibSac* 157:628 (2000): 413-14. <https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/daniel10.pdf>.

¹⁴ For example, **Theodoret**, *Commentary on Daniel 10.13-14* ("The one entrusted to rule over the very king of the Persians" and cites Dt 32:8); **Origen**, *On First Principles* 3.3.2 ("As is clearly shown ... [these rulers over individual nations] are not humans but powers."); **Pseudo-Dionysius**, *Celestial Hierarchy* 9.2-4 ("Michael is called the ruler of the Jewish people, and other angels are described as rulers of other nations" and cites Dt 32:8); **Jerome**, *Commentary on Daniel 10.13* ("This was the angel to whose charge Persia was committed" and cites Dt 32:8); **John Cassian**, *Conference* 8.13.2 ("There is no doubt whatsoever that the prince of the kingdom of the Persians was the adversary power that befriended the Persian nation."); **Ammonius of**

Daniel is referring to the Deuteronomy 32 worldview where God set over the 70 nations that came out of Babel 70 “sons of God” to rule over them. “Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God” (Dt 32:7-8).

The Targum says, “He cast the lot among the seventy *angels, the princes of the nations* with whom is the revelation to oversee the city” (Dt 32:8 PJE). This is remembered in Rabshakeh’s (his name ironically means “chief of the princes”) taunt heard by Isaiah, “Who among all the gods of the countries have delivered their countries out of my hand that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?” (2Kg 18:35; Isa 36:20; in fact, Dan 3:15 echoes this language).¹⁵ So the angel is telling Daniel that a heavenly angel (sometimes called a watcher or son of God in other

Alexandria, *Fragments on Daniel 10.20* (“Each nation has a guardian angel over them, so that they may not be harmed by the demons.”); Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius 3.1* (citing Dt 32:8 he says, “So it is clear that the prince is the one who is the commander of the angels that are ranked into legions.”); Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse 19.10* (“The accursed and godforsaken Greeks understand that we have a divine doctrine which states that the holy angels, with the approval of God, are the guardians of nations and of churches and of each one of us.”).

¹⁵ For more, see the sermon “Seventy Nations: Genesis 10.1-32,” n. 10.

literature) who had been assigned to Persia, had withstood him to prevent him from delivering his message.¹⁶

The third option is **a combination of the two**. This plays off an ambiguity. The word “**prince**” (*sar*) is deliberately vague and is used in the Bible both of angels and of men.¹⁷ It is obvious that the one speaking to Daniel is an angel and that Michael is also an angel and that they are clearly interacting with the human realm at this very moment. But the Deuteronomy 32 worldview is also perfectly clear in the Bible. So the idea here is that the two realms are in fact mirroring one another and human and angelic princes are both involved. To me, this view makes a lot of sense and allows for the mystery of how the two realms interact to be the most fully present in our minds. There is a human prince of Persia. There is a heavenly prince of Persia over him.¹⁸ The angel can see and interact with both of them (he and Michael are obviously interacting, but he is left there with kings of Persia who are clearly human).

¹⁶ For a short discussion see **Michael S. Heiser**, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 120-22.

¹⁷ This is argued by **Tim Meadowcroft**, “Who are the Princes of Persia and Greece (Daniel 10)? Pointers Towards the Danielic Vision of Earth and Heaven,” *JSTOT* 29.1 (2004): 99-113.

¹⁸ This is seen in many places in the Bible, including the Isaiah’s prophecy against the king of Babylon who is likened to Lucifer (Isaiah) and Ezekiel’s taunt against the king of Tyre who is likened to the guardian cherubim of Eden (Ezek 28).

I'll come back later to what this all means. First, in the structure of our chapter, the very center, is about Michael. "But Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me." Who is this Michael? His name is either a statement or a question: "Who is like God" or "Who is like God?" It reminds us of Moses' song about the Angel of the LORD, the "man of war" (Ex 15:3). "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?" (Ex 15:11). Some church Fathers believed that he was the angel who went with Israel in the wilderness.¹⁹ But that isn't particularly helpful if you don't actually say who you think that angel is. Is it a created angel or the Angel of the LORD? I believe it is the Angel of the LORD.

In fact, many throughout the centuries have taken the view that Michael is a proper name for the Angel of the LORD.²⁰ Others have argued against this.²¹ I believe that

¹⁹ "But who is Michael, but the angel who is granted to the people, as he says to Moses, 'I will not go with you on the way because the people are stiff necked, but my angel will go with you?'" Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel 40.4*;

²⁰ Calvin held this view. Some think the word Michael represents Christ, and I do not object to this opinion. "Clearly enough, if all angels keep watch over the faithful and elect, still Christ holds the first rank among them, because he is their head, and uses their ministry and assistance to defend all his people" (comments on Daniel 10:13).

²¹ Heiser says, "I do not consider Michael to be this second Yahweh figure. Briefly, I reject this equation for the following reasons. Michael is referred to as the prince of Israel (Dan 10:21; 12:1) and *one* of an unidentified number of 'chief princes' (Dan 10:13). These statements must inform our reading of Dan 8:11, where the little horn of Daniel's vision 'became great, even as great as the Prince of the host' (italics mine). The phrase 'prince of the host' transparently describes a leader of the entire heavenly host (i.e., all divine beings besides Yahweh). It is never used of Michael in the Bible. Dan 8:11 leaves this figure unidentified. Consequently, linking Michael to this phrase is arbitrary. This fact is important in view of Dan 8:25, where the earlier

even though Michael is called here “*one of the chief princes*,” this is like the Suffering Servant of Isaiah saying that he “*had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him*” (Isa 53:2). Jesus was the King of kings and yet he appeared to men as just another man. In fact, Michael is later called “*your prince*” (Dan 10:21) and “*the great prince who has charge of your people [Israel]*.” He is, in fact, the angel over Israel. But who does Moses say that this is? While the LXX says that God put “*angels*” over the nations, Moses said he put the “*sons of God*” over the nations (Dt 32:8). “Angels” translates “sons of God.” If that is true, then what would it mean when the next verse says, “*But the LORD’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance*” (9)? Sons inherit things. The

‘prince of the host’ is called ‘the prince of princes.’ In Dan 8, this figure, exalted above all divine beings under Yahweh, is assaulted by the little horn. Dan 11:36 describes this same assault with slightly different language. There the earthly ‘king’ who is the analogy to the little horn ‘shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods’ (RSV). Since Dan 8’s ‘prince of the host’ who is ‘prince of princes’ is correlated with ‘God of gods’ in Dan 11:36, it would be coherent to see this unidentified figure as a second Yahweh figure who, as I describe in detail later, is identified with Jesus. In fact, in the Septuagint, the ‘commander of Yahweh’s army’ (Josh 5:13–15) is described with *archistratēgos*, a word that occurs as a synonym for *archangelos* in Second Temple Jewish literature (e.g., *Testament of Abraham*, long rescension 1:4 and 14:10; 3 Baruch (Greek Apocalypse) 11:8) ... The phrases of Dan 8 are never used of Michael, and so an identification of Michael with this figure (and therefore ‘the God of gods’ and Jesus) lacks scriptural support. Michael is merely one of several chief princes (Dan 10:13). He is not exalted over all other princes (Dan 8:11, 25).” Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 120, n. 8.

LORD here would have to be the Son of God, the Angel over Israel, i.e. [Michael](#).

Notice how the angel talking to Daniel cannot withstand the power of the prince of Persia. But Michael came to help him. Clearly, Michael is more powerful than him, and that's very much like the picture we see of the creature in [vv. 5-6](#). Indeed, I see no reason why Michael couldn't also be the very terrifying figure that caused Daniel to fall on his face just a few verses earlier. This would mean that Michael is there too! Both angels are now in Daniel's presence. Why?

“To make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come” ([Dan 10:14](#)). This refers to the vision that will be discussed in ch. 11. We have no need to get into that here, because ch. 10 is really about this confrontation that Daniel has with these heavenly entities.

Notice [Daniel's new reaction](#). “When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute” ([15](#)). The entire scene is just too overwhelming for him. How can a man stand in the presence of God and his holy servants?

He can't! But behold the grace of God. “Behold, one in the likeness of the children of man (i.e. the sons of Adam) touched my lips” (16). This is what the seraphim did to Isaiah when he was commissioned to be God's prophet (Isa 6:7). For him, it took place in the divine council of heaven around the heavenly temple altar. When his lips were touched by the tongs taken from the altar, his sin was atoned for! This may explain why we have a figure in linen in Daniel's vision.

It is also similar to what *Yahweh* does to Jeremiah in his call to be a prophet. “Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth...” (Jer 1:7). In Isaiah, a created angel touches the lips. In Jeremiah, the Angel of the LORD does. This is curious because we are not entirely sure who the person touching Daniel's lips is. “This may be taken to refer to the same being as the one mentioned in verse 15 ... Or the phrase may be understood as pointing to another (different) heavenly being,”²² most likely, the angel in vv. 5-6.

It seems clear to me that there are at least two heavenly beings in this passage. There is the frightening figure “like a man” who could very well be Michael and there is the

²² René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Handbook on the Book of Daniel*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 272.

person fighting the prince of Persia who now speaks with Daniel. As the passage unfolds, Daniel is both touched and spoken to. These acts could all be being done by the same angel, we'll call him Gabriel for ease of understanding. Or, the touching could be being done by the frightening figure and the speaking by Gabriel.

If “one in the likeness of a son of man” (a child of Adam) is Gabriel, then he both touches and speaks to Daniel throughout the vision and he is distinct from the terrifying angel of vv. 5-6 who really doesn't do anything else in the chapter. It is important to note that he isn't a son of Adam, he is only in the *likeness* of us (at this moment?). On the other hand, Daniel uses very strange language when he says, “And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips ... I said to him who stood before me...” (16). Why add “him who stood before me”? It seems redundant, unless he is speaking to a different person than the one who just touched his lips. If this is the case, then the same person, I presume Christ, touches his lips in vv. 16 and again in 18, but “the one who stood before me” and “he said, ‘O man greatly loved...’” (18) both refer to Gabriel.

The language of the entire scene is quite difficult to understand, but I suppose that's the point of a terrifying

vision. We just aren't quite sure what's going on, even as Daniel himself wasn't quite sure, which is why he kept bowing to the ground and losing strength.

The point of this interaction is to strengthen the prophet who has lost it over and over again (8-10, 11, 15, 16, 17). If Isaiah and Jeremiah are indications, the touching of the lips gives him hope that his sins are covered and that his lips and words are acceptable, and therefore he can stand up and be strong and of good courage (19). But it is also to **tell Daniel why it took so long to give him the answer to his prayers.**

We are seeing a window open here. There is a cosmic battle going on around him, and in fact Gabriel is going to return to it (20) just as soon as he explains to Daniel what is written in “**the book of truth**” (21). The battle will get worse, as the “**prince of Greece**” enters the fray (20), which I think is there to foreshadow the coming history from this strange book of truth, a book that essentially is written by God himself and deals with the history of humanity and nations rising and falling “**until the end**” which we will look at next time.

Application

Why Doesn't God Hear My Prayers?

What I want to do for the remainder of our time is address a couple of things that I think can have great practical value today. The first deals with prayer. Ch. 9 is all about prayer. Ch. 10 is about fasting and seeking God. His prayers are not answered right away.

Calvin imagines Daniel thinking, “What treatment is this, to suffer me to consume away through grief for so long a period?” Daniel had remained for three weeks in a state of the severest affliction. God had heard him on the very first day. So why didn’t he answer him right away? Very pastorally (as he almost always is), Calvin explains,

We ought carefully to notice this, because delay often disturbs us when God does not immediately extend his help, and for a long time hides from us the fruit of our prayers. Whenever our passions burst forth with a strong impetuosity, and we easily manifest tokens of impatience, we must notice this expression of the angel, for our prayers may be already heard while God’s favor and mercy is concealed from us. The experience of Daniel is daily fulfilled in every member of the Church, and without the slightest doubt the same discipline is exercised towards all the pious. This is our practical reflection.²³

²³ John Calvin and Thomas Myers, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 251.

“But,” he continues,

We ought to derive another practical benefit from the passage,—God does not cease to regard us with favor even while he may not please to make us conscious of it, for he does not always place it before our eyes, but rather hides it from our view. We infer from this, God’s constant care for our safety, although not exhibited exactly in the way which our minds may conceive and comprehend. God surpasses all our comprehension in the way in which he provides for our safety, as the angel here relates his mission in quite another direction, and yet in the service of the Church. It now appears how Daniel obtained an answer to his prayers from the very first day of their offering, and yet remained unconscious of it, until God sent him some consolation in the midst of his troubles.²⁴

Demythologization

My second comment from this passage deals more fundamentally with [the supernatural world](#) and its interaction with our own. This is something I’ve thought a great deal about in recent years, especially in regard to a Christian world in many places almost maddeningly seized with avoiding it, sometimes at all costs. Having written a

²⁴ Ibid., 251–252.

couple of books on some of the supernatural things in the Bible, I've been consistently reminded of this. I've both witnessed personally and had other people tell me about the same reaction when they try to talk to others about it; that is a kind of **seething anger** raging just beneath the surface over someone who would even suggest, for example, that angels could have sired giants with women. Never mind that this was the only interpretation in the Jewish or Christian church for centuries. We moderns, like many in the past, simply find such things **too incredible to believe**²⁵ and, like several of our well-known fathers, think the idea comes from "**mad fools**" or "**stupid and silly persons.**"²⁶ That's never a good argument to use.

Closer to Daniel 10 someone asks,

How can we discern the hand of God and God's agents in the affairs of human society? We have not been helped in doing so by two key related distinctions that the discipline of biblical studies, at least in the Western tradition, insists on maintaining: that **between history and myth**, and that **between proper historical investigation of events and faith or**

²⁵ **Augustine** (*City of God* 15.23) and Luther's (Comments on Genesis 6:2) whole reason for denying it was, "I could not believe it."

²⁶ **Theodoret of Cyrus**, *The Questions on the Octateuch Volume 1: On Genesis and Exodus*, The Library of Early Christianity, trans. Robert C. Hill (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 97.

confessional affirmations about events. In fact these distinctions almost forbid us from even attempting to do so in any meaningful way.²⁷

What is he talking about here? A couple of things. First, he understands that this whole worldview of angels or “gods” being guardians of the nations arises out of **the myths** of our most ancient past. **Plato**, virtually copying Moses,²⁸ writes, “In the days of old the gods had the whole earth distributed among them by allotment,” And in another place, “Now different gods had their allotments in different places which they set in order...”²⁹

Moses and Plato on the Gods of the Nations

Deuteronomy 32:7-9	Critias
Remember the days of old ; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God . But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.	In the days of old ... (Now different gods had their allotments in different places which they set in order.) ... the gods had the whole earth distributed among them by allotment .

²⁷ Meadowcroft, “Who are the Princes,” 110.

²⁸ Justin Martyr said, “Plato clearly and openly alludes to the law of Moses, but, fearing the hemlock, he did not dare mention him by name whose teaching, he well knew, was hateful to the Greeks.” (Justin Martyr, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 25). Peter Allix remarks, “It is certain, that Plato himself, by conversing with the Jews in Egypt, borrowed of them the best notions he had of God.” Peter Allix, *The Judgment of the Ancient Jewish Church Against the Unitarians*, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1821), 2.

²⁹ Plato, *Critias*.

He goes on to explain, “... Hephaestus and Athene, who were brother and sister ... being united also in the love of philosophy and art, both obtained as their common portion this land [Greece], which was naturally adapted for wisdom and virtue; and there they implanted brave children of the soil, and put into their minds the order of government; their names are preserved, but their actions have disappeared by reason of the destruction (the Flood) of those who received the tradition, and the lapse of ages ... Poseidon, receiving for his lot the island of Atlantis, begat children by a mortal woman, and settled them in a part of the island, which I will describe.” That’s as mythological as it gets.

Therefore, dealing on some level with mythology, Daniel 10 intensifies **a problem of definition**. When most people hear the word, I believe they instantly hear in their heads a bunch of synonyms. Some of these would be **fable, fabrication, falsehood, fake, fantasy, farfetched, fib, fiction, forgery, figment of the imagination, and fish story**. To put it another way, a myth is, to Christians, an f-word. We don’t talk about such things in polite company, much less do we seriously entertain these as anything other than silly wives-tales to be avoided or possibly even disciplined by a church. This explains, I believe, why so many modern Christians hated

having to take Greek Mythology as their 10th grade English course. I also believe we badly misunderstand what myth is. Myths are origin stories that weave the natural and supernatural realms together. They can be true history or false. But necessarily believing they are false causes people to not understand or even not believe things like Daniel 10 and the interaction of the supernatural with our world.

A **second problem** our author is identifying is the opposite of mythology, and this is the modern worldview that is deeply influenced by the great *-isms* of the last couple hundred years, including rationalism, materialism, naturalism, evolution, and science. **Rudolf Bultmann** (1884-1976), a German Lutheran professor of the New Testament at the University of Marburg who became one of the major figures of 20th century biblical studies, puts the problem succinctly, “**We cannot use electric lights and radios and, in the event of illness, avail ourselves of modern medical and clinical means and at the same time believe in the spirit and wonder world of the New Testament.**”³⁰

³⁰ **Rudolf Bultmann**, “New Testament and Mythology,” in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch (New York: Harper & Row, orig. 1941), 5. <http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/Pdfs/BultmannNTMyth.pdf>. David Congdon explains how Bultmann is misunderstood. I think he does a fine job. Ironically, however, like Bultmann himself who is classified both as a liberal and conservative theologian (depending on whether you are his enemy or friend), Congdon himself, who works for IVP Academic Press, an Evangelical publisher, gives a classically liberal and positive take on Bultmann. See **David**

He believed that the wonder of the Bible is its core message about Jesus, not all those extra ancient outdated views of the world that go with it. What he meant by this was that **we live in a scientific age** and the people of the NT lived in a **pre-scientific age** dominated by a worldview that needed **mythology** to explain the world around them. Since our worldview is not theirs, we cannot possibly expect modern people to accept their mythology as true, even though we still want to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to them.

He explains (and I think he is right), that the Scripture, including the NT, is filled with a mythological worldview. A three-tiered universe with the earth at the center, heaven above, and hell underneath; heaven as the abode of angels; hell as the place of torment; earth as a place in the middle where God and angels and Satan and demons all interact with our natural, everyday events; miracles; demon possession, God guiding our lives and thoughts; heavenly visions from prophets; supernatural powers in control of history; a coming end-of-the-world apocalyptic catastrophe; judgment after life; the dead rising ... **“This is the mythical view of the world**

Congdon, “The most Misunderstood Quote in Modern Theology (Guest Post by David Congdon),” *Unsystematic Theology with Kyle Roberts* (March 17, 2016), <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/unsystematictheology/2016/03/the-most-misunderstood-quote-in-modern-theology-guest-post-by-david-congdon/>.

which the New Testament presupposes when it presents the event of redemption which is the subject of its preaching.”³¹

Mythology presents us with an unnecessary hurdle to the contemporary hearing and understanding of the Gospel, he says. We are scientists, after all, and we cannot possibly be expected to take such things seriously. Therefore, to help people overcome superstitions so they can believe the Gospel, he said that “the task of theology [is] to *demythologize* the Christian proclamation.”³²

Strangely, we conservative Christians on one hand *take pride* in the fact that we believe in a Trinity, the resurrection of the dead, the Holy Spirit’s work in his people, the miracles of Jesus, and so on. And yet, we have entire ministries dedicated to explaining the scientific processes of creation, of the Flood, of the Red Sea parting, completely missing or even denying the mythological story telling going on there.³³ Van Gemeren says it well in his article on Genesis 6.

Why does the theology in which creation, miracles, the miraculous birth and resurrection of Jesus have a place, prefer

³¹ Bultmann, 1-2.

³² Bultmann, 3.

³³ We could learn a great deal from *C. S. Lewis* in his regard in his little essay “Is Theology Poetry?” Originally presented to the Oxford Socratic Club in 1944, first published in 1962, and republished by Samizdat University Press, 2014.

a rational explanation of Genesis 6:1-4? ... What concerns me is a seeming inconsistency. Normally, the goal of interpretation has been the elucidation of the Word of God so the community of faith may know what to believe and what to do. When, however, the object of interpretation becomes the removal of apparent obstacles to which the passage may give rise, reinterpretation is introduced, and one may wonder how this differs from demythologization ... [are the difficulties] so great that [they] must be removed as something offensive? Is it possible that theology has taken the place of exegesis? Or has a philosophical theology explained away the difficulties of [such passages]?³⁴

What does it do to us if we can't talk about this stuff or believe it? Besides the obvious problems of having to come up with excuses for not believing what the text actually says and in that way doing great harm to our witness in the world, it makes it virtually impossible to understand Paul when he says, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil

³⁴ Willem A. Van Gemenen, “The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4: An Example of Evangelical Demythologization?” *WTJ* 43 (1981), 320-21. 320-48.
<https://www.dougvandorn.com/Van%20Gemenen%20-%20The%20Sons%20of%20God%20in%20Gen%206.1-4-Evangelical%20Demythologization.pdf>.

in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). Growing up, no one talked about this. It was like I was Elisha’s servant, blind to the spiritual reality all around me. I was hardly alone.

But when you see it, suddenly it’s like moving your eyesight from 2-D to 3-D. The events of the world become much more striking, vivid, and colorful. You start to realize that it isn’t just men who rage against God. It is the heavenly beings, who are interacting with us, inciting our passions, affecting massive change on the levels of governments and civilization, plotting against us, seeking our harm.

When we see this, suddenly we start to realize just how important prayer truly is, for we cannot fight against spiritual creatures with bullets and guns. We have to use the weapons of the Spirit: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shows of the readiness of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, paying at all times in the Spirit, staying alert, persevering, making supplication for all the saints.

Simply put, we are in a cosmic battle. Do you believe it? Does this make a difference to how you understand world events, political uprisings ... 2020? At a fundamental level, you are being confronted with a very different way of

viewing reality in Daniel 10. The **great Angel** stands enthroned. **Princes**—heaven and earthly, interact with one another and rage against the Son of God and his saints. **Angels** on God's side are fighting battles we can hardly imagine. Their interactions made all of our ancestors see earth as a mirror of heaven. They etched this worldview deeply into everything they did, so that we would remember and understand it. These creatures were and are deeply involved with this earth. Their interactions even effect our prayers. But enthroned above them all is the **Great Angel of the Covenant**. He is terrifying in appearance and should make our strength fail at the thought. But he comes, in various means of grace, to strengthen us, to cause us to stand, to be strong, and courageous. This is the heart of Christianity. It makes us people of the other-realm, something the the whole world needs to see renewed in us in these dark days.

See the Word that Daniel saw. Humble yourself before his majesty. Know that there are powers far greater than you and I. Turn to God and pray about these things. Test your soul and make sure you believe them. But believe most that the Great Power of Heaven has done all you need to have forgiveness, courage, and strength. Nothing can thwart his will. He does as he purposes in heaven and earth. Most of all,

he has become one of us, died for our sins, been raised to eternal life, ascended to the Right Hand of the Father. And soon he is coming to judge the living and the dead. Put your faith in him and learn to see the universe as it truly is.

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