

The story is told of an unforgettable baptism that took place in a little West Texas church. They were building a new sanctuary and it was almost finished. The new baptistry was ready for use but unfortunately the changing rooms were not. Be that may, the pastor was so excited about the new sanctuary, he planned some baptisms anyway. Since the changing rooms didn't have walls yet, they hung up curtains so those being baptized could change their clothes.

Well, the whole congregation gathered at the start of the service to watch the baptisms in the new baptistry. Everything went well until the last person to be baptized made her way down into the water. This lady was terrified of water, and in those final seconds before being lowered under the water she panicked – clawing the air for anything to keep from going under. Within her grasp was the curtain that hung behind the baptistry which served as the front wall of the men's changing room. She reached out and grabbed it, and pulled it down.

Having just stepped out of the baptistry, there stood a man completely naked, and realizing something dreadful was happening, he slowly turned around to see the entire congregation looking at him in astonishment. Quickly assessing the situation, the man did the only sensible thing he could do – he dived back into the baptistry with the preacher and the panic-stricken woman – and with that, they dismissed the worship service for the morning.

Now, why did I share that? Well, this morning, as we continue in the book **Daniel**, the curtain is going to be pulled down, so to speak – giving us a rare glimpse of the activity that occurs around us in the unseen spirit world.

We have come to the last three chapters in this book – chapters that should probably be taken together as one whole unit. In **Chapter 10** we are given the *introduction* to a vision. **Chapter 11** is the *interpretation* of the vision, and **Chapter 12** is the *epilogue* of the vision. This should be taken together as one unit, but not in one service in case you just became concerned, so with that said, if you have your Bible, turn to **Daniel 10**, which again serves as the introduction, and we will begin with **verse 1**.

¹In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and one of great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision. ²In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. ³I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.

In this first verse – written in third person, Daniel seems to be giving us a summary of these next three chapters. In the third year of King **Cyrus** of Persia, Daniel received a vision with a spoken **message**. We are not given any details, there's no mention of crazy zoo animals with horns here – all we are told is that whatever Daniel received in this vision – he knew it to be **true**, he had come to **understand** it, and he was aware it included **great conflict** for his people. That's the summary, and then beginning with **verse 2**, Daniel explains how all of this came about.

It's 536 B.C., the **third year** of Cyrus, and that's important for context because it means two years have passed since Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. Cyrus proclaimed that any person who wanted to go back could do so, but by this time – two years later, only 42,000 Jews had returned home to do the work, while many more decided to remain in Babylon. They had no desire to go to the land that God had given them, and remember, all of the Jews under the age of seventy were born in Babylon. They had never set foot in their homeland, they had never worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem, so there was no real interest to return. They had become accustomed to the foreign ways, they had settled – in a land not their own, they had become comfortable in the culture around them, and as a result, they decided to stay put.

And in regard to the temple rebuilding project, the news from Jerusalem wasn't good either. A number of those who had returned home had lost heart, and they were giving little to no effort towards the project, and on top of that, some of the locals who lived in that territory were giving the builders a hard time causing a work stoppage.

Well, all this was disturbing and sad to Daniel. He had high hopes for the future of his people but his hopes were being dashed. He was deeply burdened, and so he went into a period of **mourning** where he fasted from choice foods, he fervently prayed, and he applied no lotion to his body which served several purposes to include being used as a symbol of joy.

So, Daniel was mourning over his people. He's praying and fasting. His heart was turned towards heaven, he's seeking wisdom and insight from God, and after **three entire weeks** – that's three normal weeks, Daniel goes for a walk.

Let's continue on. Beginning with **verse 4** we are told,

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris,

Let's stop here for a second. From this verse, we now know that Daniel did not return to Jerusalem. He remained in Babylon – likely too old to make the 500-mile journey home and too old to do manual labor on the temple, and so here we find him walking along the bank of the Tigris River, which is several miles away from the city of Babylon, and then Daniel tells us beginning with **verse 5**,

⁵ I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz. ⁶ His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult. ⁷ Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. ⁸ So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. ⁹ But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Daniel is walking along the river bank with his companions, and all of a sudden, he has an encounter with a *divine being* who appears before him. This *divine being* looks like a man dressed in linen with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like a brilliant jewel, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. We are not told what he spoke, but whatever it was, it was overwhelming. Now Daniel's companions did not see any of this – they see nothing, but they sense a great dread in the air which terrifies them, and they run for cover, leaving poor old Daniel there all alone.

Well, what does Daniel do? We are told in **verse 9, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.** That's another way of saying he passed out.

So, who is this *divine being* that Daniel encounters? There is some mystery here, and even conservative scholars are split over this. Some say it's the angel Gabriel again, but Daniel has already seen Gabriel twice and I don't think a third appearance would prompt this kind of reaction by Daniel. Some speculate this is a glorious angel unknown to Daniel – which could be the case, while others suggest that this is a *Christophany* – an Old Testament appearance of Jesus.

I personally lean that direction. I believe Daniel has had an encounter with the Son of God, and I say that because the description given here by Daniel fits the

description given later to us by the Apostle John who sees Jesus in all of His glory – and let me show you what I’m talking about.

In **Revelation 1**, beginning with **verse 12** this is what John saw.

¹² Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; ¹³ and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. ¹⁴ His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. ¹⁶ In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. ¹⁷ When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man.

As you can see, the descriptions by Daniel and John are nearly identical, as well as their reactions when they saw Jesus in His glory – both passed out like dead men.

*One Sunday after the church service, a man was waiting to speak to the pastor, John MacArthur. When the opportunity came, the man shared with him how he often saw the Lord, he had regular visions of him, Jesus talked with him often. He said, “For example, Jesus will come and speak to me while I am shaving.” John MacArthur, who was understandably skeptical, said to him, “I have just one question. **When you see Jesus, do you stop shaving?**” When the man said, “No” John MacArthur said, “Then I seriously doubt that you really saw Jesus.” In the Bible, when God appeared to the prophets and the apostles; it was utterly devastating. They collapsed before Him like a tree being felled.”*

So, I think Daniel had an encounter with Jesus in all of His glory, but with that said, if you have a different view and think this is an angel instead, that is totally okay. You could very well be right.

Now, if I may be allowed to follow my train of thought – if it was Jesus, **then why would He appear to Daniel right here and right now?** I’m only guessing, but Daniel is going to receive a vision about the future of his people and some of it is very disturbing. There’s trouble, and suffering, and conflict, and warfare in the days ahead, and maybe the Lord wants to establish from the very onset, that no matter what happens, no matter what Daniel sees – in the end, when the dust finally settles – it’s all about Jesus, and make no mistake, He is the sovereign Lord of all.

Okay, let's continue on beginning with **verse 10**, where we are told,

¹⁰ Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. ¹¹ He said to me, “O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. ¹² Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. ¹³ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future.”

We left off with Daniel passed out cold, but here he is aroused by a touch, helped up to his hands and his knees – remember Daniel is an old man so getting up is a process, and he is being spoken to with some very encouraging words.

Now, it would be easy to assume that this *divine being* who is now helping Daniel to get up is the same *divine being* that Daniel had previously encountered along the river bank. That makes complete sense to me – it flows for me and I am a flow person, but if you believe it was Jesus whom Daniel had encountered – *like I do*, then you are presented with an interesting dilemma to sort out.

Look up at the screen and jump down to **verse 13**. This is coming from the one talking to Daniel, and we are told,

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.

The one talking to Daniel explains that on his way from heaven to earth, he was attacked by the **prince of the kingdom of Persia**. This was not a man – this was a demon who was assigned to influence the king of Persia to work against God's plans and God's people. This was a demon, who for **twenty-one days**, restrained the one talking to Daniel until help came from the archangel **Michael**.

So, I don't know about you, but I have a problem imagining Jesus being restrained by any demon for any length of time, and so now I have a decision to make. If

Daniel had an encounter with an angel along the river bank, as many suggest, then this flows very nicely, but if Daniel had an encounter with Jesus along the river bank, then the one who is now helping Daniel and talking to him has to be someone different. Hopefully that makes sense.

I still believe Daniel had an encounter with Jesus along the river bank, and while he was passed out, Jesus leaves, and an angel shows up – perhaps Gabriel again.

So, I believe an angel is now with Daniel – he is gentle with this old man, helping him up to his hands and his knees. Then Daniel is told he is a **man of high esteem** – he’s a man who’s greatly loved and treasured by God, and he should stand up. Daniel stands up, but he’s still trembling and wobbly on his feet, and then the angel says,

“Daniel from the first day you prayed in humility, from the time you sought the Lord with all your heart – heaven responded. Your prayer for understanding was heard and I was sent forth to reveal the future of your people to you, but on my way, I was delayed, locked into battle with a demon assigned to influence the kingdom of Persia until Michael came to relieve me.”

This is a rare glimpse behind the curtain. Angels and demons are real, and they are active in the unseen spirit world. They have ranks or hierarchies of authority and power. They seem to have assignments. They can influence kings and kingdoms – good on the part of angels and evil on the part of demons – which may help explain why some leaders and some nations do what they do, and as we see here, they engage in battle – even over the prayer of a humble man.

Let’s camp out here for a moment. As you can see behind the curtain, prayer really matters to God and it should really matter to us because as someone once said, the Christian life is not a *playground* – it’s a *battleground*, and prayer which is grounded in the truth of God’s Word – prayer offered according to God’s will, can prompt divine activity in both the *seen* and the *unseen* world.

Prayer is not just some therapeutic exercise. It’s not just some box we check off in the morning to do our spiritual duty and make ourselves feel good. It’s a big deal, things really happen, there’s a real unseen battle going on, and when we pray according to God’s will, He hears our prayer – and even though He hears our prayer, we may not experience the timely response we desire, and therefore, like Daniel, we are to be persistent in prayer.

Daniel didn't just pray once and then give up. He humbled himself and kept at it – totally unaware there was a real unseen battle going on over his prayer. **How long did Daniel pray until the answer came?** Three weeks. **How long was the angel locked into battle with the demon?** Twenty-one days – three weeks until the super angel Michael showed up. **Was there a link between Daniel's prayer and the angelic victory?** I honestly don't know, but it's something to think about.

Anyway, the angel tells Daniel why he has come. *“I'm here to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days. That's what you were praying about. I have a vision for you concerning Israel's future – for your days – all the way to the end of days.”*

What a day for Daniel, trying to make sense of all he has heard and experienced. He's seen the Son of God and passed out cold, he's interacted with an angel, he's apparently just learned about warfare in the unseen world, and he has received a vision concerning the future of his people. It was a lot to take in – Daniel's overwhelmed, and it explains this next passage beginning with **verse 15**.

¹⁵ When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. ¹⁶ And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who was standing before me, “O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength. ¹⁷ For how can such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me.” ¹⁸ Then this one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me. ¹⁹ He said, “O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!” Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, “May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.”

Daniel was wiped out – drained of strength and speechless, and then it appears another angel shows up who touches Daniel on the lips. At that point, Daniel can speak – but nothing more, and in so many words, he says to the angel,

“With all due respect, I'm unworthy to handle something like this. This is all too much for me. After receiving this vision – I'm in anguish. I'm a wreck, I can barely breathe. I've got nothing left to give.”

Once again, the angel touches Daniel and his strength is renewed, and also once again, Daniel is reminded he is **highly esteemed** – greatly treasured and loved by

his God, and as a result, there is no need to be afraid – there’s no need to throw in the towel – instead be strong and courageous.

Then before the angel leaves, he provides Daniel with some final words beginning with **verse 20**,

20 Then he said, “Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come. 21 However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince.

Here the angel asks Daniel if he understands why he came – it’s a rhetorical question just to make sure Daniel is clear. Then the angel explains the battle is not yet over. He is to return to assist the archangel **Michael** – they were the only two who were needed in battling the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece – two demons who opposed God’s plans and God’s people.

Lastly, the angel says to Daniel that he will tell him **what is inscribed in the writing of truth**. This is a description of God’s prophetic revelation for His people, it’s written out, it’s engraved, it’s the truth, it’s a done deal and no amount of demonic activity can change the outcome.

So, that was the introduction for the last few chapters in this book, and I don’t know about you, but this was very convicting introduction.

Prayer makes a difference – at times that difference may be completely unknown to us, and as we learned this morning, that difference may have an impact in both the *seen* and the *unseen* worlds. We know this to be true and yet – **Why do we not pray more? Why do we give up after a few attempts – after a few minutes? Where is the sincerity and the passion in our prayer? Or maybe here’s a better question – a question I will leave you with to ponder: If Daniel prayed just like you do, what might have happened?**

Source Material:

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