

Daniel 10:1–19

Introduction

This morning we're coming to the beginning of the end of Daniel (see page 9). Of the four visions in this second half of Daniel, the first three really didn't have much "introduction." But this fourth vision has an entire chapter of "introduction." This chapter is what will enable us to read the rest of this vision rightly – in a way that imparts to us wisdom and understanding.

I. 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.

These opening words of chapter ten are theologically and emotionally jarring to us. Back in chapter one, after Daniel's deportation to Babylon, we read this:

➤ Daniel 1:21 — And Daniel was there *until the first year of King Cyrus*.

The point is not to say that after the first year of Cyrus, Daniel no longer lived in Babylon. The point is to emphasize that Daniel lived to see the end of the exile – the day when the word went out from Cyrus that Jerusalem should be rebuilt. Daniel lived through the death of God's people in exile to see the beginning of the end – the beginning of their restoration and resurrection from the dead. And so here at the end of the book, these words are jarring: "In the *third* year of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel" (still living in exile; v. 4), "who was named Belteshazzar." It's been a long time since we heard that name (the last time was in chapter five; 5:12); and the reason for reminding us of it here is to bring us back again to chapter one where the chief of the eunuchs gave to Daniel a Babylonian name, Belteshazzar (1:7).

So here we are, two or three years after the decree allowing the Jews to return home and Daniel is still living in Babylon and his name is still Belteshazzar. He's in his eighties now, so maybe he's just too old to endure the rigors of the return journey and the hard work of resettling and rebuilding. Maybe he sees that he can be of greater service to his people by staying in Babylon and using his connections to advocate for them. But in any case, the language here is a reminder that though the exile is over in one sense, it's not really, finally over.

And now, to top everything off, a word is revealed to Daniel and the word (or the message) was one of a "great conflict" – of battle and war. When we hear of this "great conflict," we might be reminded of those sixty-two sevens of "troubled times" culminating in the "decreed *end*" and the "desolations" poured out on the earthly temple and city of Jerusalem in 70 AD (9:25-27). This fourth vision is going to be all about that "troubled time." And yet we remember, too, that the "troubled time" in Daniel 9 also culminates in the Jubilee and Sabbath rest of God's people (9:24). And so also, here in this fourth and final vision, we'll be brought in the end—in the last chapter of Daniel—to that final salvation and deliverance when the death symbolized by the exile of God's people is replaced by the resurrection of the dead to life everlasting. So we go on, now, to read in verses 2-3:

II. Daniel 10:2–3 — In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.

As we have so often throughout this book, we see here the heart of Daniel. Three weeks of mourning. Three weeks of eating only the sparest diet and denying oneself all of the normal and most basic comforts of life (such as oil to moisturize one’s skin in a dry climate). It was in this third year of Cyrus (when the small number of returning Jews had only just begun work on the temple) that the opposition to the work of rebuilding began in earnest. We read in Ezra chapter four:

➤ **Ezra 4:1–5** — When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the LORD, the God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers’ houses and said to them, “Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here.” But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers’ houses in Israel said to them, “You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.” Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

This is the news, no doubt, that causes Daniel to mourn. This combined with the fact that Daniel knows now that even when Jerusalem is rebuilt, there will still be 62 more sevens of “troubled times” and then—final, eschatological judgment poured out on the earthly city and temple. Maybe we could say that the more Daniel understood, the more Daniel realized he didn’t understand. So that’s why he prays now, humbling himself and crying out for understanding of what the future holds for his people (cf. 10:12, 14).

Why should Daniel care *this much*? Why can’t he just let the future take care of itself? Today, Daniel could still be living a very comfortable life, enjoying meat and wine and delicacies and anointing himself with oil. But now he finds it impossible to enjoy any of these things. It’s one thing to care, isn’t it? It’s another thing to care *this much*. Daniel’s distress and turmoil is simply the result of his deep concern for God’s glory in the salvation of His people. Daniel’s mourning for three weeks on end was just the result of him seeking first God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness. It was the orientation of Daniel’s desires and longings around the things of God—around God’s saving, redemptive purposes—that caused Daniel to care *this much*.

So how much do we care? How much do we care about the things of the kingdom and the priorities of heaven? Daniel showed that he cared not just by mourning and fasting, but by praying. Can truly say we’re seeking first the kingdom of heaven as individuals and as families if we’re not praying together as a church? Do we care—do I care—like Daniel cared? But now we move on from Daniel’s mourning and fasting and praying to read in verses 4-6:

III. Daniel 10:4–6 — On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris) 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. 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.

Whenever we come in the Bible to visions of heavenly beings, whether divine or angelic, we find the biblical writers always searching for metaphors that might convey to us just an idea or a likeness of what they saw. So in Revelation chapter one, when John sees a vision of one “like” a son of man, he uses that word “like” eight times – “like a trumpet... like white wool... like snow... like a flame of fire... like burnished bronze... like the roar of many waters... like the sun shining in full strength...” (Rev. 1:10-16). When Ezekiel sees a vision of God’s throne, seventeen times he uses the expressions “as it were,” “like,” and “likeness” (Ezek. 1:4-28). Even the angelic attendants, the cherubim and seraphim in God’s throne room, defy any attempts to describe them fully. Ezekiel says that he saw the “*likeness*” of four living creatures (1:5) and that “their appearance was *like* burning coals of fire, *like* the appearance of torches... And the living creatures darted to and fro, *like* the appearance of a flash of lightning” (1:13-14). Beside each of these four living creatures was a wheel (1:14)—“*as it were* a wheel within a wheel” (symbolizing the mobility of God’s throne; 1:16)—“and the rims of [the wheels] were full of eyes all around (symbolizing the all-seeing, all knowing nature of God; 1:18) and “the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels” (1:20-21); and “the appearance of the wheels... was *like* the gleaming of beryl” (1:16). The sound of the wings of the living creatures was “*like* the sound of many waters, *like* the sound of the Almighty, a sound of tumult *like* the sound of an army” (1:24). Do you see how Ezekiel piles up metaphors to describe what is indescribable? And do you see how the glory of these living creatures—of these angelic cherubim—is a reflection of the glory of the living God in whose presence they stand? Moses was just a flesh and blood mortal, and yet think of how his face shone with glory just from talking with God for a brief time on the mountain (cf. Exod. 34:29-35; 2 Cor. 3:7). How much more, then, must the immortal angels, who always stand in the presence of God (cf. Lk. 1:19), shine with the unbearable brilliance and radiance of the glory of God? Therefore Daniel, too, must search for metaphors and analogies—not so we can see exactly what he saw, but just so we can have even the faintest idea of what it was that he saw (“his body was *like* beryl, his face *like* the appearance of lightning, his eyes *like* the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words *like* the sound of a multitude”).

In the end, we know we can’t possibly have seen exactly what Daniel sees unless we’ve responded exactly as Daniel responds. We read in verses 7-9:

IV. Daniel 10:7-9 — 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. So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My natural color turned to a deathly palor [cf. NIV; “my comeliness was turned in me into corruption”; ASV; KJV], 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.

We read these words, and yet we can still sit here comparatively unaffected. Why is that? Is it because we have a stronger mental constitution? Is it because we’re naturally bolder and more unafraid? The answer is obvious, isn’t it? It’s because regardless of the amount of description, it’s impossible for us to really see what Daniel sees. But if ever we *were* to see what Daniel sees—if ever we *were* to be given this vision—can there be any doubt in our minds that we

would respond in exactly the same way as Daniel responds? Even the men who were with Daniel, who couldn't see the vision, were gripped with a "great trembling." Their bodies and limbs were literally, physically shaking so that they had only the strength left to flee and look for a place to hide. Grown men shaking, and running, and hiding. Why doesn't Daniel run and hide? On the one hand, in seeing what the others can't see, Daniel must be experientially overwhelmed with the utter futility of running or hiding. On the other hand, in seeing what the others can't see, Daniel is left with no strength to run, even if he had wanted to. In hearing what the others can't hear, Daniel fell on his face in deep sleep with his face to the ground. Can you see how it's this *response*, more than any other description, that helps us to "see" for ourselves what it is that Daniel sees? It's Daniel's *response* and the *response* of the men who were with him that helps us the most to understand, and maybe even—as we reflect on these things—to "tremble" somewhat ourselves.

The Hebrew word for the trembling of the men who were with Daniel is *ha-ra-dah* and so today there's a group of Jews called the *Haredi* or the *Haredim*—the "Tremblers" (cf. Longman). Isn't there a sense in which, recognizing the reality of God's holiness and glory, we should rightly be known as "the tremblers"? Maybe not the physical trembling that causes us to flee and hide or to fall down on our faces like dead people, but certainly the heart trembling that causes us to worship God truly – with reverence and awe and obedience. It would be a good thing if we were known at this church as those who tremble.

- Isaiah 66:2 — This is the one to whom I will look [says the Lord]: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

We see this repeated theme in the Psalms:

- Psalms 2:11 — Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
- Psalms 96:9 — Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!
- Psalms 99:1 — The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!
- Psalms 114:7 — Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.

And the writer of Hebrews says:

- Hebrews 12:28–29 — Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

Here is a trembling that motivates us and empowers us and equips us for faithful living. But, of course, the trembling of Daniel has so far rendered him completely useless. Daniel is no more than a corpse on the ground. So now we read in verse 10:

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

The angelic being that's caused Daniel such terror is now the very same being that enables him to overcome his terror. Not "overcome" in the sense of trivializing the glory of God, but "overcome" in the sense of just being able to function and live in the presence of such awesome power and majesty.

It's important for us to understand that God's messengers, and even the "Angel of the Lord" Himself are not always revealed in their glory like this. The writer of Hebrews, reflecting on the experience of Abraham in Genesis 18, reminds us that "some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2). In light of the experience of Daniel, here, and of the similar experiences of Ezekiel, and Isaiah, and John, is that not a shocking thing – that any angel anywhere could ever be entertained unawares? Can you see what a wonderful mercy this is? And yet there's a mercy *here*, too.

Why is this angelic messenger revealed to Daniel in such terrifying splendor and glory? This is what Daniel needs to fortify him for the message he's about to hear – for this message of a "great conflict," of battle and war in the heavenly places with direct repercussions for the things that happen on earth – and especially for the things that will happen to his own people. There's a deep and a wonderful mercy here in this terrifying display of glory because it lays a foundation for hope in the midst of much conflict – for peace and confidence in the midst of battle and war. And so it's also in this light that we see a deep and a wonderful mercy in the hand that touches Daniel and sets him, *still trembling*, on all fours ("on his hands and knees).

VI. Daniel 10:10b–12 — 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. 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.

Daniel recovers gradually in stages as the angel ministers to him God's mercy and grace. First, he's revived from his death-like stupor and set trembling on his hands and knees. Now he's enabled to stand up on two feet – still trembling. Would any one of us want to be Daniel here?

It's against the backdrop of Daniel's terror and the overwhelming, overawing presence and glory of this angelic being, that the tenderness and gentleness of God is seen all the more beautifully. Two times the angel addresses Daniel by his name, "O *Daniel*, man greatly loved... Fear not, *Daniel*..." But most amazing and wonderful of all is that this mighty angel should ever be sent to Daniel at all. Most amazing and wonderful of all are these "unbelievable" words: "for now I have been sent to you... your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words." I'm reminded here of what the writer of Hebrews says of all the angels:

- Hebrews 1:14 — Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Are you beginning to see, now, the depths of divine mercy and grace in this angelic visitation? Daniel has been mourning and fasting for three weeks. In light of the powerful opposition to the

small and feeble work in Jerusalem and in light of the word that he's already received about 62 more sevens of "troubled times" followed by the eschatological destruction of the earthly Jerusalem and temple, Daniel is crying out to God for understanding. What do all these things mean for the salvation of God's people and the triumph of God's kingdom? How can these things be? And now this mighty angel has come to Daniel *because of his words*—for the sake of all the faithful Daniel's in Israel who are to inherit salvation. He comes in a terrifying display of glory in order to equip Daniel—and all the faithful Daniel's in Israel—to receive this message of "great conflict" with hope and confidence and peace. We read now in verses 13-14:

VII. Daniel 10:13-14— 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, 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.

Can you imagine any being capable of withstanding this angelic messenger for any amount of time at all. The evil spiritual powers in the heavenly places are real; their power and their might are real. Their goal is to use the earthly powers that be—the kingdoms and nations and governments of men—to thwart the purposes of God and ultimately to devour and destroy the people of God (cf. Dan. 7 & 8). And so the first—the preeminent—goal of the evil spiritual powers in Daniel's day was to destroy the people *through whom* the promised "seed," the promised Messiah, was to come into the world. We can see this was the goal of the prince of the kingdom of Persia not only when we read Ezra and Nehemiah, but also when we read Esther and see Haman plotting "to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children (Esther 3:13). Satan was not so concerned with the Jews themselves as he was with the Jews as that chosen vehicle through whom God had promised to bring His Messiah into the world and accomplish the salvation of all the Messiah's offspring – the spiritual seed of Abraham, Jews and Gentiles alike (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53:10; Gal. 3:29; Rom. 4:11-12). Satan was not so concerned with the Jews themselves as he was with the Jews as that chosen vehicle through whom God had promised to bring into the world the one who would crush the head of the serpent – the one through whom Satan and the power of death would finally be vanquished once and for all.

The evil spiritual powers in the heavenly places are real—capable of withstanding this mighty angelic messenger for twenty-one days until help comes to him. And yet notice what it is that this prince of the kingdom of Persia is working so hard to prevent. How long has Daniel been mourning and fasting and praying? For three weeks (10:2). And when was Daniel's prayer heard and this angel commissioned to come to Daniel and give him understanding? From the very first day that he set his heart to understand and humbled himself before God (10:12). So why, then, did it take the angel three weeks to come to Daniel and bring the answer to his prayers? Because the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood him – because the prince of the kingdom of Persia absolutely did not want this message coming to Daniel. And why didn't the prince of the kingdom of Persia want Daniel to hear this message? Because even though it's a message of great conflict, it's ultimately a message spelling out and guaranteeing his own final defeat (cf. Lucas). The power of the enemy is terrible and real, and yet *at the same time* the enemy is always desperate and full of a rage that's driven by fear.

And so in the end, *God will not allow* the prince of the kingdom of Persia to keep Daniel from hearing the message that will give him understanding. For the sake of Daniel—and for the sake of all those who were to inherit salvation—Michael, one of the chief princes, was sent to help overcome the resistance – in order that this angelic messenger might come to Daniel. God will not allow the prince of the kingdom of Persia to keep Daniel from hearing the message that while the conflict will at times be terrible, the final deliverance of God’s people is assured (cf. 12:1-3). Daniel says in verses 15-17:

VIII. Daniel 10:15–17 — When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute. 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. How can my lord’s servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me.”

We see again how Daniel recovers gradually, in stages, as the angels minister to him God’s mercy and grace. First, Daniel was revived and set trembling on his hands and knees. Then Daniel was enabled to stand up on two feet – still trembling. Now we see Daniel finally enabled to speak. And yet when he does finally speak all he can plead is his total inability to talk with his lord. “Pains have come upon me; I retain no strength; no breath has been left in me.” And so now—*at last*—we read in verses 18-19:

IX. Daniel 10:18–19 — Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. 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.”

Daniel has been taken completely apart, as it were, and put back together again. His “recovery” is now complete. And yet the nature of this recovery is such that he’s not the same as he was before. Only now is Daniel in a place to receive this message of “great conflict”—and “fear not.” Only now is Daniel in a place to hear this message of battle and war on earth and in the heavenly places and “be strong and of good courage.” Only now is Daniel in a place to hear of the trials and tribulations that await his people and still know God’s perfect peace—*shalom*. Why the “ordeal” of chapter ten? Because it teaches us wisdom; because it prepares us to hear and to understand. We would do well not to skim over this chapter as a mere “introduction” to the vision, but rather to read it carefully and let the message of this chapter work its way into every part of who we are – of how we think and speak and live.

Conclusion

If the prince of the kingdom of Persia was desperate to keep Daniel from hearing the message of Messiah’s future victory, how much more desperate and fearful must Satan be now that the Messiah has already come and cast him out (cf. Rev. 12)?

There is nothing more terrifying or deadly to us in all the world than the glory of God. We are *right* to tremble (cf. Mat. 10:28). And yet it’s this same God who comes to us and says to us as those He has greatly loved through Jesus Christ His Son, “Fear not, peace be with you; be strong

and of good courage.” It’s only those who have been saved from the deadly peril of the holiness and glory of God who can rejoice in that holiness and glory and say with Daniel, even as we come to hear a word of “great conflict”: “Let my lord speak, for now you have strengthened me.”

The very first words of the resurrected Jesus to His disciples in the upper room were these: “Peace be with you” (Jn. 20:19, 26). And so this is also—always—His word to us.

- John 14:27 — Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.
- John 16:33 — I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

The Book of DANIEL – God’s Sovereignty in Death and Resurrection*

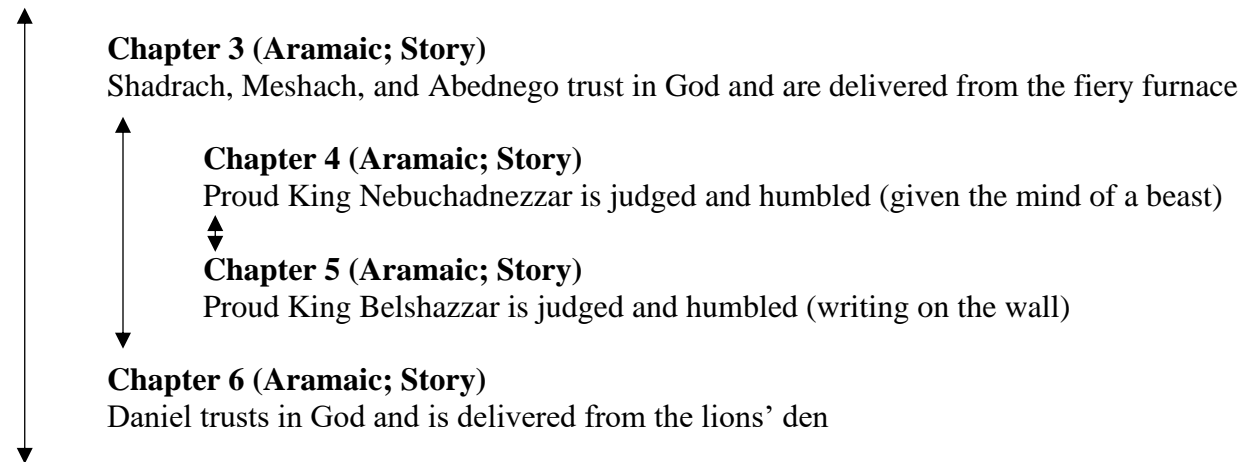
Chapters 1-6: Six “stories” (historical narratives)

Chapters 7-12: Four visions

Chaper 1 – Introduction and bookend with chapter twelve (DEATH) (Hebrew)

Chapter 2 (Aramaic; Story)

Nebuchadnezzar dreams of four kingdoms followed by the kingdom of God (statue made of gold, silver, bronze, and iron)



Chapter 7 (Aramaic; Vision)

Daniel sees a vision of four kingdoms followed by the kingdom of God (four beasts and one like a Son of Man)

Chapter 8 (Hebrew; Vision)

Daniel sees a vision relating to the second and third kingdoms (a ram and a goat) followed by the restoration of the sanctuary (8:14) and the destruction of a particularly powerful king who opposes God’s people (8:25).

Chapter 9 (Hebrew; Vision)
Daniel prays (9:1-19) and sees a vision of seventy sevens that are decreed for the restoration of Jerusalem and the salvation of God’s people (9:20-27)

Chapters 10-12 (Hebrew; Vision)

Daniel sees a vision relating to the second, third, and fourth kingdoms, followed by the resurrection and restoration of God’s people.

Chapter 12 – Conclusion and bookend with chapter one (RESURRECTION)

* This “outline” of Daniel is an adaptation from and a combination of the outlines of Steinmann and Hamilton.