DANIEL 10:1-11:1 ESV

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. ***11:1*** *"And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.*

STRUCTURE:

I. **The setting: Daniel mourns Israel's condition and seeks understanding (1-4)**
   a. *The historical setting*: Persia reigns, but Israel's restoration remains incomplete (1a)
   b. *The subject of the revelation*: A true word concerning a great conflict (1b)
   c. *The recipient of the revelation*: Daniel, a persistent seeker of understanding (1c)
   d. *The preparation for the revelation*: Daniel mourns and fasts for three weeks, then receives his revelation beside the Tigris (2-4)

II. **The first heavenly encounter: Christ's overwhelming glory incapacitates Daniel (5–9)**
   a. *The glorious appearance*: A heavenly man appears with divine and priestly attributes, anticipating the glorified Christ of Revelation 1 (5-6)
   b. *The overwhelming response*: Daniel alone sees the vision; his companions flee, while he loses all strength and collapses into a deep sleep (7-9)

III. **The second heavenly encounter: God's love strengthens Daniel to understand the unseen conflict (10:10–11:1)**
   a. *The first reassurance*: The angel touches Daniel, calls him "greatly loved," and tells him to "fear not"—his prayers have been heard (10–12)
   b. *The first revelation:* Spiritual warfare has delayed the angel, but God's purpose for Israel "in the latter days" remains certain (13-14)
   c. *The second reassurance:* Twice more the angel touches Daniel, again calling him "greatly loved" and saying "fear not," progressively restoring his strength (15-19)

d. *The second revelation:* Spiritual warfare will continue through successive empires, but their future is already written in God's book of truth (10:20-11:1)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

Lest we imagine that Daniel lived with a constant stream of encounters, both angelic and divine, his timeline brings clarity. The last half of Daniel unfolds over nearly two decades of prophetic ministry, and it contains just four visions. We are catching the highlight reel.

What a reel it is, though! Most scholars view Daniel 10-12 as an extended revelation about the second and third empires, Persia and Greece. Babylon is conquered, Persia has replaced it as the dominant power, and it will continue this way for two centuries. Nevertheless, Persia and Greece will consistently skirmish until the latter tramples the former beneath the dust of history.

But Daniel's concern is not primarily with these global superpowers. It is with Israel. Two years prior, Gabriel had revealed how the Jews would return home and rebuild both the temple and the city. That process began within just a few months! But Daniel stayed back. Verse 4 locates him beside the Tigris River. We don't know why he didn't return with the first wave of exiles. Regardless, the prophet is not happy. As we observed in Daniel 9, he's fasting, praying, and mourning—ostensibly over Israel's condition, though we're not told.

After three weeks of fasting, Daniel encounters what appears to be two distinct heavenly figures. The first wears priestly apparel. His traits seem divine. This is probably the "one like a son of man" from his vision nearly two decades prior. The apostle John will behold a figure with these same features on the isle of Patmos. Before Daniel's revelation of a "great conflict" (10:14), and before John's revelation of an even greater conflict, Jesus appears.

Both prophets fall to the earth like a dead man. Their frightful encounter with Jesus prepares them—prepares us—for conflict ahead. When empires rise, tyrants trample, kings flatter, wars break out, economies crash, believers are blamed, the sacred is profaned, and when demonic spirits manipulate these outcomes, we can nevertheless, as the angel says: "fear not!" (10:12, 19).

If you fear the Lord, you won't fear tribulation.

Daniel 11-12 spell out many tribulations to occur in the "latter days" (10:14). Before these are revealed, however, an angel appears and strengthens the prophet. The messenger also explains the invisible war that manipulates earthly powers.

The good news is two-fold. First, Daniel's prayers, and ours, influence this invisible war. When we pray according to God's will, he dispatches warring angels to do battle on our behalf. Second, despite continuing warfare—on earth and in the heavens—Israel's future and ours is already written in "the book of truth" (11:1). What we call *future*, God calls *history*. He declares the end from the beginning because he wrote the book. Not only that, but God wrote himself into the book. The same Jesus who appears to Daniel by the Tigris and John on Patmos appeared in history as the son of Joseph and Mary—the Son of God. The author of history is the One who redeems it.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

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.

—"In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia":

- 1:21: "And Daniel was there until the **first year of King Cyrus**."
- 6:28: "So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and **the reign of Cyrus the Persian**."
- Chapter 1 says Daniel "was there"—apparently continuing in royal service—until Cyrus' first year. Chapter 6 adds that Daniel prospered during the reign of Cyrus, but it doesn't define how long. Could his prosperity have continued only into Cyrus' first year? Did he retire from the royal court? Did he continue his duties before the king in a different location? We are not told. We know that Cyrus' first year marked an enormous historical transition, but we don't know whether it also marked a geographical or vocational transition for Daniel.
- Daniel 6:28 appears to distinguish Darius the Mede from Cyrus the Persian. However, other passages suggest that both may have exercised authority over Babylon beginning with its conquest in 539 BC (5:30–31; 9:1). My view is that Cyrus ruled the larger Persian Empire, including the newly conquered Babylonian territories, while Darius ruled from Babylon under Cyrus's authority. Daniel 9:1 supports this possibility, stating that Darius was "made king" over the kingdom of the Chaldeans—presumably by an overseer (Cyrus).
- Chronologically, Daniel's experience in chapter 10 (ca. 536 BC) occurs approximately 17 years after his vision of four successive empires in Daniel 7 (ca. 553 BC), 15 years after his vision of the second and

third empires in Daniel 8 (ca. 551 BC), and 2–3 years after his revelation concerning the seventy weeks in Daniel 9 (ca. 539–538 BC).

—"a word was revealed to Daniel": Most interpreters understand Daniel 10-12 as one extended revelation, with chapter 10 introducing the vision, chapter 11 unfolding its contents, and chapter 12 bringing it to its conclusion.

—"who was named Belteshazzar": It's interesting that Daniel's Babylonian name is referenced. Babylon is out of the picture. Persia reigns. Why does the author mention it? Perhaps it is to highlight that Daniel remains in exile. Even though Cyrus released the Jews (not narrated in this book), Daniel did not return with that wave of exiles. Some conjecture that his advanced age would have prevented such a journey. Daniel would have been in his mid-eighties.

—"and the word was true, and it was a great conflict": This anticipates the warfare described in Daniel 11, particularly the prolonged conflicts between the kings of the north and south, whose kingdoms emerged from the division of the Greek Empire (the third kingdom of Daniel 7). But the "great conflict" may also encompass the spiritual warfare revealed in Daniel 10 and the persecution of God's people described throughout chapters 11-12.

—"he understood the word and had understanding of the vision":

- This marks an interesting development from Daniel's earlier visions. In Daniel 7, he was troubled by what he saw and sought an interpretation (7:15-16, 19). In Daniel 8, even after Gabriel explained the vision, Daniel confessed that he was appalled by it and "did not understand it" (8:27). In Daniel 9, Gabriel came specifically to give Daniel "insight and understanding" (9:22-23). Now, in Daniel 10, we are explicitly told that Daniel understood the revelation. Perhaps this indicates a progression in Daniel's understanding as God progressively disclosed his purposes. However, we shouldn't overstate the point. Daniel 12:8 records Daniel saying, "I heard, but I did not understand." Apparently, Daniel grasped the substance of this final revelation without comprehending all its details.
- The theme of wisdom and understanding is prominent in Daniel (1:4, 17, 20; 2:14-23, 27-30, 47; 4:6-9, 18; 5:7-8, 11-12, 14-16; 7:15-16, 19; 8:15-17, 27; 9:2-3, 13, 22-23, 25; 10:1, 11-12, 14; 11:32-35; 12:3-4, 8-10). Daniel is portrayed as the model wisdom-seeker. He doesn't always understand, but he always seeks understanding.
- Daniel 11 and 12 describe faithful believers in future generations who will endure persecution and instruct many. These are "the wise" who will be resurrected at the end of the age (12:2-3). The angel who provides Daniel with wisdom will do the same for future saints. God's revelation to Daniel shows how believers can remain wise and faithful in the face of warring powers—both national and cosmic.

—"In those days, I, Daniel": Daniel moves from third-person to first-person storytelling. The nature of the account, being told by an eyewitness, lends credibility to it.

—"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":

- The last time we observed Daniel mourning was in chapter 9, when he prayed, confessed, and fasted before the God of Israel to release his people from exile.
- By this point, Israel has been released, but Daniel is still fasting and mourning.
- Why? Several theories are proposed.
    - Some say Daniel was disappointed by how few of his fellow Jews took Cyrus up on the offer to return home. Others suggest he is mourning because the temple's rebuilding had run into such opposition. Still others believe Daniel is responding to his vision from Daniel 9:24-27, where God's decisive intervention would take centuries to unfold. Finally, some believe that Daniel is distressed about the general uncertainty about Israel's condition.
    - In 10:4, we learn that the angel appears to Daniel on the 24th day of the first month (Nisan), which suggests that Daniel fasted even during feast days—Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. During the very season where Israel celebrated a return from exile (Egypt), Daniel fasted as an exile.
    - We can't know with certainty which circumstance triggered the prophet's distress. We can reasonably conclude, however, that he was responding to Israel's sad condition. Cyrus' decree had not, by itself, solved the problem.
    - Wonderful news does not always yield immediately wonderful outcomes. Cyrus had recently released the exiles—great news!—but Daniel is back where he started. Before the release, Daniel mourned. Now after the release, he still mourns. His mourning was holy, but it also communicates something important. Political victory did not solve the deeper problem.
- This is commonly called a "Daniel fast."
    - We have no indication that God directed him to fast in this precise way. However, it does indicate that God still considers it a fast, even if we don't totally abstain from food.

- I typically summarize a Daniel fast as “sweets, meats, and alcohol.”
- However, Daniel also did not “anoint” himself during that time. This anointing with oil kept skin from cracking in dry climates. Our closest modern equivalent might be applying lotion after a shower. However, anointing was also associated with refreshment and celebration. By not anointing himself, Daniel was visibly expressing grief.
- When I fast, I often ask the Lord what kind of fast he would have me pursue. In Scripture, fasting typically involved abstaining from food (Matt. 4:2; Acts 13:2-3), though the Bible doesn't always specify whether people continued drinking water. Moses fasted from both food and water for forty days (Exod. 34:28; Deut. 9:9), but this was extraordinary and not something we should attempt to imitate. Going without water can be dangerous, especially for people with medical conditions. Others abstained from both food and water for shorter periods (Esth. 4:16; Acts 9:9). Married couples might also mutually agree to abstain from sexual intimacy for a limited time to devote themselves to prayer (1 Cor. 7:5). Also, pregnant people should never fast from food or water. Growing kids and teenagers should likewise be cautious. We know we’re being “over-spiritual” if we are harming ourselves and others.

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.

—“On the twenty-fourth day of the first month”: Daniel had been fasting during Passover. See comments above.

—“I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris)”: The Tigris did not run through the city of Babylon, where Daniel had previously been stationed. It ran just east of the Euphrates (which did run through Babylon).

—The vision of the heavenly being:

- In Daniel 3:25, we observe a fourth man in the fire who is “like a son of the gods.” In 7:9-10, the Ancient of Days has clothes “as white as snow” and other divine features. In 7:13-14, he sees “one like a son of man” being worshiped. In 8:15-16, one resembling a man appears before Daniel, and a voice commands Gabriel to explain the vision. In 9:21, he sees Gabriel again. In 10:16-18, figures described as having “the likeness of the children of man” and “the appearance of a man” touch and strengthen Daniel. In 12:5-6, two heavenly figures stand on opposite riverbanks, while a third, clothed in linen, stands above the river.
- It is difficult to decipher these beings. Some appear to be God, while others are merely god-like, but appearing in human form.
- One indicator that this figure is not merely angelic but divine is his linen clothing. Linen was associated with priestly ministry, particularly the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:4). It seems more fitting for a priestly office to be filled by Jesus than by an angel. This may not be decisive, but it appears to be suggestive.
- Another indicator that the figure is divine is the voice like the sound of a multitude. This reminds us of a similar comparison in Ezekiel 43:2, which compares God’s approach with “the sound of many waters.” The sound of multitude and the sound of many waters are essentially the same in Revelation 19:6.
- If we interpret the passage canonically, Revelation 1 sheds light on this vision: “Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’”
- Similarities between Revelation 1:12-18 and Daniel 10:5-6:
  - A golden sash or belt.
  - Eyes like flames of fire.
  - Feet resembling burnished bronze.
  - A voice like the roar of many waters.
  - A brilliantly radiant appearance.
- Interestingly, Revelation places the vision of Christ among seven lampstands, the churches, and he seems to be operating in a priestly role—caring for the lampstands (churches). He is also called “one

like a son of man," which directly alludes to Dan. 7:13. However, he also has hair "like white wool, like snow," which associates him with the Ancient of Days, God the Father, who appears in Dan. 7:9.

- Here's how I interpret the vision of Jesus in Revelation 1 in a quote from my book on the subject: *"Every detail carries symbolic weight. Our Lord's robe and sash portray royalty and priesthood (1:13); his white hair represents wisdom and links him to the Ancient of Days, God the Father (1:14; cf. Dan. 7:9); his fiery eyes penetrate mysteries and souls (1:14); his feet like burnished bronze reflect the brilliance of one who survived death's furnace; the voice like many waters conveys omni-grandeur like no made-up word can (1:15); the stars in his right hand represent guardian angels (1:16, 20); and the sword in his mouth is the Word of God, which slices our sin before his sunlike face (1:16)."*
- I believe Daniel is beholding a pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. However, this interpretation will face a hurdle in 10:13. See there.

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.

—Only Daniel saw the vision, but other men experienced it. A "great trembling fell upon them," and they "fled to hide themselves" (10:7). We are reminded of what happened with Saul on the road to Damascus. Saul's companions "heard the voice but saw no one" (Acts 9:7). Later, Paul explains that they saw the brilliant light but did not understand the voice speaking to him (Acts 22:9). And in his account before Agrippa, Paul adds that everyone fell to the ground (Acts 26:13-14).

—In both scenarios, a heavenly revelation was granted—to Saul, to Daniel—but others were still affected. Even if we don't see or understand it, an entire spiritual world overlaps and intersects with our own.

—Experiencing revelatory phenomena is not the same as receiving revelation. Daniel and Saul received understanding; bystanders did not.

—I am reminded of John 12:28-29, where God speaks audibly. Some think it's an angel; others say it thundered. Imagine that! We think, "Nothing could be more clear than God speaking audibly!" Even then, however, we might dismiss it.

—I recently read this in Gavin Ortlund's book, Why Christianity Makes Sense: *"Richard Dawkins was once asked by another atheist philosopher what it would take for him to believe in God. He answered that he used to think a loud voice from clouds of glory would do the trick, but then he realized it could be a hallucination or magic trick. Dawkins was pushed a bit further to clarify if anything could convince him. Amazingly, he responded with these words: 'Well, I'm starting to think nothing would, which, in a way, goes against the grain, because I've always paid lip service to the view that a scientist should change his mind when evidence is forthcoming.'"*

—"no strength was left in me… I retained no strength":

- Like John who fell before Jesus like a dead man, Daniel is undone. His "radiant appearance was fearfully changed."
- Similar responses are normal for people who encounter God:
  - Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God (Exod. 3:6).
  - Joshua fell facedown before the commander of the LORD's army (Josh. 5:13-15).
  - Manoah and his wife fell facedown when the angel of the LORD ascended in the altar's flame. Manoah feared they would die because they had seen God (Judg. 13:19-22).
  - Isaiah cried, "Woe is me! For I am lost," when he saw the Lord enthroned in glory (Isa. 6:1-5).
  - Ezekiel fell facedown when he saw the appearance of the glory of the LORD (Ezek. 1:26-28; 3:23).
  - Saul (Paul) fell to the ground when the risen Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-4; 26:13-14).
- God's glory is so great that it overwhelms our natural capacities. We must be careful about becoming cavalier with the Almighty. He descends to our level in Christ, and he calls us friends. But this does not diminish his glory. The closer we draw to him, the more awe we should feel toward him.
- I feel concern about our cavalier attitude toward God in the American church. In many cases, our church services have turned into a circus. A saying often attributed to Charles Spurgeon puts it like this: "A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats."

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.

—"heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground":

- On several occasions in Scripture, we observe significant moments occurring in deep sleep. The closest parallel here seems to be that of Abraham in Genesis 15. God puts him into a deep sleep, then reveals the future suffering and deliverance of Israel. The same happens here. God reveals to Daniel the future suffering and deliverance of his people.
- Notice how this connects with chapter 9. There, Daniel appealed to the God who had delivered Israel from Egypt (9:15), pleading for him to deliver his people from exile once again. In effect, Daniel was praying for another exodus. Now, in chapter 10, Daniel's deep sleep recalls Abraham's, when God first revealed the original pattern of Israel's suffering in a foreign land followed by divine deliverance. Centuries later, God reveals to Daniel that Israel will again experience suffering, followed by an ultimate deliverance.

—"And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees":

- It is unclear whether this "hand" belongs to the heavenly being just mentioned or if the hand belonged to another heavenly being.
- I believe these are two distinct beings. While it perhaps reads less naturally, it is a reasonable interpretation that I think best harmonizes with 10:13. See there.
- This heavenly being's touch moves him from lying prostrate to being on all fours—still trembling. He has not yet regained all his strength.

—"And he said to me, 'O Daniel, man greatly loved'":

- Gabriel addresses Daniel this way in 9:23. It means treasured, cherished, precious.
- Many interpreters view the echo of 9:23 as an indicator that the heavenly being of this sequence is Gabriel. This interpretation is corroborated by 8:18, where Gabriel touches Daniel after he falls into deep sleep, as here.
- We cannot draw these conclusions with certainty, but I think it best harmonizes all the details. After the hurdle of 10:13 has been addressed, I will summarize my position succinctly.

—"understand the words that I speak to you": Theme of understanding continues.

—After the heavenly being commands him to stand, he does, but he's still trembling. Is there any significance to the sequence—where Daniel collapses facedown, then rises to all fours, then stands, but always trembling? Perhaps. Matthew Henry says, *"Note, Strength and comfort commonly come by degrees to those that have been long cast down and disquieted; they are first helped up a little, and then more. 'After two days he will revive us, and then the third day he will raise us up.' And we must not 'despise the day of small things,' but be thankful for the beginnings of mercy."*

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."

—"Fear not": Fear is perhaps the most common response by those who have experienced heavenly visitations. People who talk about angels visiting them regularly, almost casually, are like those Paul warns about: *"Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God"* (Col. 2:19). Heavenly visions and visitations are real, but we should carefully discern people who talk constantly about divine encounters. Paul was more hesitant (2 Cor. 12:1-6).

—"from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself":

- Daniel's pursuit of understanding and humility (which included the fast mentioned earlier) brought this heavenly being to Daniel.
- Do you want to receive revelation? Humble yourself. Fast. Concern yourself with the state of the church, and the state of the world, and pray. Jeremiah 33:3: *"Call to me, and I will answer you, and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."*
- Daniel was also heard specifically "because of your words." The appearance of the heavenly being marks an answer to his prayer. This does not mean he prayed, "Please send a heavenly being." In Daniel 9, he was praying for forgiveness and restoration—then God sent a heavenly being.

—"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":

- The "prince of the kingdom of Persia" cannot possibly refer to Cyrus or some other human ruler. Why? Because the angel Michael is likewise called a prince, and the two princes are at war with one another. This is a spiritual battle. Persia appears to have a spiritual being assigned to oversee it; soon we will

see that Greece has a spiritual being assigned to oversee it (10:20); Michael appears to be a guardian angel, if you will, of Israel (see also 12:1).

- The Greek translation of Daniel calls these heavenly princes *archontes*, meaning rulers. It's the same word Jesus uses when he calls Satan the ruler of this world (John 12:31), and the same word Paul uses when he calls Satan the ruler of the authority of the air (Eph. 2:2). In Ephesians 6, Paul uses a related word, *archai*, for the spiritual rulers against whom Christians wrestle. So Daniel 10 introduces us to a spiritual conflict that the New Testament develops much more fully. Behind the visible political powers of the world are invisible spiritual powers.
- This verse highlights why I view the heavenly being of 10:5-6 as distinct from the one talking here in 10:13. The former appears to be the pre-incarnate Christ. The latter describes being "withstood" for "twenty-one days" by the "prince of the kingdom of Persia." Considering that Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Trinity, there is no world in which a demonic territorial spirit could prevent our Lord's success. With a single word, Jesus could annihilate the devil and his entire army.
- So here's a summary of my interpretation regarding this sequence of events: I believe Daniel initially encountered the preincarnate Christ. Then, beginning in verse 10, a different heavenly messenger—probably Gabriel—touches Daniel and begins explaining the revelation. The text doesn't explicitly identify this second messenger, so we can't be certain. But this interpretation helps explain why the messenger in verse 13 needed Michael's assistance in overcoming the prince of Persia.
- "twenty-one days":
    - Daniel had been fasting for "three weeks" (10:2-3). It cannot be incidental that for twenty-one days the prince of Persia resisted this angel (I will call him Gabriel going forward for simplicity, although his identity is uncertain).
    - Daniel's prayer was heard "from the first day" he humbled himself (10:12), but Gabriel did not come with a message until the fast reached three weeks. In other words, Gabriel battled with Persia's demonic prince for the duration of Daniel's fast. His prayers participated in a heavenly battle.
    - Sometimes our prayers are hindered due to spiritual forces we cannot see. But there's a difference between "hindered" and "unheard." Heaven hears our prayers from the moment we first utter them. But there is a spiritual battle. Satan can slow the process. Like Daniel, we must keep praying.
    - Notice that Daniel does not begin casting down territorial spirits. He never exorcises the prince of Persia. In fact, this territorial spirit will remain in power for the next two centuries! Daniel's response to the spiritual battle is to continue humbling himself and praying for Israel.
    - Likewise, Scripture never models casting down territorial spirits. Some verses apparently suggest we avoid rebuking them (2 Pet. 2:10-11; Jude 8).
    - See sidebar below for a pastoral excursus on this subject.

—"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":

- Daniel 11–12 describes Israel's future under Persia and Greece, particularly the persecution under Antiochus IV in the second century BC.
- "Latter days" doesn't necessarily mean the end of the world. The Hebrew expression can simply mean "days to come" (Gen. 49:1; Deut. 31:29). In Daniel 2:28, it encompasses centuries of successive empires, culminating in God's everlasting kingdom.
- The same seems true here. Daniel 11 describes events in Israel's nearer future, but the revelation ultimately reaches the end of the age. Paul draws on Daniel 11:36-37 to describe the final man of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:3-4), while Daniel 12:1-3 explicitly describes the resurrection.
- Thus, "latter days" encompasses both Israel's coming historical struggles and the ultimate consummation of God's kingdom.

PASTORAL EXCURSUS: TESTING MODERN SPIRITUAL WARFARE TEACHINGS

1. Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare — C. Peter Wagner

Dr. Wagner developed what he called "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare" (SLSW) based largely on this passage. SLSW teaches that we need apostles and prophets to identify territorial spirits so they can be cast down and the gospel can advance freely. While we can commend proponents of SLSW for taking seriously the need for prayer and missions, but the Bible does not teach this approach.

Here is a summary of the steps involved in SLSW:

1. **Identify** the territory where demonic powers are believed to operate.

2. **Unite** churches and intercessors in prayer and fasting.
3. **Conduct spiritual mapping** to uncover historical sins and demonic strongholds.
4. Seek prophetic revelation to **identify the ruling territorial spirits**.
5. **Practice identificational repentance** for sins believed to give demons authority.
6. **Exercise apostolic authority to confront and bind** the territorial spirits, supported by prophetic intercession.
7. **Advance evangelism and discipleship** in the territory believed to have been liberated.

When we read Daniel 10 (or the Bible), we observe none of these steps. Daniel doesn't identify the prince of Persia by name. He doesn't directly address or rebuke the prince. He doesn't command the territorial spirit to leave.

In my reading of Luke 10, Jesus reverses Wagner's sequence. Rather than instructing his disciples to identify and cast down territorial spirits before advancing the gospel, Jesus sends them into towns to heal the sick and proclaim, "The kingdom of God has come near to you" (Luke 10:1, 9).

When the disciples return, rejoicing that even demons submit to them in Jesus' name, Jesus declares, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (10:17-18). The advance of God's kingdom is itself an assault upon Satan's kingdom. We don't first cast down territorial spirits to make way for the gospel; as the gospel advances in the power of Jesus, Satan's dominion is broken (cf. Luke 11:20-22; Matt. 12:28-29).

2. Courts of Heaven — Robert Henderson
Other ministry leaders have taught based on Daniel 10 that we can enter "the courts of heaven" (CoH) to bind demonic spirits hindering our prayers, thus receiving more answers. CoH theology is spreading like wildfire, and it's dangerous. One of the biggest proponents of CoH is Robert Henderson. A summary:

1. **Spiritually enter heaven's courtroom**, sometimes envisioning its doors, God's throne, heavenly witnesses, and angels recording proceedings.
2. **Discover what is written in your heavenly book of destiny**, sometimes through prophetic revelation, so you can present the case God supposedly intends you to bring.
3. **Identify Satan's legal accusations, including offenses committed by ancestors**, which Henderson believes can give demons grounds to obstruct God's purposes.
4. **Repent and cleanse your bloodline**, seeking the cancellation of inherited demonic claims.
5. **Discern and agree with the voices testifying in heaven**, including Jesus' blood, departed saints, angels, and the heavenly assembly.
6. **Present financial offerings as testimony.** Henderson teaches that giving can speak in heaven's courts and recommends prophesying over offerings to strengthen their testimony.
7. **Obtain a heavenly verdict, silence the accuser, and establish the legal authority necessary for God's will to be accomplished on earth.**

The subtitle of Henderson's book says it all: *"Granting God the Legal Right to Fulfill His Passion and Answer our Prayers."* Do you see the inversion? Though he would deny this framing, there is no escaping it: Henderson has declared you sovereign over God. According to him, God wants to fulfill his passion; God wants to answer your prayers. But he can't. Not until you grant him the right. I have no words. This is gross. And charismatics are eating it up. He has sold millions of books.

For more resources breaking down the problems with CoH, see:

- Sam Storms, "A Review of Operating in the Courts of Heaven," by Robert Henderson. Parts 1 and 2. Samstorms.org.
- The Remnant Radio on YouTube. Video 1: "A Response to the Courts of Heaven with Ken Fish." Video 2: "Courts of Heaven Part 2." Video 3: "Receiving Mantles from the Courts of Heaven: A review of Robert Henderson's use of Scripture."

3. Test Everything by Scripture
The aforementioned examples highlight why it is so important that we test everything with Scripture. Those who practice SLSW and CoH tell stories of tremendous success, but this is a theology of pragmatism. Just because water gushed out when Moses struck the rock, that doesn't mean he did the right thing. God disciplined him severely for his disobedience, yet God blessed Israel in spite of it! Sometimes God blesses errant spiritual practices, not as an endorsement of the practices themselves, but because he loves his people. At other times, these so-called "answers to prayer" are not provided by God at all. They are granted by evil spirits. Personally, I think that CoH flirts with the heresy of Gnosticism. I would not attribute their alleged breakthroughs to God.

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.

—CHART OF DANIEL'S REACTIONS TO HEAVENLY ENCOUNTERS IN DANIEL 10:

Verse	Heavenly being's action	Daniel's bodily reaction
10:5–8	Appears in overwhelming glory	Loses all strength; his appearance changes
10:9	Speaks to Daniel	Falls facedown into a deep sleep
10:10	Touches Daniel	Rises to hands and knees, trembling
10:11	Commands Daniel to stand	Stands upright, still trembling
10:14–15	Explains the vision	Lowers his face and becomes mute
10:16–17	Touches Daniel's lips	Regains speech but remains weak, anguished, and breathless
10:18	Touches Daniel again	Receives strength
10:19	Speaks peace and encouragement	Regains strength and invites the messenger to continue

—The main point seems to be that Daniel's body is too frail to absorb such glory. Each time he is strengthened, it is gradual, progressive, and it comes from heaven.
—The one whose glory enfeebles Daniel likewise strengthens Daniel.
—The scene of Daniel rising from weakness possibly foreshadows the ultimate strengthening he will enjoy at the end of the age. The angel's revelation will play out over centuries. Daniel will not live to see their fulfillment, but he is among the wise who will "stand" in resurrection power (12:13). This is the same Hebrew word for "stand" that appears in 10:11 after the angel strengthens him.
—"Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me":

- When verse 16 describes "one in the likeness of the children of man," it almost sounds like *another* heavenly figure—a *third* one, if we consider 10:5-6 to be Christ, and then the figure of 10:10-14 to be Gabriel.
- That reading is possible, but I don't favor it. When Daniel says he was "again... touched" by this heavenly being, he is revisiting the first touch by a heavenly being—ostensibly, the first one—the one I have interpreted to be Gabriel.
- In short, I interpret Daniel 10 as an encounter with two heavenly beings—not just one, and not three. We cannot be certain, however.
- Angels take on human form throughout the book of Daniel (8:15-16; 9:21; 10:16, 18; 12:5-7).

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."

—"O man greatly loved, fear not": This might reinforce my view that Gabriel is the heavenly being interacting with Daniel from 10:10 onward. As mentioned above, Gabriel used these same words in 9:23. By my interpretation, he is the one repeating them in 10:11, 19.
—"fear not":

- This reinforces further that this is the same heavenly being (I believe, Gabriel). Gabriel already told Daniel to "fear not" in 10:12.
- Daniel's appearance was "fearfully changed" in 10:8. There is no linguistic connection between this and the angel's command to "fear not." However, the thematic shift is unmistakable.
- At Sinai, the Israelites trembled at God's glory and feared his voice. Yet Moses told them, "Do not fear," explaining that God had appeared so that the fear of him would remain with them and keep them from sinning (Exod. 20:18-20). There's a kind of fear God wants to remove, and a kind of fear he wants to cultivate. Daniel is overwhelmed by heaven's majesty, but then reassured of heaven's love. The fear of God and the assurance of his love are not opposites.

—"peace be with you; be strong and of good courage":

- Gabriel's touch had just strengthened him (10:18); then the angel tells him to be strong (10:19a); strength entered Daniel as the angel spoke (10:19b).

- Gabriel doesn't just tell him to be strong. He also blesses Daniel with shalom—peace—and tells him to be of good courage (to be encouraged).
- Daniel will soon learn about great suffering and continued oppression. The "beasts" will seem to overpower his people. Daniel's experience with such overpowering heavenly beings reveals the true and greater power. You don't need to be afraid of the "beasts" when you fear the Lord. God overwhelms us with power, but also love. The beasts, in contrast, overwhelm with force and violence. That's scary, no doubt. But it's nothing compared to what Daniel experiences here. Once you've been overwhelmed with the power and love of God, your perspective changes.
- Have you ever been overwhelmed with God's power and love? God's attributes are not to be just studied or talked about, but to be experienced. How do we experience them? Daniel is our model. He constantly seeks greater wisdom and understanding. He prays. He fasts. He mourns over Israel's condition. If we ask and seek and knock, God will answer and reveal and open the door. He did it for Daniel. He promises to do it for us. But "blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." Casual Christians know little of God's majesty.
- This makes me think about Revelation 1, which alludes to the experience of Christ in Daniel 10. In both passages, a glorious vision of Jesus precedes devastating revelations that follow. Why? Because if we fear the Lord, we won't fear tribulation. If we've experienced his power, we won't dread demonic forces. When we know his love, we won't know fear—at least, not earthly fears.

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.

—"Do you know why I have come to you?": He already stated the purpose in 10:14: "[He] 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."

—"now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia":

- Gabriel got caught up by the prince of Persia in 10:13. While Daniel prayed and fasted, Michael was dispatched "to help" Gabriel (10:13).
- The territorial demonic spirit over Persia, which had become the dominant world power, contended with Gabriel for a time. He came to Daniel in response to his prayer to deliver a message about the "latter days" (10:14). After he reveals God's plan for Israel, and its relationship to global empires, Gabriel will return to the fray. A battle between powerful angels, both good and evil, will resume in the heavenlies.

—"and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come":

- Not just Persia, but Greece also, has a territorial spirit.
- Gabriel already knows that Greece will step into the battle. In fact, Gabriel revealed in chapter 8 that Greece will conquer Persia.
- In the sequence of chapters, then, chapter 8 revealed the activities of Persia and Greece, rising to prominence, and ultimately falling. The vision introduced by chapter 10 and continuing until chapter 12 reveals those same activities, while introducing the spiritual world behind it. In the center of these is chapter 9, where Israel experiences a mega-jubilee after a Messiah is cut off. What can we conclude from this sequence? What is Daniel communicating by the structure of this section?
    - The decisive victory in this "great conflict" (10:1) comes from the Messiah who was cut off. Israel will prevail because her sin was atoned for. Even though earthly and celestial powers war against one another, the solution to Israel's plight is neither political nor angelic, but messianic. SUNDAY SCHOOL ANSWER ALERT: Jesus is the answer.
    - Jesus has never ceased to be the answer. Politicians sling mud on each other. Nations fire missiles. Territorial spirits pull the strings of kings and presidents. Archangels war against them. Saints pray. Every chess piece plays a role, but heaven's king manages the board.
    - Daniel 9 places the cross at the theological center of the conflict revealed in chapters 8 and 10-12.
- Persia will remain in power for two centuries. Greece and Persia will repeatedly fight one another during that time. Alexander wins, and Greece becomes the world power in the fourth century BC.
- As the nations of Greece and Persia wage war on each other, the demonic spirits over Greece and Persia war simultaneously. War plays out in two theaters, both heaven and earth. Gabriel is soon to reenter that mess. What a mess it is! World history has never been different. It is always messy.

—"But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth":

- The meat of the revelation has still not been shared. Daniel has experienced a heavenly visitation, he's been strengthened, he's heard a little bit about cosmic warfare. But the content of the vision—what is written in the "book of truth"—awaits the revelation of Daniel 11.

- House (quoting Baldwin on the book of truth): "Baldwin thinks this scribal image 'conveys God's control and knowledge of past, present, and future (Ps. 139:16; Mal. 3:16).'"
- The content of the revelation about Greece and Persia is inscribed in God's book, symbolizing his total control of time and world events. Daniel has nothing to fear.

—"there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince":

- Michael came to Gabriel's aid in 10:13. He contends by his side here in 10:21.
- Michael is Israel's guardian angel in Dan. 12:1. It would seem from Revelation 12 that Michael is the guardian, or defender, of all the people of God—not just ancient Israel but the church throughout history.
- Gabriel and Michael contend with both the territorial spirits of Persia and Greece.
- It's an interesting image. The territorial spirits of these nations seem to give God's angels a run for their money. Nevertheless, the whole story is written by God's hand in the book of truth. He knows the story; he guides it to his desired end.

11:1 *"And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him."*

—Even though this verse belongs to the next chapter, it continues the thought of chapter 10 and precedes the revelation that begins in 11:2

—Gabriel recalls "the first year of Darius the Mede," which was about two years prior. Darius assumed the throne in the city of Babylon after Persia conquered it under Cyrus.

—There is debate about the last word—"him." Whom did Gabriel "confirm and strengthen"? Darius or Michael the archangel?

- It seems that "in the first year of Darius the Mede" is not intended to define the recipient of Gabriel's strengthening. Rather, it is to mark the timeframe.
- In 10:13, Michael helped Gabriel, so we have precedent for powerful angels supporting one another. And in 10:21 (right before 11:1), Michael and Gabriel are portrayed as fighting side by side.
- Chronologically, Gabriel appears to have helped Michael in the first year of Darius the Mede (ca. 539–538 BC), shortly after Persia conquered Babylon. About two or three years later, in the third year of Cyrus (ca. 536 BC), Michael returned the favor, assisting Gabriel in his struggle against Persia's spiritual prince (10:13; 11:1). The two heavenly messengers appear to have worked together throughout these early years of Persian rule.

—Do territorial spirits still reign over the nations/regions of the earth?

- I've already mentioned the linguistic relationship between the "princes" of Persia and Greece and the "rulers" or "principalities" of the New Testament (Eph. 6:12). We sometimes imagine the kingdom of darkness as a flat, almost omnipresent force of spiritual evil. But Scripture paints a more complex picture. In Matthew 12:24, Beelzebul is called the "prince of demons"—using the same Greek word (archōn) found in the Greek translation of Daniel 10. Jesus then speaks of Satan possessing a "kingdom" (12:25-26). Revelation 12:7-9 likewise describes the devil "and his angels." There appears to be an organized hierarchy within the kingdom of darkness.
- Scripture also suggests variations in power. In Daniel 10:13, the prince of Persia is formidable enough that Michael must assist the heavenly messenger. Jesus may imply differences in demonic resistance when he says, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer" (Mark 9:29). And, almost as an aside, Jesus describes some demons as "more evil" than others (Matt. 12:45).
- There appear to be geographical dimensions to demonic influence: Jesus describes Pergamum as the place "where Satan's throne is" and "where Satan dwells" (Rev. 2:13). This probably relates to the rampant idolatry in Pergamum, depicting the city as a hotbed for hellish activity.
- When we look to the Old Testament, we observe further evidence of demonic powers over nations in Deuteronomy 4 and 32—passages that provide Moses' reflection on the tower of Babel and its aftermath.
    - Deut. 4:19-20: *"And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day."*
    - Deut. 32:8-9: *"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 Deuteronomy 4, God "allotted" false gods "to all the peoples under the whole heaven." This contrasts with Israel, whom God redeemed "out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance."

    - In Deuteronomy 32, God “gave to the nations their inheritance when he divided mankind” and “fixed the borders of the peoples.” This happened after the tower of Babel, when God divided the nations and spread them across the earth. But God did more than assign national borders and peoples. He assigned “gods.” We see this in how “the borders of the peoples” were allotted “according to the number of the sons of God”—a term throughout the OT for celestial beings, or members of the divine council. Think, high-ranking angels that turned rebellious. When mankind rebelled against Yahweh at the tower of Babel, he turned them over to false “gods” and the high-ranking spirits who represented them. In contrast, he adopted Israel as his own “portion” and “allotted heritage.”
    - This fits remarkably well with the idea of territorial spirits. The prince of Greece and the prince of Persia could naturally be understood as high-ranking spirits representing those empires. God had adopted Israel for himself, and high-ranking good spirits (Michael, Gabriel) fight for Israel.
    - In our New Covenant era, I think we can assume that territorial spirits did not just disappear. Even if national borders have shifted—they always do—“principalities” or “rulers” continue to influence the world. I would expect that such spirits continue to sway nations—but under God. It is not ruling politicians or spiritual princes that ultimately rule. It is the Most High God.
    - By my interpretation, Revelation 2-3 portray guardian angels over churches residing in each of the seven cities. This might not mean that every local church has a guardian angel; it could represent “the church in that city.” Nevertheless, it is not just empires and pagan nations that have spirits over them. Churches do too. I wonder how often we enjoy that benefit unaware.
- Satan is not omnipresent. He is a finite, created being who operates through subordinate spiritual powers. The kingdom of darkness is neither flat nor equal to God's kingdom. It is an organized but finite rebellion against the Lord.

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