

Lessons from Daniel 10

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Humans may notice what is visible to them, at least to some extent. Insiders take notice of what is happening behind the scenes. This is so in the world of business and politics as well as in many other areas. In contrast to the insiders, most people can only guess at what is really happening.

However, when it comes to the supernatural world all of us are outsiders. We can guess, but we do not know what is going on. We are caught in our three-dimensional world and have no access to knowledge beyond our sphere—that is, unless God reveals it to us and we care to listen.

Daniel 10 is a unique chapter in Scripture. It not only introduces Daniel's last vision but also draws the curtain aside so we can understand that there is another dimension to our struggles on earth.

I. Structure of the Vision of Daniel 10–12

The broad outline below comprises Daniel 10–12, although for now we will concentrate on chapter 10 only. It consists of three major parts and helps us see the contours of the entire last vision of the book of Daniel.

- Prologue to the last vision of Daniel (10:1–11:1)
- The vision of the kingdoms (11:2–12:4)
- Epilogue to the last vision and to the entire book (12:5–13)

In the beginning of chapter 10 Daniel mourns (10:2–3). At the end of the vision he is told that he would rest and experience the resurrection (12:13). The man in linen clothes, who appears in Daniel 10:4–9, reappears in Daniel 12:6–7(13). He may be present during the entire vision. Michael is found in Daniel 10:13, 21 and Daniel 12:1. This shows that the introduction and the conclusion of the vision correspond in an important way. There is Daniel, the prophet of God, who sees what the people of God will experience. There are heavenly beings and a divine being who control events on earth and sustain the people of God. In the end, there will be the resurrection. There is hope.

For now, we will concentrate on chapter 10 but the outline helps us to see the larger issue more clearly. Chapter 10 can be structured in the following way:

- *Historical Setting (10:1)*
- *Daniel Mourns (10:2–3)*
- *The Man in Linen Clothes and Daniel (10:4–9)*
 - Description of the Man in Linen Clothes (10:4–6)
 - Daniel's Reaction to the Vision (10:7–9)
- *The Angel and Daniel (10:20–11:1)*
 - The Angel's Actions and Speech (10:10–16a)
 - Daniel's Response (10:16b–17)
 - The Angels Action and Speech (10:18–19a)
 - Daniel's Response (10:19b)
 - The Angel's Speech (10:20–11:1)

II. Survey of Chapter 10

1. Time Frame

Daniel received his vision during 536/535 BC, the third year of the Persian king Cyrus. Having been deported from Jerusalem in 605 BC, he was an old man in his late eighties. The vision of chapter 11 begins in Persian times and extends to the end of time.

2. Distinctive Features of Daniel 10

While the chapter is cast in a narrative framework and contains insights into the practical life of a believer—namely how to relate to God—it also contains one of the most fascinating biblical revelations.

A number of persons appear, although it is not completely clear how many. In any case, there are Daniel, the man in linen clothes, probably an interpreting angel, Michael, and the princes of Persia and Greece.

In this chapter two visions are mentioned: the vision of the man clothed in linen and the vision about the kingdoms and the people of God, which will be developed in chapters 11 and 12a.

Remarkable are also the phenomena describing a prophet in a vision.

III. The Discussion of the Chapter

1. The Historical Setting

10:1 While the revelations of chapters 7 and 8 are given during the first and third year of a Babylonian king, those of Daniel 9 and 10 occur during the first and third year of Persian kings. When Daniel experienced what is described in chapter 12, he was at the Tigris river (Dan 12:4). The vision deals with a part of the great controversy. Daniel understood what was shown him in the next verses, but we know from the book that certain parts of what he had seen he did not understand. They were sealed “until the time of the end” (Dan 12:4).

2. Daniel Mourns

10:2–3 No reason is provided for Daniel’s mourning. However, the historical context may indicate that he was afraid that Cyrus’ decree, which allowed the Jews to return to Palestine, might not be completed due to the resistance on the part of the Samaritans. In his distress, Daniel sought God’s presence through prayer (Dan 10:12) and partial fasting.

3. The Man in Linen Clothes

10:4–6 The first vision is one of the man in linen clothes. It is distinct from the vision of the kingdoms in Daniel 11, which is described with a different Hebrew term. A similar vision was seen by John in Revelation 1:12–16. *What are the similarities between what Daniel saw and what John saw?*

- Both supernatural beings are described as men.
- They wear long, priestly garments.
- They have a golden sash or belt, which may point to royalty.
- Their eyes are like flames of fire.
- Their feet and legs are like burnished bronze.
- Their faces were like lightning, or the sun shining at full strength.
- They both have a mighty voice.

In Revelation it is very clear that this person is Jesus, and that Jesus is God. Some of the characteristics of Jesus in Revelation 1 are those of the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9; Rev 1:14). In Daniel we also have to assume that this person is Jesus. Daniel 10:4–6 reminds us of the heavenly Son of Man (Dan 7:13–14). So Daniel encounters the pre-incarnate Jesus in His glory.

4. Daniel’s Reaction to the Vision

10:7 The fact that while only Daniel saw the vision, the people with him, while they did not see the vision, trembled and fled, indicates that they somehow felt the divine presence. It reminds us of Paul’s Damascus experience and the effects on his companions in Acts 9:7.

10:8–10, It is very rare in Scripture that we hear about the prophets’ physical reactions when they received a

16–19 vision. This is due to the fact that the emphasis is not on how prophets were affected but on the message they had to deliver. Nevertheless, in the case of Daniel we are informed that no strength was left in him. He fell on his face, was helpless, and fainted. That he was without breath could mean that he ceased breathing. Therefore, he needed to be strengthened in order to stand upright (Dan 10:11). The call, “Fear not” seems to indicate that he was afraid.

The physical and emotional phenomena are reminiscent of Ellen G. White's experience when she was in a vision. In Daniel 10 we do not have a lot of "message"; rather we see the majestic Jesus and some actions. *What could be some reasons for these phenomena to be recorded here?*

- Daniel sees a theophany, an appearance of God. While the appearance of angels, such as Gabriel, evokes fear in humans (Dan 8:16–17; 9:21; Luke 1:11–19, 26–29), this can hardly be compared to Daniel's strong reaction in chapter 10.
- To see God, even in a veiled form, is almost too much for humans—even believers. God is the sovereign Lord and not just a good friend. Therefore, awe, respect, and love go hand in hand. We cannot play games with God.
- It is this majesty of heaven, the Almighty, that is able to settle all things and keep the power of human beings, but also of evil supernatural beings, in check (the princes of Persia and Greece). God is able to solve the problems of His people. While this message of God's might and sovereignty is sometimes presented in words, it is occasionally also presented without words, by a direct appearance of God.
- Daniel and all followers of Jesus need encouragement when the future looks bleak. The Lord does not run out of possibilities to intervene and bring to a conclusion the plan of salvation.
- Daniel and Christ's disciples need to have a personal relationship with the Lord and recognize their personal responsibilities.

5. The Angel

10:10, 16, 18 Three times Daniel is touched. Physical touch is important to most humans; they are encouraged and comforted by the presence of other beings who draw close and show care. Here Daniel is being touched by a being. Is it the man in linen or is it an angel? There is a correspondence in terminology and concepts between Gabriel's appearance to Daniel in chapter 9 and the person who touches Daniel in chapter 10 (e.g., the heavenly being coming to Daniel in 9:22 and 10:20; Daniel as being loved in 9:23 and 10:19; to give understanding in 9:22 and 10:14). Therefore, it is often assumed that here we have presented Gabriel as interpreting angel, as he also appears elsewhere in Scripture.

6. The Dialogue between the Angel and Daniel

10:10–11:1 In the ensuing dialogue the angel speaks three times; Daniel speaks just twice.

- Daniel is being encouraged. Twice he is told that God loves him greatly (Dan 10:11, 19). Who would not like to hear that from fellow humans—and all the more from God? Twice Daniel is also told not to fear (Dan 10:12, 19). Peace will be with him.
- While being strengthened, he is also affirmed that his intercessory prayer for his people is heard and that it has made and will make a difference (Dan 10:12). It was heard right away and was not put on a waiting list. Therefore, he now can be strong and of good courage (Dan 10:19).
- His understanding will be enlarged (Dan 10:13, 20). He has not only seen the pre-incarnate Jesus but will also know that behind the scenes a great battle is going on that will be won by the supreme Lord. It is not only the Samaritans who cause problems to the Jews returning from exile; there are evil angels engaged in warfare against God and His people.
- So the present issues behind the scenes as well as the future of God's people are revealed to Daniel. Verse 14 is crucial. The kingdoms described in chapter 11 do not reflect all major powers in the history of this earth or even the major political players that still may appear. The focus is not so much on these kingdoms, but rather on the people of God, especially "in the latter days."

10:16–17, Daniel seems to contribute little to the conversation with Gabriel. *Why is it important anyway?*

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- He acknowledges his weakness and his respect for the heavenly being. But this makes all the difference.
 - Daniel knows that he is not in charge; God is.
 - What is really important is that Daniel wants to listen to the message from God.

7. Michael

- 10:13, 21 Twice the angel informs Daniel about Michael. *What do we know about Michael?*
- Michael came to the help of Gabriel, who was involved in a spiritual battle against the prince of Persia—obviously a fallen angel, if not Satan himself. Michael is involved in a spiritual battle against evil powers in favor of his people. The battle extends also to the heart of the pagan king. Michael is one of the chief princes (Dan 10:13).
 - Michael is “your prince” (Dan 10:21), the prince of God’s people, who intervenes with the Persian and Greek overlords and by implication with all hostile overlords.
 - Daniel 12:1 again calls Michael the great prince of “your people.” He will rescue all those “written in the book.” There will be a future resurrection (Dan 12:2).
 - Michael has fought the dragon, Satan, and gained the victory (Rev 12:7–8; Jude 1:9)
 - He is the only one to be called archangel in Scripture (Jude 1:9).
 - His name means “Who is like God?”
 - Jesus will return with the voice of the archangel (1 Thess 4:16).
 - Obviously Jesus is the archangel Michael, as He is the Chief Shepherd (literally “arch-shepherd,” 1 Pet 5:4).

If this conclusion is correct, then Daniel encounters the pre-incarnate Christ as the Man Clothed in Linen, but he also hears about His involvement as Michael in the spiritual battle against evil powers.

Result

As other chapters in Daniel have a strong emphasis on the (at this time) still future Messiah, and as Daniel 9 even indicates the time of His public appearance as a human being on earth, so Daniel 10 is all about Jesus.

IV. Application

There are a few lessons for us to learn from Daniel 10:

- Our spiritual life is important. It is dangerous to neglect one’s spiritual life. A day without prayer can easily become a lost day. We also need to recover fasting, even if it is a partial fasting. Fasting may go beyond abstaining from food. We may need to abstain, for instance, from excessive work, the preoccupation with material things, the Internet and the constant occupation with mobile phones and other devices, or from the obsession to be reachable at any time and to reach others at any time. We should live our lives in the presence of God instead of being chained to our devices.
- Our dedication to God and the welfare of His people are important. Life is not only about ourselves; it is also about others, including the community of faith. When things go wrong in the church, people today tend to withdraw. Daniel, while suffering, held on and interceded for his people. He did not cut himself off from the fellowship of believers. God heard his prayer, encouraged him, and granted him inner peace.
- While God considers us His beloved children, we also need to love him. A formal religion, a mere adherence to biblical beliefs, and even a strict observance of God’s commandments are insufficient if we do not love God and each other.
- Battles behind the scenes continue today. We do not recognize and understand all of them, and full understanding may not even be necessary. But there is someone who knows all things. He cannot be deceived, and His plan cannot be thwarted. Daniel was not able to fight all the battles; he had to leave them to the Lord. It is best for us to leave the battle in Jesus’ hand, while we follow Him faithfully

with all our heart, soul, and mind. He has already gained the victory, and this victory will fully be realized at His second coming and after the Millennium.

- Therefore, we are not alone when evil powers assault us (Eph 6:10–18). In all temptations, suffering, and persecutions Jesus will be with us as He has promised (Matt 28:20)—even to the end of the world. Those who belong to Michael will also be victorious.

Conclusion

Daniel 10—and we have to repeat this—is all about Jesus, the Man Clothed in Linen and Michael, our Prince. It is all about Him, who has saved us and will save us completely.

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