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MINISTRIES

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The Exiled Prophet, Part 12: The Terrifying Vision (Daniel 10)

Welcome back to our study on the book of Daniel. In our last teaching, we covered the last part of Daniel chapter 9, where Daniel received a vision concerning the restoration of Israel and the rebuilding of the temple. In this teaching, we’re going to cover Daniel chapter 10. In chapter 10, Daniel receives another vision after he fasts for three weeks. Chapters 11 and 12 contain the bulk of this vision, but chapter 10 describes how Daniel came to receive it, as well as the physical impact that receiving the vision had upon him.

Let’s start our examination of this chapter in verse 1:

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.

Daniel received this vision in “the third year of Cyrus.” Cyrus was the Persian king who conquered Babylon (Herodotus, *Histories* 1:190–191; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 7.5.1-30), an event that is described in Daniel chapter 5 (Daniel 5:30-31). So, these events in chapter 10 occurred three years after the events of chapter 5, and two years after the vision Daniel received in chapter 9 (Daniel 9:1).

In Daniel 9, Daniel received his vision after praying a prayer of repentance on behalf of Israel. Here in chapter 10, Daniel receives a vision after a three-week long fasting period:

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.

The text does not explain why Daniel was mourning, but we may be able to reasonably assume the reason for it. We know from Daniel 9 that Daniel very much wanted to see the Jewish exiles return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. At this point in history, king Cyrus had granted the Jews permission to do both of those things (Ezra 1:1-4). However, the enemies of Israel had caused the building of the temple to be interrupted shortly after it had begun (Ezra 4:4-5). This may well be what caused Daniel to

mourn. As scholar John Walvoord puts it:

The occasion for Daniel's fasting probably was his concern for the pilgrims who had returned to Jerusalem two years before, anticipated in his prayer in Daniel 9. As the book of Ezra makes plain, the children of Israel had encountered great difficulty in getting settled in the land. Although the altar had been set up and the foundation of the temple laid (Ezra 3), the work had been suspended because of opposition by the people of the land (Ezra 4:1-5, 24). All of this was a great concern to Daniel, for his primary purpose in encouraging the expedition had been the restoration of the temple as well as the city of Jerusalem.

- Walvoord, John F., *Daniel*, edited by Charles H. Dyer & Philip E. Rawley (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012), p. 303

Much later, when Nehemiah heard news about how the building of Jerusalem had been halted, he mourned and fasted in much the same way that Daniel did (Nehemiah 1:1-4). So, it seems likely that the interruption of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple was the reason for Daniel's three weeks of distress.

Next, we are told about the beginning of Daniel's vision:

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.

We are told here that Daniel encounters a "man" who has a very unusual appearance. What does this appearance tell us about this person?

Well, there are three characters in the Scriptures who have these elements to their appearance. The first is the high priest; the high priest wore linen (Exodus 28:42; 39:27-28; Leviticus 6:10; 16:4), as well as fine and beautiful clothing (Exodus 28:2). The high priest had a beryl as one of the gemstones on his golden breastplate (Exodus 28:20; 39:13). The high priest was anointed with oil (Exodus 28:41; 30:30; 40:13; Psalm 133:2), which would have caused his face to shine. It is unclear how the legs of bronze, or the voice like a multitude would apply to a high priest, but the rest of the features would remind someone of the high priest's attire.

The second character that these features describe is a cherub. The prophet Ezekiel received a vision in which he saw cherubim, and the cherubim had many of the same features that are described here in Daniel. They had attached wheels whose appearance is described as beryl (Ezekiel 1:16; 10:9; see also Ezekiel 28:13-14). Their appearance is associated with lightning (Ezekiel 1:13), and also with flaming torches (Ezekiel 1:13). Their feet were like bronze (Ezekiel 1:7). These features of cherubim described in Ezekiel are very similar to the features of this man described in Daniel.

The third character who has these features is Jesus, or Yeshua, as he was known in Hebrew. Yeshua is depicted with these features in John's vision from the book of Revelation.

Revelation 1:12-16

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.

So, the appearance described by Daniel could apply to high priests, cherubim, or to Yeshua. What do high priests, cherubim, and Yeshua have in common? They were all in the presence of God when they had this appearance. The high priest entered the presence of God on the day of Atonement (Hebrews 9:7); cherubim are said to be continually in the presence of God (Ezekiel 10:19), and Yeshua went into the presence of God after his ascension (John 20:17), which is where he would have been during John's vision in Revelation. In any case, if someone has this kind of appearance, that is an indication that he is coming from the presence of God, and that the words he speaks will be true.

That still presents the question: who was this messenger who delivered this vision to Daniel? Well, it doesn't make much sense for it to be the high priest. There shouldn't have even been a high priest at this point, because a working temple is necessary in order to perform the priests' consecration ceremony, and the temple's construction had not been completed at this time. It also doesn't make much sense for this to be Yeshua. We will see later that this messenger was detained for a time by the "prince of the kingdom of Persia" (Daniel 10:13). However, Paul says that Yeshua is "above all rule and authority and power and dominion" (Ephesians 2:21). It seems unlikely that any prince of any kind could provide any obstacle to Yeshua. The last option remaining is that this messenger was a cherub, an angel coming to Daniel from the presence of God. That option seems to be the most likely.

As we return to the text, Daniel continues his story:

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 radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground.

Daniel's companions fled in fear before even seeing this angel, and Daniel lost his strength upon seeing him. When the angel spoke, Daniel fell on his face and lost consciousness. This same thing happened when Daniel received his vision in chapter 8 (Daniel 8:15-18). This also happened to Abraham when he received a vision in Genesis 15 (Genesis 15:12), and Job also describes a terror and deep sleep that occurs when one receives a vision from God (Job 4:13; 33:15). However, the angel comforts Daniel and gives him strength:

Daniel 10:10-11

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

God frequently has people stand up when he gives prophecy to them. We see this with Abraham (Genesis 18:22), Moses (Exodus 3:5), Elijah (1 Kings 19:11), and even all Israel at Sinai (Deuteronomy

4:10). We are not told why people stand in these situations, but we might suppose that God wants them to be alert and pay attention to what he is saying or showing them.

Daniel 10:12

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.

Here we learn that this angel was sent to give Daniel this vision on the first day that Daniel began to fast, which was three weeks earlier. So, Daniel did not need to be fasting for these three weeks in order to receive this vision. The very first day, as soon as God saw his humility, this angel was sent on his way. So, why did it take three weeks for Daniel to receive the vision? We find out in the next verse:

Daniel 10:13

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,

This angel was dispatched as soon as Daniel started fasting, but the “prince of the kingdom of Persia” delayed him until he received help from Michael “one of the chief princes.” There are many questions that arise from this verse. Who were these “princes”? Why were they fighting over this angel delivering Daniel a message? And how did the prince of Persia manage to delay an angel in the first place?

We’ll start by answering the easiest question first, and that is, who is Michael? Michael is the name of an angel, and not just any angel, but one who is in command of an angelic army (see Revelation 12:7). This is why he is called a “chief prince.” Michael is a protector of Israel (Daniel 12:1), and he is usually depicted as one who contends against Satan (Jude 1:9; Revelation 12:7; see also Zechariah 3:1-5). Why does Michael help the angel who is delivering the message to Daniel? Well, one possibility is that God sent Michael specifically to help. Another is that Michael would do this as part of his job as protector of Israel. This vision brings good news to Israel, and so Michael would want it to be delivered. Also, Daniel is an Israelite, so Michael would want him to receive comfort. One way or another, it would be Michael’s duty to help this other angel deliver his message to Daniel.

That brings us to our next question, which is, who is the “prince of the kingdom of Persia”? There are two different answers to this question that could potentially line up with the Scriptures. One is that this prince of Persia is a human leader within the Persian kingdom. Human leaders of Persia were called “princes” in the “kingdom” in the book of Esther:

Esther 1:14

the men next to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven **princes of Persia** and Media, who saw the king’s face, and sat first in the kingdom.

One question we may have is, if this prince is a human, how could he do anything to delay an angel? Usually, when we see angels in scripture, they are exercising the power of God, and humans are powerless to stop them. For example, in Genesis, angels brought destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1, 11, 13), and in 2 Kings, they killed 185,000 troops in the Assyrian army (2 Kings 19:35). In neither case could a human do anything to stop them. However, we do see a human contend with an angel in at least one place in scripture. Jacob famously wrestled with an angel all night long (Genesis 32:24-26; Hosea 12:4), and the angel could not leave until Jacob let him go. So, a human prince of

Persia, as strange as that may seem, is one of the possibilities in this passage.

The other possibility, which seems more likely, is that the prince of the kingdom of Persia is an angel similar to Michael. It seems more reasonable to say that an angel could delay another angel for three weeks, as opposed to the idea that a human could cause such a delay. Why would one angel delay another angel? Well, just like Michael is a prince who protects Israel, this prince of Persia protects Persia. This prince of Persia would not want a vision that foretells Persia's downfall to be delivered. As we will see in chapter 11, Persia's downfall is one of the things that this vision says will happen. So, the prince of Persia wants the message to be stopped, because it is bad news for Persia; Michael, on the other hand, wants the message to be delivered, because it is good news for Israel.

Now, there still seems to be a problem. How can two of God's angels fight with each other? Wouldn't that produce a kingdom that cannot stand (cf. Matthew 12:26)? Well, even though the text does not explicitly say so, it seems quite likely that this prince of Persia is under the rulership of Satan, who, as we mentioned earlier, is himself frequently seen fighting against Michael. These angels are in conflict because they are members of different kingdoms (see Matthew 4:8-9), and they are working toward different goals. This is not a case of God being divided against himself, but rather it is a case of the word of God overcoming the devil.

Getting back to the angel who is delivering this word, he continues his explanation of why he has come in the next verse:

Daniel 10:14

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.

The vision Daniel receives tells him what will happen to his people in the "latter days." When is that exactly? The Hebrew phrase translated "latter days" is *acharit hayamim*, which is used in a variety of contexts. Sometimes, this phrase is used to refer to the time that Messiah will rule on earth, as we see in passages like Isaiah 2:

Isaiah 2:2-3

It shall come to pass in the **latter days** that the mountain of the house of the LORD [YHWH] shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD [YHWH], to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD [YHWH] from Jerusalem.

(see also: Micah 4:1-2; Hosea 3:4-5)

Because of passages like this one, some think that *acharit hayamim* must always refer to this specific period of time, but there are places in scripture where the phrase is not referring to that period of time. The phrase itself simply means "a time in the future," and we see that meaning expressed in places like Deuteronomy 31:29:

Deuteronomy 31:29

For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in **the days to come** [*acharit hayamim*] evil will befall you, because

you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD [YHWH], provoking him to anger through the work of your hands.

The “days to come” mentioned in this verse were fulfilled in the book of Judges. This was the time that the people did “what is evil in the sight of YHWH” and “provoked him to anger” through the work of their hands, which means making idols:

Judges 2:11-12

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD [YHWH] and served the Baals. And they abandoned the LORD [YHWH], the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD [YHWH] to anger.

So, sometimes *acharit hayamim* means the time of the reign of Messiah, and sometimes it simply means “a time in the future.” The question is, what does it mean here in Daniel 10? Is Daniel’s vision about the time of Messiah’s reign, or is it just about a time in Daniel’s future?

The answer may actually be both. Chapter 11, as we will see in the next teaching in this series, covers a time period of several hundred years that has already transpired in history. However, chapter 12 may cover a time still in our future, when there will be a resurrection of the dead. We will cover that in greater detail when we dig into that chapter. What’s clear is that at least part of Daniel’s vision is about a time long before the Messiah’s reign, so the phrase *acharit hayamim* likely means “a future time” in this passage.

After Daniel receives this information about how this vision got to him, and what it is about, Daniel suffers some more physical effects. Specifically, he loses the ability to speak:

Daniel 10:15

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

This same thing happened to Ezekiel during one of his visions. Ezekiel was struck dumb until the time that YHWH wanted him to tell the vision to other people:

Ezekiel 3:25-27

And you, O son of man, behold, cords will be placed upon you, and you shall be bound with them, so that you cannot go out among the people. And I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute and unable to reprove them, for they are a rebellious house. But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD [YHWH].’...

We might think that God would treat Daniel the same way that he treated Ezekiel, and keep him mute for a while, but God actually removes Daniel’s muteness from him right away. We might conclude from this that God wanted Daniel to share this vision with other people as soon as possible. Once Daniel’s speech is restored, he asks for the vision to stop, because his body cannot handle the intensity of the experience:

Daniel 10:16-17

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 have seen throughout this chapter that Daniel's strength has been diminished; he has fallen down twice, and it has been difficult for him to stand. Now, we see Daniel say, “no breath is left in me.” This could mean that Daniel was literally having difficulty breathing, but the term for “breath” in Hebrew is *neshamah*, which frequently refers to the “breath of life” (see Genesis 2:7; 7:22; Deuteronomy 20:16; Daniel 5:23). More likely what Daniel means by this phrase is that he feels like he's going to die. This is a common experience among people who encounter God:

Exodus 33:18-20

Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD [YHWH].’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”

Revelation 1:12, 17

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me...
[v. 17] When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead...

Exodus 20:18-19

Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.”

Daniel seems to be experiencing the same thing as these other people. When he comes face to face with the glory of God, he feels like he is going to die, and he cannot tolerate being there and hearing God's words for very long. However, God strengthens and reassures Daniel that he is not going to die. God wants Daniel not only to live, but also to spread this word to others:

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.”

The words used to comfort Daniel here are used throughout the Scriptures. “**Fear not**” is something God says to many people when he is speaking with them. He said this exact phrase to Abram (Genesis 15:1), Hagar (Genesis 21:17), Isaac (Genesis 26:24), Jacob (Genesis 46:3), and John (Revelation 1:17) when they received prophetic visions. “**Peace be with you**” is a common Hebrew greeting, and it is often used to reassure someone that he is not an enemy. Daniel may have felt fear and physical discomfort, but God was assuring Daniel that he was not angry with him. Finally, “**be strong**” is something that God frequently says to people before they go forth to accomplish his will (see Deuteronomy 11:8; 31:6-7; Joshua 1:6-9; 1 Chronicles 28:10; Ezra 10:4; Haggai 2:4). These words all serve to assure Daniel that he can endure this vision. God will not allow him to die, and God has a job for him to do.

Daniel 10:20

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.

Here, the angel foreshadows what we will see later on in this vision, specifically in chapter 11. After a time, this angel's fight will not be against the prince of Persia, but against the prince of Greece. This is because Greece will conquer Persia, which is something that Daniel was told in his previous vision back in chapter 8.

This chapter concludes on an unusual verse:

Daniel 10:21

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.

The same term “inscribed” is used when speaking of the words that were written on the wall in Daniel chapter 5 (Daniel 5:24). Those words were inscribed and they came true, just like the words of this vision are inscribed and they will come true.

The final thing Daniel is told in this chapter is that the only one who contends by the side of this angel is Michael “your prince.” We mentioned before that Michael is the angel tasked with protecting Israel. The fact that Michael has assisted in bringing this message to Daniel may indicate that this message is important to Israel's future and well-being. The phrasing here is a bit odd, so perhaps it means something else; whatever the case, Daniel has been told again and again that this vision is true, and that it is important that he sees it.

Lessons For Us

This chapter hasn't even gotten into the meat of Daniel's vision, but there are still some lessons we can take away from what we've read.

First, God is responsive to his people. From the moment Daniel started mourning, God sent a message of comfort. That message did not reach Daniel right away, but it was sent out immediately when God saw his distress. This is why Yeshua says that we do not need to use many words when we pray; God hears us from the very first word:

Matthew 6:7-8

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Not only does God know our needs right away, but he is faithful to provide them, as John wrote:

1 John 5:14-15

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

The key here is that we ask “according to his will.” How can we know if the things we ask are his will? Well, if we live according to his will, then we will be asking for things that are his will too. As David

put it, “He fulfills the desire of those who fear him”:

Psalm 145:18-20

The LORD [YHWH] is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them. The LORD [YHWH] preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.

Even when things look bad, God is fighting for his people, and he does respond to the prayers of the righteous. God looked after Daniel, and he will look after us.

A second lesson we can take away from this chapter is understanding why we don't always hear from God. Sometimes people wonder why God doesn't speak to them. One reason is that he doesn't need to; he has already spoken to all of us by his prophets. We have his word recorded in the Scriptures, so we don't need to hear from him directly to know what he wants. However, another thing to consider is that encountering God is terrifying. People who encounter God typically experience intense fear, and even feel like they are going to die. Daniel had experience with visions; he had received several visions before this one in chapter 10, but even he felt like he was going to collapse and die as God revealed this latest prophetic word to him. When we ask for God to speak to us, we likely don't understand what we are really asking. There are probably times that God chooses not to speak to us for our own good. As we mentioned before, we do have God's words already, including the words that he spoke to Daniel, and we can make use of those words just as well as words that we receive directly. The duty of a prophet is to relay God's word to the people, and the duty of the people is to obey God's word. We still have that duty to obey even if we don't personally have a terrifying encounter with God.

The third lesson that we can take from this chapter is that God's will is inevitable. We have seen throughout the book of Daniel that no human king, and no human kingdom can stand against God's will. That has been a consistent message in Daniel's prophecies. This chapter tells us that not only can no human resist God's will, but no angel can stand against him either. God is sovereign over all realms, whether human or angelic. Paul repeats this message in two of his epistles:

Colossians 2:18-19

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.

Romans 8:38-39

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] our Lord.

Nothing and no one can prevent God's will from being done. No power on earth or in heaven can stop him. So, should we go along with God's will, or try to oppose it? Daniel's vision shows us how futile it is to fight against God.

In the next teaching in this series, we will examine Daniel chapter 11. We hope to see you there.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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