Daniel 10:1-21

Days Yet To Come

[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. – Daniel 10:1-21 ESV

These closing chapters of the Book of Daniel contain some of the most important prophecies in the Scriptures. It all began with Daniel reading the words of Jeremiah the prophet concerning Israel's 70-year exile in Babylon. Through the prophet, God promised that there would be an expiration date for the banishment of the people from the land. God had sent them into exile at the hands of the Babylonians, but He would also return them to land. From what Daniel could ascertain, the time was drawing near for that promise to be fulfilled. Encouraged by what he read, Daniel was also concerned that this promise might not be fulfilled because of the disobedience of the people of Israel. He immediately set out to rectify the problem. Entering a period of fasting and prayer, Daniel confessed the sins of his people and begged God to forgive them so that they might return to the land and restore it to its former glory.

> *"O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name."* – Daniel 9:19 ESV

This is when Daniel was visited by Gabriel, a messenger from God sent to give him "insight and understanding" (Daniel 9:23 ESV) into the future events concerning the nation of Israel. Daniel had primarily been concerned about the exiles' upcoming return to the land. After all, the 70 years were just about to expire. But God wanted Daniel to know that He had far greater plans in store for His chosen people.

Gabriel began to unveil God's plans concerning a period of seventy weeks or seventy sevens. To understand the meaning of this strange phrase, it is important to remember that Daniel had just read about the 70 years of captivity coming to an end. He was thinking in terms of years. So, when Gabriel mentioned the seventy sevens, Daniel would have recognized it as a reference to 490 years.

Gabriel was letting Daniel in on the details of God's longer-term plans for Israel. This 490-year timeline would bring about six significant outcomes concerning Jerusalem and the people of Israel.

First, the 490 years will finally end Israel's rebellion against God, eliminate all sin, provide atonement for their guilt, usher in a time of everlasting righteousness, confirm all the biblical prophecies, and result in the anointing of the Most Holy Place. These six byproducts would have caught Daniel's attention. After his impassioned prayer and painfully honest confession of Israel's sin, the thought of a day when their transgression and guilt would come to an end would have been music to his ears. But there were other, less appealing aspects to the prophecy that had to happen before the good news could be fulfilled.

Gabriel spoke of Jerusalem being rebuilt and then destroyed, along with the Temple. He warns of floods, wars, and miseries. He reveals that a powerful ruler will appear on the scene who will make a treaty with Israel and then break it. This same leader will desecrate the Temple and outlaw the observance of the sacrificial system.

As chapter 10 opens, three years have passed and the prophecy Daniel read in the Book of Jeremiah has already begun to be fulfilled. The year is 536 B.C., and Daniel is an old man – well into his 80s. He has spent most of his adult life living in exile in the land of Babylon. Two years earlier in 538 B.C., Cyrus the Medo-Persian king issued a decree that permitted the Jews to return to their land so they could rebuild the Temple under the leadership of a man named Zerubbabel. The Book of Ezra reveals that by 537 B.C. they had reinstituted the sacrificial system and by 536 B.C., they had begun work on the Temple.

Yet Daniel remained in Babylon, perhaps too old to make the long trip back to the Judah. He was in retirement by now, having served in the administrations of a succession of different kings. But even in his old age and even though the real action was taking place back in Judah, Daniel was still hearing from his God. Daniel's advancing years and decreased activity had not prevented him from receiving additional insights from God concerning the future of Israel.

God sent Daniel a special messenger – "a man dressed in linen clothing, with a belt of pure gold around his waist. His body looked like a precious gem. His face flashed like lightning, and his eyes flamed like torches. His arms and feet shone like polished bronze, and his voice roared like a vast multitude of people" (Daniel 10:5-6 NLT).

Daniel had been in mourning for three weeks when this vision came to him. It's likely he had received the news of the difficulties facing the remnant of Jews who had returned to the land. They faced extensive opposition from those who had taken over the land in their absence. While progress had been made, it had not been without great difficulty. They were under spiritual and physical attack from their enemies, and Daniel was likely interceding on their behalf. It was during this extended time of prayer that Daniel received a "visit" from God's messenger.

When Daniel encountered this divine messenger, he reacted with fear. At the sound his voice, Daniel fainted. Yet two times, the messenger assured Daniel he was "greatly loved" (Daniel 10:11 ESV). This was not just a reference to Daniel's status as one of God's chosen people; it was meant to let Daniel know he was precious to God. Daniel had faithfully served God all the years he had lived in Babylon and remained obedient to God's will and reliant upon God's power.

Through Gabriel, God encouraged Daniel to take courage and be strong because what he was about to hear was going to be difficult to accept. God revealed to Daniel that a great spiritual war was going on, unseen by men, and impacting the world in which Daniel lived. He also told Daniel that things were going to get worse before they got better. The conflicts the people of Israel faced back in Judah were nothing compared with what was to come. Much to Daniel's surprise and disappointment, there would continue to be conflicts on earth and in the heavens until God decided it was time to bring it all to an end.

This elderly servant of God was getting a glimpse into the future of Israel and the world. For Daniel, these events would have been disturbing and not encouraging. But despite the negative

nature of the news, God wanted Daniel to be encouraged and remain strong. God was not trying to scare Daniel; He was revealing His sovereign, unstoppable will concerning His chosen people and the world He had made. God wanted Daniel to know that He was in complete control of all that was happening back in Jerusalem and well into the future.

Gabriel reveals that his appointment with Daniel had been delayed because of spiritual warfare. He had been dispatched by God the moment Daniel had begun to pray but on his way, he had encountered "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" (Daniel 10:13 ESV). This is likely a reference to a demon, not a human king. Jesus referred to Satan as "the prince of this world" (John 14:30). Paul called him the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). So, it only makes sense that this "prince" that Gabriel encountered was one of the fallen angels who had joined Satan in his rebellion against God (Jude 1:6).

This demonic creature tried to keep Gabriel from accomplishing his God-ordained task. This cosmic battle in the unseen realms reminds us that spiritual warfare is always taking place all around us. God has a plan and his enemies are doing everything in their power to prevent that plan from taking place. But God is in control. His will cannot be circumvented, sidelined, or supplanted. The apostle John provides a stirring reminder of God's supremacy and ultimate victory over the enemy.

> *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* – 1 John 4:4 ESV

Before departing and returning to his battle with "the prince of Persia," Gabriel promises to tell Daniel all that is "written in the Book of Truth" (Daniel 10:21 NLT). This statement is meant to assure Daniel of the message's veracity and reliability. Gabriel was assuring Daniel that these things must happen because God had ordained it to be so. They were all part of His divine plan and recorded in the Book of Truth. Nothing has happened or ever will happen that is outside the sovereign will of God Almighty.

Daniel could be encouraged and remain strong even in the face of coming struggles. He could hear bad news concerning the remnant in Judah but could rest easy knowing God was in control. When he heard that Gabriel was returning to do war with the prince of Persia, he had no reason to worry or panic. The realization that spiritual warfare was taking place in the unseen realms was meant to remind Daniel that his God was working behind the scenes to ensure that His will was done.

Daniel's God was all-powerful and in full control. Because Daniel prayed and received an answer from God, we have been given a glimpse into the future. One of first things we should realize is that most of the six outcomes that Gabriel outlined in his message to Daniel have yet to take place. Israel's rebellion against God has not come to an end. Despite Jesus' incarnation, the Jewish people rejected Him as their long-awaited Messiah. Rather than worship Him as King, they had Him crucified.

It is also painfully clear that sin has not ended or been eradicated. Jesus came to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), yet sin remains because there are those who refuse to accept Him as their sin substitute and Savior. And because of their rejection of the Savior, their guilt and condemnation remain. Sin's penalty of death still hands over their heads like the sword of Damocles.

It is obvious that we are not living in a time of everlasting righteousness. Wickedness and evil abound and unrighteousness rules the day. It is also self-evident that many of the prophecies contained in the Scriptures remain unfulfilled. Jesus promised to return but has not yet done so. Finally, the anointing of the Most Holy Place has yet to happen because there is no Temple.

Yet, Daniel was given a glimpse into the future and a fleeting and rather fuzzy view of things to come. Because we have been given the completed canon of Scripture, we know how the story ends. By combining the writings of Daniel with John's fantastic insights recorded in the Book of Revelation, we can begin to piece together God's incredible plans for Israel's future and the fate of the world.

We know that things will get worse before they get better. We know the enemy will fight until the end. But we also know that our side wins. The will of God will be accomplished, and His plan will be fulfilled. So, there is no need to be afraid. Like Daniel, we are precious to God. He has chosen us and He will protect us. We can take courage. We can be strong.