

The sermon

Intro

I confess it's been rough sledding through Daniel's prophecies. This morning no prophecies, just an angelic encounter and territorial demons.

What does this mean for you today? Bear with me. I'll show you how we can connect Daniel's experience with our own lives.

Body

Passage Focus

What we have today is an introduction (chapter 10) to a vision (chapters 11-12). We'll trace the encounter. Then we'll draw 6 applications from the encounter.

Tracing the narrative

READ 10:1

Date (10:1)

"In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia" (10:1) = 536 BC. Meaning Daniel's been there for about 70 years. Meaning Daniel decided to stick around in Babylon and not go back with the first wave in 538 BC (Ezra 1:1-4).

Comments on the vision (10:1)

And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision. – 10:1

Vision = something Daniel saw. This vision was about a great conflict, or war. Daniel acquired understanding from this vision.

READ 10:2-9

Before the vision (10:2-3)

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. – 10:2-3

For three weeks Daniel engaged in a modified fast where he abstained from delicacies identified as meat and wine. He didn't abstain from all food, just the delicacies.

And Daniel didn't anoint himself meaning he didn't use lotion for his dry skin in Babylon's heat. Daniel's fast was like a woman giving up filet mignon and cappuccinos and make-up for three weeks.

Note fasting is connected with mourning. It's unclear what grief prompted this fast. 10:12 indicates there was some understanding he desired. He fasted for understanding.

When in a season of mourning, fasting is a fitting response. Rather than over-eating or binge watching a TV show, you might consider fasting.

A frightening visitor (10:4-9)

While standing at the river bank Daniel saw a unique man.

- 1) Dressed in linen.

- 2) A belt made of gold.
- 3) Body like beryl = some sort of shining gemstone.
- 4) Face like lightning = bright light.
- 5) Eyes like flaming torches = bright light.
- 6) Arms and legs of burnished bronze = shiny metal with light reflecting off it.
- 7) Amplified speech (*"like the sound of a multitude"*).

Daniel's visitor was an unnamed angel.

Others were present, but only Daniel saw this visitor = divine veiling. However, everyone was afraid and fled, recognizing a supernatural presence. Daniel lost his strength and went pale in fright (*"My radiant appearance was fearfully changed"*) and the angel's speech put Daniel in a deep sleep.

Angelic presence had bodily effects.

READ 10:10-14

Angelic explanation (10:10-14)

An unidentified hand, likely the angel just encountered, touches Daniel so that he's now on his hands and knees (10:10).

Daniel's afraid (trembling), but the angel assures Daniel that he's loved (by God). The angel has been sent (by God) with words (from God). When Daniel stands at the angel's command, he's still trembling.

With more words of reassurance, the angel says "fear not" and explains why he's come to Daniel.

- 1) Because Daniel humbled himself before God by fasting.
- 2) Because God heard Daniel's prayers.
- 3) Because God wants Daniel to know and understand what will happen to the Jews *"in the latter days."*

The understanding Daniel longed for (10:12) comes through an angel's message of *"the latter days."*

The angel wanted to visit Daniel earlier, but he was prevented by a demon.

More on the unseen realm later.

READ 10:15-17

Speech taken and given (10:15-17)

Upon hearing the angel's voice, Daniel was mute (10:15). The angel touches Daniel's lips and he can speak again (10:16). Again angelic encounter has bodily effects.

Now able to speak, Daniel says that the visions have brought him physical pain and robbed him of his strength (*"by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength"*).

Calling the angel his lord and calling himself the angel's servant (*"How can my lord's servant talk with my lord?"*), Daniel remains robbed of strength and breath (10:17).

READ 10:18-21

Strengthened to hear (10:18-21)

Verse 20 indicates this is the same angel who fought with "the prince of Persia."

Again, angelic touch results in physical strengthening (10:18). This time encouraging angelic speech results in physical strength (10:19).

With Daniel strengthened, the angel can give understanding. He's come to tell Daniel "*what is inscribed in the book of truth*" (10:21). We'll get to this book of truth next week.

Several observations about this angelic encounter:

- 1) Supernatural presence results in fear, which produces bodily effects (e.g., mute, lack of strength).
- 2) Supernatural touch results in recovery of bodily abilities (e.g., ability to speak and stand).

Applications

A note on application. We read and study and meditate on Scripture to connect the Bible to our daily lives. The purpose of learning about the Bible is to have transformed lives that bring glory to God.

Point 1: Behind the scenes there's angelic warfare (10:13, 20-21)

A few observations about the angelic realm:

- 1) "*Michael, one of the chief princes*" (10:13) indicates a hierarchy in the angels.
- 2) Michael being "*your prince*" = Israel's angel.

What is he doing right now?

- 3) "*The prince of the kingdom of Persia*" withstood the unnamed angel for 21 days (10:13) = angelic warfare.

"But I will return to fight against the prince of Persia" (10:20).

- 4) "*The prince of the kingdom of Persia*" must be a demon.
- 5) "*The prince of the kingdom of Persia*" indicates territorial demons.

Same with "*the prince of Greece will come*" (10:20).

- 6) Territorial demons would appear to destructively influence the region assigned to them.
- 7) The reference "*for I was left there with the kings of Persia*" (10:13) would seem to indicate a battle over these two kings. Likely influence.

That's angels and demons fighting to influence world rulers. For example, a demon trying to influence world rulers to harm Israel.

Events on earth are affected by warfare in the unseen realm. Behind beastly world rulers and kingdoms lie territorial demons. Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the little horn, of Daniel 8, was empowered by Satanic forces (8:24).

Paul says this to us about the matter:

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* – **Ephesians 6:11-12**

Because there are powerful forces at work unknown to us, we need God's resources in the battle to stand firm.

Point 2: God loves

Twice the angel refers to Daniel as "greatly loved." "*O Daniel, man greatly loved*" (10:11). "*O man greatly loved*" (10:18).

God has sent an angel to give him the understanding he desired.

What does this mean for us?

Daniel is loved because he has a personal relationship with God. We enter into personal relationship with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance towards God. Jesus died on the cross to save a people from their sins. We become God's people when we turn to God for forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' death and resurrection.

This sort of relationship Daniel enjoys with God is exclusive to those who trust in Jesus.

Christian, say you find yourself in a time where you've been diagnosed with a deadly disease. You don't have a promise that you'll be healed. You don't have a promise that you won't die. What do you do?

Christian, say you lost your job, whether unjustly or just because of an economic downturn. You don't have a promise that you'll find a job that's ideal or pays as much as the job you lost. What do you do?

Christian, say you have children or grandchildren that have chosen to reject Jesus. And they're living a sinful lifestyle you would have never imagined. You don't have a promise that if I do this they're guaranteed to repent. What do you do?

As a pastor, when I've been discouraged about people leaving the church, I didn't have a promise that says if you do these three things no one will ever leave the church. When things are bleak, where do we turn? What can we cling to?

We don't have a promise that our faithfulness will always produce pleasant results. Sometimes life is hard for God's faithful people. What do we do then?

One answer is we remember that we are greatly loved by God.

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, ¹⁹ that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. – Psalm 33:18-19

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. ¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. ¹⁴ For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. –

Psalm 103:11-14

His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, ¹¹ but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. – Psalm 147:10-11

The word **"greatly loved"** refers to valuable things that are regarded as precious. It's used of gold (Ezra 8:27). It's the same word translated "delicacies" in 10:3. Christian, God values you and regards you as precious.

Christian, God values you in distressing circumstances. God values you in confusing times.

Non-Christian, when we turn to Jesus, God regards us as "greatly loved." We become his precious child. God relates to us in new ways.

The next four points also apply when a specific promise from God is elusive.

Point 3: God hears

"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." – 10:12

Daniel's mourning over something. So he fasts. Daniel lacks understanding. So he prays. And God answers. By sending an angel.

Christian, say you're troubled by something going on in your life. Pray. Say you're confused by something you read in your Bible. God acted in a way that I wouldn't expect. Pray.

Are you mourning? Are you confused? Pray. The encouragement here is that God listens to you when you cry out to him in despair.

The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. – **Psalm 34:15**

Note God hears the righteous. That's those who trust in Jesus and follow him.

Non-Christian, can you pray to God? Yes, but there's no guarantee God will hear. If you come humbly, like Daniel, he'll hear. Prayers like help me to understand the gospel. Help me to see what these Christians see. Help me to know you. These sort of prayers God hears.

God is merciful. God welcomes those who turn from unrighteousness by trusting his Son Jesus. Ask him to help you do this.

Point 4: God reveals

Daniel prayed. God responded. By sending an angelic visitor. In 10:14, the angel relates that he ***“came to make you understand that is to happen to your people in the latter days.”***

God heard and he acted for Daniel. Understanding is coming in chapters 11-12.

Christian, God reveals. Say you don't know what to make of a distressing or perplexing situation. Pray for understanding. God may answer by guiding you to relevant Scriptures or conversation with a Christian friend or a good Christian book.

Be confident that God provides guidance when we ask (Jas 1:5-6).

Non-Christian, is a certain truth about God disturbing or confusing you? Ask God for understanding. I wish I had God's wisdom in high school to navigate bullies and peer pressure and a desire for belonging.

Point 5: God strengthens

Daniel finds himself mourning and confused. God comes to his aid by sending an angel. By the time the understanding comes, the angel has strengthened Daniel.

(mourning & confused → overwhelmed → strengthened → understanding)

Christian, is the distress and confusion overwhelming? Do you find yourself unable to bear the weight of your circumstances? No shame in that. We are finite, limited creatures. There's a limit to our strength. God, on the other hand, is infinite. There's no limit to his resources.

In 2 Corinthians 1:8, Paul speaks of a time when ***“we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.”*** In other words, he had reached the end of his own strength. He needed God's strength. In Philippians 4:13, he said, ***“I can do all things through him [Christ] who strengthens me.”***

Non-Christian, God strengthens those who trust in him. I wish I had God strengthening me in high school.

Point 6: God comforts

In 10:19, the angel imparts peace to Daniel: *“peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.”* Mourning and confusion gives way to peace.

Christian, this is what God does for his people. When we turn to God he hears us and acts for us. One way he acts for us is by comforting our troubled souls with peace. Peace here meaning the absence of inner distress and anguish. A soul at rest. A soul refreshed.

Conclusion

Christian, I don't have a Scripture that promises you ease. I don't have a promise in Scripture that guarantees you the absence of suffering. At least not in this life. Yes Daniel speaks of a kingdom to come where suffering will cease. But I do have Scriptures that promise God treasures you. God hears you. God reveals truth to you. God strengthens you. God comforts you.

These promises can belong to anyone in this room, if you turn to Jesus, and only Jesus, for forgiveness of sins.