

The Final Vision of Daniel

The last three chapters of Daniel highlight a lengthy final vision. It is broken up into a few sections as outlined below:

Dan. 10:1–11:1 – Introduction to the vision

Dan. 11:2–35 – Near Prophetic Events

Dan. 11:36–12:4 – Far Prophetic Events

Dan. 12:5–13 – Final Message for Daniel

It should be no surprise that the contents of this fourth vision of Daniel *also* pertains to the nation of Israel and to the Holy Land, i.e., including the city of Jerusalem. The context is given in the first verse of chapter 10 and gives information about how Daniel received this new revelation from God. One notable highlight is that this new revelation involves some basic truths concerning the ministry of angels (angelology).

Daniel 10:1

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and *one of* great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision.

The third year of Cyrus would have been 536 BC, approximately two years after the Babylonian empire fell to the Medo-Persian empire (Dan. 5:30–31). The question is often asked why Daniel did not return to Israel with his fellow-countrymen at the conclusion of the Babylonian rule. One possible explanation is ... due to his advanced age; being well into his 80s by now. It is also possible that Daniel felt he could do more good for his people Israel if he remained in office as a high official to king Cyrus. Daniel himself includes his Babylonian name in the introduction to assure the reader that he is the same Daniel that served Nebuchadnezzar some 50+ years prior. He then tells us the nature of the vision which he had seen; it was a vision of “great conflict,” no doubt concerning his people Israel. That he tells us he understood the message, in stark contrast to the other visions Daniel received. Recall at the end of his vision in chapter 7 his “thoughts were greatly alarming” and after the vision in chapter 8 he was “sick for days.” Perhaps he understood in the sense that he was already introduced to the fact that future Israel would undergo great persecution and this vision gave more details concerning these events.

Daniel 10:2–3

² In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. ³ I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.

Notice now the change from the third person to the first person, which will continue for the rest of Daniel. It is interesting that Daniel was mourning during this time which caused him to fast. Why would Daniel be mourning? That is a topic of much conjecture. It is possible that Strauss has speculated the answer to this question:

The concern of Daniel might have been caused from a lack of interest on the part of his people to return to the land. From the twelve tribes then in captivity, only 49,697 desired to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:64, 65; Neh 7:66). The seventy years of captivity had expired; at the time of this last vision it was about seventy-two years since the first deportation, and now only a meager number had wanted to return. Daniel mourned for the lack of concern in the hearts of the Jews.

Daniel specifically mentions that he did not eat “tasty food,” which has led some to believe that his fasting perhaps occurred during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, since the Hebrew term literally means “bread that is desirable.” This is likely an idiom for “those foods that we really enjoy eating.” Miller makes an important point concerning fasting ...

Fasting is a neglected discipline for most Christians today, but it was commonly practiced in biblical times. Some have associated fasting with legalism, but only one fast was commanded in the biblical law code. Once a year on the Day of Atonement the people of Israel were to “deny” themselves by fasting and mourning over their sins (Lev 16:29, 30, 31). Even then individuals had to choose to come to Jerusalem and participate in the feast. Other fasts recorded in the Bible

were voluntary. Through fasting, a person demonstrated sincerity by denying one of humanity's strongest urges, that of satisfying hunger. Fasting is a personal matter between the individual and God. It is voluntary. However, if giants of the faith like Moses, David, Esther, Daniel, Paul, and Jesus himself felt the need to fast, it would seem reasonable that modern saints should be willing to deny themselves in order to pray more earnestly for the furtherance of the kingdom of God in a world that lies in deep spiritual darkness.

One final note: the text here literally says "three weeks of days," possibly as a very clear contrast to the seventy sevens of chapter 9. The word "days" is specifically used here to ensure the reader is clear on the time frame Daniel was fasting.

Daniel 10:4–6

⁴ On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, ⁵ I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with *a belt of pure gold of Uphaz*. ⁶ His body also *was* like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

Here Daniel mentions the 24th day of the first month, at the end of his three weeks of fasting. The first month in the Jewish calendar is Nissan (March/April on ours). Those first 24 days would have included two important Jewish feasts; Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Here in verse 4, we indeed have evidence against the Maccabean view in that Daniel was physically on the bank of the Tigris. This would have been two years after Cyrus' decree to let Jews return home. Why is this evidence of an early date for Daniel? Because it is highly unlikely that a Maccabean author would **not** have "brought" Daniel back to Judea! That he was physically at the Tigris River is indicated by verse 7 in which the men that were with him did not "see the vision."

Daniel lifted his eyes, perhaps from prayer, and saw a man. From Daniel's description of this individual, he was clearly not a mere man, but some kind of heavenly being. He was dressed in linen. In the OT, linen was used to represent holiness. The priestly garments were made of linen and were specifically said to be "holy garments." (Lev. 16:4) He was girded with a belt of pure gold, depicting purity and holiness. He mentions that the part of His body that was visible looked like beryl. Beryl is an emerald-like stone brilliant in color and transparency. It comes in different colors from green to a bright off-yellow. Daniel then tells us this heavenly man's face had the appearance of lightening. Certainly, the radiant brightness of lightening here depicts this being's power on display simply by looking at him. Finally, His purity is again on display by the appearance of His eyes like flaming torches. Who or what is this divine personage that Daniel saw?

Though we know nothing of the book of Revelation at this point, the majority opinion in the evangelical community is that this person is indeed the Lord Jesus Christ. If you correlate this person with the **risen** Christ that John saw in Revelation 1, you see the obvious parallels. For this reason, the vast majority of scholar see this appearance of Christ as a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance. While this is technically correct, the vision that John saw was not of the pre-incarnate Christ ... but the post-resurrected Christ! Did Daniel see the Lord Jesus before His incarnation? Yes ... but I believe Daniel was given an appearance in his vision of the resurrected Lord Jesus. Nit point ...

Daniel 10:7–9

⁷ Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. ⁸ So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. ⁹ But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Daniel continues to give us insight into what he saw. His next remarks indicate, in the strongest possible language, that he alone saw the vision. The Hebrew literally is rendered "I saw, I, Daniel, I alone ..." None of the men that were with him saw the vision but they did know something incredible was happening and they ran away. Daniel is now alone to see this great vision but the act of opening the spiritual realm to him sapped him of any physical strength. This is a common occurrence when sinful human beings are confronted with divine visions and revelation. Daniel has experienced this before (Dan. 7:28; 8:27). He mentions that his "natural color turned to deathly pallor," ... we would today render this as "he looked like he had seen a ghost." At this point Daniel heard the heavenly man speaking, perhaps in that voice he described earlier as "the sound of a tumult." This caused Daniel to fall into a deep sleep with his face on the ground. He was totally incapacitated.

Daniel 10:10–12

¹⁰ Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. ¹¹ He said to me, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. ¹² Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding *this* and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.

When we come to verse 10 and beyond, we have a dilemma to consider. The interjection translated "Then behold" seems to indicate some kind of transition. Daniel is touched by a hand and this hand seems to lift him from the face down position to now on his hands and knees, albeit trembling. Is this hand from the personage that Daniel just saw in verses 5 and 6 above, i.e., the Lord Jesus, ... or ... is this another divine being (perhaps an angel)? Naturally, there are two schools of thought. Renald Showers views this being in verse 10 as the same person as before and he deals with the issues that are in the text. What are those issues? There are several issues that argue AGAINST this being the Lord Jesus.

First, it appears that this being has been sent, which *can* imply obedience to a higher authority. Second, in the verses that follow Daniel tells us that this being in verse 10 was hindered by the prince of Persia for 21 days. It seems very unlikely that any created being (whoever or whatever the Prince of Persia is) could hinder Jesus Christ for 21 days. Third, this being in verse 10 had to have Michael's help to complete his mission of coming to Daniel with the revelation of these last chapters.

I personally agree with Dr. Showers 99% of the time ... but here, I must depart from his interpretation. I see a second personage beginning in this verse, and though the text does not say it explicitly, I believe it may be Gabriel again that comes to Daniel to provide the revelation in these last chapters. It solves more problems than it creates. Let's at least assume it is an angelic being and go on with the text as the identity of this being really has no bearing on the vision itself.

This angel has been sent to Daniel specifically to provide the final revelation to him. The angel strengthens Daniel so that he can go from laying face down to hands and knees ... and then from hands and knees to standing upright, though still trembling.

The first thing the angel said to Daniel is "do not be afraid." Daniel was certainly trembling at the sight of the Lord Jesus and this angelic being, but the angel tries to comfort him in the words that follow. The angel then says that he has come in response to his "humbling himself" and this seems to correlate with Daniel's fasting period. He sought to understand what he had already seen in previous visions and he humbled himself before God with fasting and prayer (recall the section of Dan. 9 that we skipped). This angel had come in response to his petitions to God. This should comfort Daniel.

Daniel 10:13–14

¹³ "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. ¹⁴ "Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet *future*."

Here is where things begin to get interesting. The angel, I think Gabriel, was prevented from coming to Daniel for 21 days. The text says that the prince of Persia withstood him, literally "stood in front of" him.

Who is this prince of Persia? The prince of the kingdom of Persia must be another angel (an evil one), for how could a mere man prevent an angel from coming to Daniel; we can't even see angels. What is now evident, especially in light of the revelation that Michael is in charge of overseeing the nation of Israel, is that this prince of Persia must be an evil angel overseeing the kingdom of Persia to influence its leaders for evil intent against the nation of Israel and God Himself. Is it possible this angel was Satan himself? Yes, given that Gabriel was not able to pass and Michael was required to intervene. In other places in scripture, it is evident that Satan himself is behind the most powerful kingdoms of the world (Isa. 14 – where he is depicted as the king of Babylon and in Ezek. 28 – where he is the king of Tyre).

What is clear from this passage is that there are good and evil angels that watch over and influence the human leaders of the nations. These angels are dispatched by their respective rulers (God and Satan) and there is a continuous battle in the spiritual realm that we cannot see or understand and we can do nothing to influence this battle *in our humanity*.

Heartfelt Warning Alert: We must be very careful with this new revelation, concerning the doctrine of angels, that we do not go beyond the text of the Bible. What we understand about demonic influence is very scant. We know there is a spiritual battle going on, Eph. 6:12. We know the deception of the nations is one of Satan's main purposes (Rev. 20:3, 8). However, you must, at all costs, avoid entertaining the wild speculation of those who claim to both see and understand this spiritual warfare that is going on in this realm. I have included some astute comments from conservative commentators on the last page.

Another angel is introduced for the first time in the Biblical text and ***this powerful angel is a prominent personage in Biblical eschatology***. This angel is called Michael, and he is referred to as "one of the chief princes." If we restrict our knowledge of this new angelic being to the book of Daniel, we can look forward to verse 21 ... where Michael is referred to as "your prince," indicating that he is somehow a ruler of some sort over Daniel, and by extension, Daniel's people. This relationship is further clarified in 12:1 as "the great prince ... who stands guard over the sons of your people." Apparently, this powerful angel Michael is specifically responsible for guarding and protecting the nation of Israel. Have you ever wondered how the Jewish people have managed to remain a race upon the earth with generation after generation of people wanting to wipe them off the face of the earth? It is Michael and his powerful ministry of oversight that helps guarantee Israel's existence. Perhaps this is why Michael was sent to assist Gabriel, because Daniel was specifically petitioning the Lord God concerning Israel and Jerusalem.

Finally, the angel reveals to Daniel that the revelation he is about to receive concerns "what will happen to your people in the latter days." He says this is still future from Daniel's perspective.

Daniel 10:15–17

¹⁵ When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. ¹⁶ And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who was standing before me, "O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength. ¹⁷ "For how can such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me."

Daniel certainly knew, from his vision in chapter 7, that persecution was going to be coming for Israel. Once Gabriel told him the reason he came, i.e., to tell Daniel concerned that persecution, he could no longer stand upright and fell on the ground once again face down, evidently overcome by thoughts of fear over what he was about to learn.

The "and behold" seems to indicate still another being, described here as "one who resembled a human being" as now entering the scene. But it could also just be a curious way of coming back to Gabriel ... as he will say he needs to return to the battle shortly.

Daniel 10:18–21

¹⁸ Then *this* one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me. ¹⁹ He said, "O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!" Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, "May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me." ²⁰ Then he said, "Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come. ²¹ "However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these *forces* except Michael your prince.

The being touches Daniel and frames the vision he is about to receive ... "Do you understand why I came to you?" Then the angel is going to return to the battle and mentions that the prince of Greece is about to come. This could be a reference to Alexander himself ... but more likely it could refer to another evil angel that has been put in charge of the coming Greek empire.

Next week we will get into the vision itself in chapter 11.

Grant Richison discusses a potential misapplication of the revelation in these passages...

Some in the spiritual warfare movement believe that “Territorial Spirits” must be bound for the gospel to be effective in a national entity. They call this “Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare.” They believe in three levels of demonic control. Firstly, ground level demons control individuals. Secondly, occult demons give power to magicians, shamans and witches. Lastly, strategic level demons, whose main purpose is to hinder the advance of the gospel, rule geographical regions.

Frank Peretti’s writing (*This Present Darkness*) is an example of this belief. Peter Wagner represents a church growth author of this position. Wagner asserts that this belief brought down the Berlin Wall and opened the gospel to Albania. He claimed that 10 million Japanese would come to Christ by the year 2000.

The growing movement of exorcism of territorial spirits does not have biblical foundation. These people pray over neighborhoods, cities and nations to exorcise demons controlling these geographical areas. Some church growth techniques recommend this approach to evangelism. This movement grew out of citywide evangelistic campaigns in Latin America movement and might have its roots in animism.

The argument for waging war on “territorial demons” rests primarily on Daniel 10:13. There is such a thing as territorial demons but there is no biblical basis for claiming victory over demons by name. Daniel did not know about this conflict before the angel told him about it so he did not pray to overcome these demons.

The Bible never suggests that believers are to command demons to give up national territory. In Daniel 10, God sent the Archangel Michael to deal with the fallen angels responsible for Persia and Greece. The content of the gospel itself has “power” “unto salvation” so there is no need for “power encounters” to validate God’s message.

Rom 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (Daniel 10:13 Bible Exposition Commentary)

James Rosscup in his review in *Master's Seminary Journal* on Frank E. Peretti's book *This Present Darkness* (published in 1986) writes...

Peretti's fast-selling works stress the urgency of prayer in spiritual warfare that encounters unseen angels and demons. The plots are fascinating, and the action fast-moving. His characters engage in eastern meditation, channeling, expanded consciousness, realization of potential claims to be gods, and experience in past and future lives. A novel can be a poor place to learn Christian doctrine and practice. Unfortunately, Peretti and others sometimes go beyond Scripture. He makes holy angels sarcastic and spiteful and victorious only when humans pray. He gives all of them wings and swords, and attributes to them different nationalities. Demons dissolve, fall into many bits, vanish in a red puff, have their heads cut off by angels, and roll like a puppy on black tar. Other distinctions that Scripture never makes include designations of particular demons of lust, lawlessness, deception, complacency, despair, murder, and the like. The author's stories make prayer a priority, which is good. Yet to make God and angels completely dependent on human prayer questions His sovereignty. (See page 21 in *Christian Books on the New Age*)

Finally, I cite my own experience with the novels of Frank Peretti. My first exposure to this type of theology was in reading *This Present Darkness*. I loved the action; I loved the story; but the theology implied in the novel was totally unbiblical ... and the whole theological framework of his writings is based on Daniel 10:13. On the back cover, one reviewer remarked ... “Not since *The Screwtape Letters* has there been a novel with as much insight into spiritual warfare and the necessity of prayer.”

While I could spend hours discussing what is wrong with Peretti’s implied theology in his novels, I will just mention that the reviewer seems oblivious to the fact that we are talking about a work of fiction and fantasy ... not a primer on practical angelology. Please be careful to not bring fanciful elements of fictional novels into your understanding of Biblical theology. Many people have been led astray by these and similar works.