



gracefellowship

Daniel: Thriving in Exile
January 17, 2021
God's Delayed Response

I'm glad you've joined us today as we continue to study the book of Daniel together. If you've missed any of the messages in this series I'd encourage you to go back on our website or church app and catch up with us. Daniel is a fascinating book and although it was written a few thousand years ago, it's still very relevant to what we face today. In fact, almost each week of this series something in the chapter we have studied has tied in to current events we face in our world. This week is no different! I think today you will see how God is at work in our world, but perhaps in a different way than you've considered before!

If you have a Bible, turn to Daniel 10. As we start to wrap up our study of this book it is important to understand that Daniel 10-12 is all one section. In Daniel 10 we see the set up for a vision God has given Daniel about the future. Chapter 11 is a detailed description of the vision. And chapter 12 is the final explanation of the future events Daniel has been shown. Today we are just going to look at chapter 10 and then next week I hope to cover 11 and 12 together and close our study of the book.

Last week we talked about how Daniel fasted and prayed to God for understanding of a vision God had shown him. God immediately answered Daniel's prayer and sent a messenger to give him the meaning of the vision. Daniel got an immediate response. Today we are going to see Daniel do the same thing for yet another vision, but the response is delayed. There is a pretty fascinating reason for the delay. Let's take a look at it together.

:: Daniel 10

1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision.

2 At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks.

3 I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris,

5 I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist.

6 His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

7 I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; those who were with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves.

8 So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless.

9 Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground.

10 A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

11 He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

12 Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.

13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

14 Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

15 While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless.

16 Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, "I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I feel very weak.

17 How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe."

18 Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength.

19 "Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed," he said. "Peace! Be strong now; be strong." When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength."

20 So he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come;

21 but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.

At the beginning of this passage we see that Daniel is in distress over a vision, or revelation, God has given to him. Daniel has already seen the revelation, but we won't get the details behind it until next week. Remember, Daniel is about 84 years old at this point and he has been shown incredible things by God over his

lifetime. But this vision is so powerful that it caused Daniel to mourn for three weeks. Daniel experiences anxiety over what he has seen. His mourning and anxiousness over this vision causes him to call out to God for understanding.

Last week we talked about how Daniel fasted and prayed to seek God. This week we see a very similar thing. Part of Daniel's mourning was to practice self-denial. You might consider this a limited fast, but the true definition of fasting is cutting out food from your diet for a period of time. We aren't told here that Daniel cuts out all food, but he does what we saw him do at the beginning of the book, when he was a young man first going into exile- he cut out choice foods. Daniel tells us that no meat or wine touched his lips for 3 weeks.

There may be times in your life when you feel God call you to an extended time of seeking Him about something specific. While you may not completely fast from all food during that window of time, you may practice self-denial of something you typically enjoy as a way to remind you when you crave that thing to call out to God. During the season of Lent many Christians give up something important to them for a period of 30-40 days in order to make more room for Jesus during the celebration of Easter.

Daniel is in a place where the vision he has been given causes him to realize that only God can help him and make sense of these things.

Question: What situations cause you to get to a place of total desperation and bring you to call out to God? Hopefully, as we mature in our faith in Jesus, it takes less and less for us to stop relying on our power and wisdom and to ask God to intervene on our behalf. We need God more than we can possibly imagine! Sometimes we think we can handle life on our own, but it's not true! You need God in your marriage, as you raise your kids, in your workplace, and in every element of life!

Daniel is in great need for God and is praying to Him continually and in verses 4-11 we see God's answer show up.

4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris,

5 I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist.

6 His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

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Talking Points:

1. When the angel shows up Daniel describes him and he is amazing-supernatural in every meaning of the word!
2. Daniel’s friends were with him and while they didn’t see the angel, his presence was so tangible it caused them to be terrified and they ran to hide.
3. It’s possible spiritual/supernatural things are happening all around you and you are not even aware of them.
4. Not only did Daniel’s friends leave, the angel is so stunning that Daniel says he lost strength, his face turned deathly pale and he was helpless. Daniel falls to his face on the ground and goes into a deep sleep.
5. The angel picks Daniel up and delivers an incredible message to him.

Remember, Daniel has been praying for 3 weeks asking God for the ability to understand the vision that’s been shown to him. Look at what the angel tells Daniel in verses 12-14:

12 Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.

13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

14 Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.”

Daniel is told that an answer to his prayer was dispatched on the first day he started praying. So, what took the angel so long to get there? The angel tells Daniel that in route to deliver the message the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted him for 21 days.

Who is this prince of the Persian kingdom? Is it a man? No, there isn’t a man on earth who can stand against God’s angels. This is a spiritual being- a demonic force that is opposing God. You may ask, “how did you come to that conclusion when the text doesn’t say it’s a demon?” In verse 13 when the angel talks about Michael coming to help him fight this battle, he calls Michael one of God’s chief princes. The same terminology is used to describe the archangel of God and the demon known as the prince of the Persian kingdom.

Here’s what we need to understand and gain clarity on today:

There are heavenly realities that stand behind human conflict.

Most people go through life completely unaware of this reality- or they think it's just something in Sci-fi movies. We need to be aware today that there are unseen battles taking place in the spiritual realm around us that affect our world continually. We see a picture of this in another OT book. In 2 Kings 6 the King of Aram has surrounded the city where the prophet Elisha lives. The Arameans have been trying to conquer Israel and Elisha keeps thwarting their plans by revealing to the King of Israel what Aram is going to do ahead of time. So the King of Aram goes after Elisha personally. Elisha and his servant are surrounded when they wake up one morning and the servant freaks out! But Elisha is calm. The servant says, "What are we going to do?" And Elisha responds, "Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them!" Then Elisha prays for God to open the eyes of his servant and the man looks out around the city to see horses and chariots of fire carrying the armies of the Lord! The spiritual world was revealed and the conflict changed immediately.

Our world is in a state of spiritual conflict. Satan is fighting hard to destroy the work of God in this world and to take as many people to hell with him as he can.

Because we know that Jesus has already come to earth, died on the cross and been raised from the dead, you may ask: "If Jesus has come and won the victory over Satan, why is there still a lingering battle?" Satan knows he is defeated- let's be clear about that- and he knows his end is coming; but he still fights to thwart the plans of God.

Illustration: After the Allied forces won World War II allied planes would drop pamphlets in areas where fighting persisted to tell people the war was over. However, in the Philippines a Japanese Intelligence Officer named, Hiroo Onoda, continued to engage in guerilla warfare in the jungles of the Philippines. He didn't believe the war was over and considered the pamphlets dropped by the allies to be a trick. Onoda continued to lead his troops and fight for 29 more years after the end of WWII! The war was over, but he fought for 3 more decades! Satan is like that. The war is over, but he continues to fight against the people of God and the purposes of God

Christians, we are in a war. But it may not be what you think. Paul tells us in the book of Ephesians what kind of war this is.

:: Ephesians 6:10-12

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

We aren't fighting against flesh and blood. People are not our enemies. Even those we disagree with them politically or ideologically. People are caught up in the spiritual battles taking place and need to be shown the light of Jesus to help them escape the darkness!

Paul goes on to tell us about how we are to take place in this spiritual conflict.

:: Ephesians 6:13-18

13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

What are our weapons in this spiritual war as we live in the physical realm?

- Truth
- Righteousness
- The Gospel of Peace
- Faith
- Salvation
- The Word of God
- Prayer

Prayer brings us back to Daniel. He began praying and didn't get an immediate answer like we saw last week. So what did Daniel do? He continued to pray!

Your prayers matter! Be persistent in prayer as we continue to engage in spiritual battles.

Daniel had no idea that in the heavenly realms two spiritual beings were fighting over the things he was praying about! But Daniel kept praying until an answer came. When God doesn't immediately answer your prayer, keep praying. You never know what is taking place in the unseen realms and how your persistent, fervent prayers are impacting the outcomes of those battles.

Let's close by looking at one more section of Daniel together.

:: Daniel 10:18- Daniel 11:1

**18 Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength.
19 “Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong.” When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.”**

20 So he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come;

21 but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.

1 And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.)

Daniel becomes aware that when the angel leaves he will once again engage in conflict with the prince of Persia, but that the prince of Greece is coming. A new kingdom will emerge and next week we will see how these things play out as we wrap up the book of Daniel.

For now, let me encourage you to stay consistent in prayer. Notice as the chapter closes Daniel doesn't feel any responsibility to leave this encounter and do anything to fight in a greater way. He trusts God and His heavenly forces to fight on behalf of his people. Daniel remains faithful to pray and God continues to fight on his behalf.

Here's the last thing I want to leave you with you today and it will be a precursor to the message next week.

You can trust an unknown future to a known God.

Next week we find out what this terrifying vision was all about and how God is at work in some of Israel's darkest days. And He is at work in your darkest days as well. God knows your future better than you know your past! You can trust Him as you prayerfully step into the unknown. Continue to pray and do battle on your knees as spiritual warriors do battle behind the scenes in the heavenly realms.

Life Group Discussion Questions:

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