

Daniel

Chapter 10

Daniel's Terrifying Vision of a Man

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.[a] 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,[b] 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 withheld 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.

Chs 10–12 Though quoting other speakers, Daniel is the narrator (except for 10:1, which characterizes the contents). He describes an encounter with a heavenly messenger. (CSB)

Ch 10 Luth: “The tenth chapter is a prologue to the eleventh. Yet in it Daniel writes something special about the angels, the like of which we find nowhere else in the Scriptures, namely, that the good angels do battle with the evil angels in defense of men. Besides Daniel calls also the evil angels princes, as when he speaks of ‘the prince of Greece’ [10:20]. Hence we may understand why things are so wild and dissolute at the courts of kings and princes, and why they hinder the good and bring on war and unhappiness. For

there are devils there, hounding and goading, or hindering to such an extent that nothing goes as it should” (AE 35:305–6). (TLSB)

10:1 *third year of Cyrus.* The third year after his conquest of Babylonia in 539 B.C. (CSB)

vision. Daniel’s previous vision (ch 8) disclosed information similar to that found in ch 11. (TLSB)

Daniel begins his account of the vision by identifying himself as the one who had been renamed Belteshazzar. This, plus the reference to Cyrus, is a direct tie to the beginning of the book (1:7, 21). Thus Daniel is claiming his authorship of the entire book and is giving us notice that the book in the form that we have it was probably composed during the early years of Cyrus’ reign. (CC)

10:2 Daniel continued to grieve for his people and Jerusalem (9:3, 16). Two years had passed since the Judeans were allowed to return to Jerusalem. Daniel was too old to return. Perhaps he heard of the hardships the returnees were facing. (TLSB)

10:3 *anoint myself.* Use of oil was normal hygiene in a dry climate (cf Ec 9:8), but a mourner abstained from anointing (2Sm 14:2). (TLSB)

Daniel’s mourning that led to fasting was probably due to his continued concern for Jerusalem (see 9:3 and his prayer in 9:4–19). Now in 536 BC, two years had passed since Cyrus’ edict in 538 BC that allowed the first Judean exiles in Babylon to return to Jerusalem. Daniel was now at an advanced age, and so he did not return with them. Perhaps he had received word that the returnees had not yet begun the rebuilding of the temple. (CC)

Daniel’s note that he did not eat any meat or wine means that in his mourning he did not partake of the Passover lamb that year, since Passover would have been celebrated on 14–15 Nisan as commanded in Ex 12:1–6, and the date of the vision was 24 Nisan (Dan 10:4). Celebrating the deliverance of Israel by means of the Passover pilgrimage (celebrated in conjunction with the Feast of Unleavened Bread), one of the three annual pilgrimages to the Jerusalem temple (Ex 23:14–17; 34:24; Deut 16:16), was out of the question, since the temple still lay in ruins and its sacrifices were on hold. Yet he could still hope for the future deliverance through the Messiah, the Passover Lamb without blemish (cf. Gen 22:8; Ex 12:5; Is 53:7, quoted in Acts 8:32; Jn 1:29, 36; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 5:6, 12). (CC)

Daniel’s neglect of anointing was a sign of mourning, as seen in 2 Sam 14:2. When mourning ceased, one resumed the use of oil (2 Sam 12:20; Judith 10:3), which was seen as part of normal daily hygiene (Eccl 9:8; Amos 6:6; Mt 6:17). Because this use of oil was associated with the end of mourning, it was called “the oil of gladness” (Ps 45:7; Is 61:3). (CC)

Daniel’s fast was apparently accompanied by prayer and study of God’s Word, including requests for understanding the previous vision he had received (10:12; cf. 9:2, where he indicates he had been reading Jeremiah). Thus his concern seems to be for his people and the city of Jerusalem, including the temple. In later apocalypses, fasting often preceded the reception of a vision. (CC)

The description of the individual in Daniel 10 also has points of contact with Ezekiel’s vision of God and his cherubim in Ezekiel 1 and with John’s vision of the exalted Christ in Revelation 1. (CC)

Daniel 10:5–6: The Divine Man

Appearance like a man, a Son

Ezekiel 1:4–28 God and His Cherubim

God’s appearance is like a man (1:26–27)

Revelation 1:13–16: The Glorified Jesus Christ

Like a Son of Man (1:13)

of Man (10:5, 16, 18; cf. 7:13)		
Clothed in linen garments (10:5)	No reference to clothing	Clothed in long robe (1:13)
A gold belt around his waist (10:5)	Appearance of gleaming metal above God's waist and fire below his waist (1:27)	A gold belt around his chest (1:13)
Body like jasper (10:6)	Appearance of gleaming metal and fire (1:27)	No reference to his body
Face like lightning (10:6)	Flashes of lightning from the cherubim (1:13)	Face shining like the sun (1:16)
Eyes like burning torches (10:6)	God's presence like fire (1:4); torches flash between the cherubim (1:13); from the waist down, God appeared like fire (1:27)	Eyes like flames of fire (1:14)
Arms and feet like polished bronze (10:6)	God's presence like glowing metal (1:4); the cherubim had feet like polished bronze (10:7); Feet like polished bronze from the waist up, God appeared like glowing metal (1:27)	Refined in a furnace (1:15)
Voice like an army (10:6); compare 12:6–7, where he is “above the waters of the river”	The wings of the cherubim made the sound of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like battle tumult and an army camp (1:24)	Voice like many waters (1:15), that is, ocean breakers or a large waterfall

10:4 *first month.* Nisan (Mar/Apr). (TLSB)

Tigris. Large river east of Babylon. His previous vision was at the Ulai canal (8:2). (TLSB)

10:5 *man clothed in linen.* Divine messenger; called a “man,” as was Gabriel previously (8:15; 9:21). (TLSB)

Uphaz. Location unknown. (TLSB)

10:7 The vision was intended only for Daniel. (TLSB)

great trembling ... fled. They knew something unusual was taking place, perhaps from Daniel’s reactions. (TLSB)

10:8 *no strength.* Daniel repeatedly spoke of his weakness and need to be strengthened (cf vv 16–19). (TLSB)

my radiant appearance. Reflecting the glory of the Lord. (TLSB)

10:10–11 As in previous visions, Daniel is touched, strengthened, and given the ability to understand by the one speaking with him (8:18; 9:21–22). Daniel is also specifically identified as the one to whom this man was sent. The reason that he but not the others saw the vision is hinted at in the title “highly prized” (10:11). God chose Daniel as his prophet, and this faithful believer was cherished and valued by God, as are all his believers (cf. Ps 72:14; 116:15; 2 Cor 4:7; 1 Pet 1:7; 3:4). (CC)

10:10 *hand touched me.* Daniel may have been met by a number of heavenly beings (cf vv 5, 10, 16, 18). This could have been either the hand of the messenger (v 5) or another divine being who had been sent (v 11). (TLSB)

10:11 *man greatly loved.* Daniel was held in high esteem. (TLSB)

10:12 Daniel’s prayers were heard (v 2), but the answer was delayed. (TLSB)

fear not – The divine man’s greeting, “do not be afraid” (10:12), serves as a comforting benediction and absolution that was often spoken by God and his angels to believers (Gen 15:1; 26:24; Judg 6:23; Lk 1:13, 30; Acts 27:24). Christ spoke the equivalent of לֹא תִירא, “do not be afraid,” when he appeared in a very similar form to John (Rev 1:17), and he uttered the same words on other occasions. The holy divine power that accompanies God and his angels is so overpowering that this reassurance was designed to calm the fear that would naturally come over a sinful human being on these occasions. (CC)

set your heart to understand – The man’s words in Dan 10:12 show that Daniel’s fasting and seeking to understand God’s Word was accompanied by prayer, as is often the case in the OT. The humbling of oneself is often connected with fasting and the offering of prayers and sacrifice (Lev 16:29, 31; 23:27, 32; Ps 35:13; Ezra 8:21). Daniel’s prayer was heard and answered from the very first day he began praying, although three weeks elapsed before Daniel received the audible answer from the man. This shows the need for perseverance in prayer with confidence that God is hearing and answering even though we may not be aware of his response (cf. Lk 18:1–8; 1 Thess 5:17). (CC)

10:13 *prince of the kingdom of Persia.*† A demonically inspired attempt to use the kingdom of Persia to thwart God’s plan for his people ended in failure when Michael came to the help of the angel clothed in linen (v. 5). (CSB)

Spiritual being, perhaps a fallen angel, who contended for Persia. (TLSB)

withstood me twenty-one days. God’s messenger was held up for three weeks (v 2) before coming to Daniel. (TLSB)

There was a delay in the arrival of the divine man for the twenty-one days of Daniel’s fast (Dan 10:13). The delay was caused by the divine man’s battle against “the prince of the kingdom of Persia.” The phrase “the prince of the kingdom” (שָׁרֵךְ מַלְכּוֹת) is unique in the OT. It expresses that a fallen angel, a demon had taken a special interest in thwarting God’s salvific purposes, which God would accomplish partly through using the pagan kingdom of Persia. This particular demon took up his position over Persia to attempt to foil God’s plans involving this nation. (CC)

The NT describes the demonic possession of certain individuals, and declares that worship of pagan gods and idols really is demon worship (1 Cor 10:20–21), but this passage shows that a demon can gain a position of influence over an entire pagan nation or people. This is also one of the clearest portrayals in Scripture of opposition by the devil and his evil angels to God, his holy angels, and his salvific purpose, which ultimately is to redeem all people through his Son, Jesus Christ. (CC)

Heavenly warfare involving Christ as the commander of his angels is mentioned throughout the Scriptures, though in less detail than here. Already in Exodus, God had promised that his angel would go before Israel into the land of Canaan to fight for them (Ex 32:34; 33:2). This was fulfilled in Joshua’s day, as confirmed by the appearance of the preincarnate Christ to Joshua in the form of “the Prince of the army of Yahweh” (Josh 5:14). The battle of Barak against Sisera was also fought in heaven (Judg 5:19–20, where “stars” likely refers to angels, as in Job 38:7; Rev 1:20; 12:4). The demonic army that opposes God will be punished at the final judgment (Is 24:21), and Paul reminds us that our most significant struggles in this life are against the spiritual powers of darkness who fight on the heavenly plane (Eph 6:12). The most explicit NT passage to depict this warfare is Rev 12:7–11, where the archangel Michael and the angels under his command fight Satan and his angels; Michael and his troops expel the fallen angels from heaven after the first advent of Christ. (CC)

The divine man told Daniel, “I had been left there against the kings of Persia” (Dan 10:13), which refers to demons who had stationed themselves over Persia during the reigns of past Persian kings. The verb “left” (נִזְאַר) probably means that God the Son was left alone, repelling the enemy by himself until Michael came to his aid. This is similar to the temptation of Christ: he alone fought against Satan (Mt 4:1–10), then after his victory over the devil, angels attended him (Mt 4:11). Jesus was also abandoned on the cross (Mt 27:46, quoting Ps 22:1), where he alone defeated the devil (Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 3:8) by atoning for humanity’s sins, then angels accompanied his resurrection (Mt 28:2–3; Mk 16:5; Lk 24:4). (CC)

Presumably after the divine man and Michael won the most recent battle against the prince of the kingdom of Persia, Michael remained stationed in the Persian court to thwart further attacks while the divine man visited Daniel. After the Son of God would complete his visit to reveal the divine message to Daniel, he would return to continue his spiritual warfare along with Michael against “the prince of Persia,” and after that, against “the prince of Greece” (10:20). His statement “I had been left there against the kings of Persia” (10:13) emphasizes that spiritual attacks had come throughout the reigns of several past Persian kings. It also suggests that spiritual assaults would continue in the future under the Persian kings who would succeed Cyrus. The divine man would have to continue to wage spiritual war to ensure that the Judeans who returned to Israel would have a heavenly warrior who would defend them as they would struggle to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. The opposition they would face and eventually overcome (recorded in Ezra 1–6) was a reflection of the ebb and flow of the battles that the divine man and Michael would fight on their behalf in the spiritual realm. (CC)

Michael. Israel’s prince/angel, whose name means “who is like God.” Helped the messenger in his spiritual struggle against the prince of Persia. (TLSB)

Michael is called “one of the chief princes” (10:13), the equivalent of ἀρχάγγελος, “archangel” (Jude 9). Thus it is possible that in addition to Michael himself, other angels under his command (Rev 12:7) were posted at the Persian court. (CC)

10:14 What the messenger had to say to Daniel concerned a time that lay in the future. (TLSB)

time yet to come – The revelation to Daniel will relate the coming events that will affect God’s people and will culminate in the resurrection of all the dead (Dan 12:2–3) on the Last Day, after the return of Christ. This eschatological perspective is confirmed when the divine man says, מִזְרָחַ לֹא יֵשׁ, literally, “yet [the] vision is concerning the days [to come]” (10:14). Thus the vision is not simply about future world history, but about the eschatological and theological future that culminates in the promised eschatological kingdom of God in Christ, which arrived at his first advent (Mk 1:14–15; 9:1; Col 1:13) and will be consummated at his second advent (1 Cor 6:9–10; 15:24; 2 Tim 4:1, 18). (CC)

10:16 touched my lips. So Daniel could speak again. (TLSB)

lord. Hbr ’adonai. Not the Lord God but an address showing respect. (TLSB)

10:19 Daniel was strengthened (cf v 8) and thus made ready to hear what the messenger had to say. (TLSB)

10:20 *return to fight.* The messenger had to resume his struggle with the Persian prince. (TLSB)

prince of Greece.† This antagonistic power will also have to be opposed. (CSB)

Another battle loomed. (TLSB)

The divine man continues by asking Daniel a rhetorical question, “Do you know why I have come to you?” (10:20), which expects no answer, and so he does not wait for one. Instead, he informs Daniel that he will return to continue the battle against the demonic power that seeks to undermine God’s purpose in the Persian Empire. However, he also tells Daniel that when that particular battle is over, the demon who will be the prince of Greece will come, implying that a new battle will begin against him (10:20). Satan’s spiritual warfare shall continue for the rest of the OT era, intensify against Christ in his earthly ministry (Mt 4:1–11; Jn 13:27), and persist throughout the church age as Satan, both directly and through his agents, seeks to destroy the followers of Jesus (e.g., 1 Thess 2:18; 1 Pet 5:8; Rev 12:13–13:18), but Christ’s conquest on the cross has secured eventual and eternal victory over Satan for all believers (Rom 16:20). (CC)

10:21 The messenger would first fulfill his assignment to tell Daniel what had been written about Israel’s future (v 1;11:2). This thought is continued in ch 11. (TLSB)

Book of Truth. Perhaps a reference to the divine record of the destinies of all human beings. (CSB)

Before returning to war, the Son of God is going to tell Daniel what is contained in “the Book of Truth” (10:21). This book is only mentioned here in the Scriptures. (It should not be confused with the “books” opened in the judgment in 7:10 or with “the book” in Dan 12:1 in which the names of God’s saints are written.) From the content of the remainder of the vision, it appears as if this book contains the true course of history as recorded by God in his foreknowledge of all things. Daniel used the same noun, ἀληθία, “truth,” in 10:1 to describe the entire fourth vision (chapters 10–12), and the divine man will use it again in 11:2 to characterize the content of the later portion of the vision. Both of those other uses of ἀληθία, “truth,” reinforce that the content of the “Book of Truth” is God’s “truth,” which the divine man now reveals. Compare the revelation of “truth” in and by Christ in Jn 1:14, 17; 8:32, 40; 14:6; 18:37. (CC)

Ch 10 Daniel continues to grieve over the fate of his people and Jerusalem. Once again, the Lord sends a divine messenger to strengthen Daniel and prepare him spiritually for the word of truth he will hear. That Daniel is strengthened by an angel reminds us of Jesus’ experience in Gethsemane (Lk 22:43) and His promise that angels watch over us (Mt 18:10). Our knowledge of how angels serve God’s people is very limited. We know they guard our ways (Ps 91:11–12), which may also include strengthening us when we are weak. • Lord of heaven and earth, send Your holy angels to care for me, that I may be strengthened to do Your will. Amen. (TLSB)