

Daniel
The Spiritual War Behind World History
Daniel 10
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Well I am excited tonight to return again to our study of the book of Daniel. I invite you to take your bibles and turn with me to Daniel chapter 10 as we continue to work our way through this magnificent book. The theme of Daniel of course as we have discovered again and again is that God is completely and totally sovereign over the affairs of empires, of nations, of kings and of individual lives. He is sovereign over the events that unfold on the political stage of this world. Tonight we come to a unique passage in the book of Daniel. There are really only a few passages in Scripture that describe the unseen spiritual world that surrounds us and the spiritual battle that rages. We get glimpses of that battle even in heaven for example in Job chapter 1 verse 6 and in Job 2 verse 1 we see that Satan himself enters into the presence of God in order to accuse believers like Job, like us. He's known as the accuser of the brethren. There's another fascinating glimpse in First Kings chapter 22 verse 19 and following where Micaiah the prophet sort of pulls back the screen or the curtain rather and allows us to see into the throne room of God as God asks, already having decided what He will accomplish, He asks for the feedback of the angels and they describe how there's one said this, and another said that and God responds as He holds council with these amazing beings.

There're also glimpses of this reality on earth. I want you to turn to Second Kings as we begin and keep your hand there in Daniel, but turn to Second Kings chapter 6. Here you have a plot by the king of Aram to war against Israel. In verse 14 of Second Kings 6 says, "He sent horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city of Dothan." Verse 15,

"Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

What you have in that fascinating passage is God allowed, in answer to the prayer of Elisha, again the curtain to be pulled back and for the servant of Elisha to see the spiritual reality that around this planet involved with the events of human history, involved with human wars and kings there is an unseen spiritual battle that rages. The passage that we come to tonight Daniel chapter 10 provides us I think one of the clearest glimpses into that spiritual war that rages between powerful spiritual beings. And it is a war, you need to understand this we'll see it unfold in Daniel chapter 10, it is a war that affects the events that unfold on the stage of human history. In other words the unseen war between angels and demons has direct and immediate results on the stage of world history.

Tonight we begin our study of Daniel's final vision. This last vision actually runs to the very end of the book, from chapter 10 verse 1 all the way to chapter 12 verse 13. The prophecy that we will see unfold in these chapters extends from the time of Daniel and the kings of Persia all the way until the future kingdom of God is established on this planet. In fact these chapters are going to deal with some of the very same events that have already been described in Daniel chapter 8, but here, particularly in chapter 11 we will see in much greater detail especially regarding the empire of Greece. Daniel chapter 10 is really just the introduction to the final vision, the vision that unfolds and begins in chapter 11 and runs through the end of the book. But this chapter, chapter 10 is very important it's not only an introduction, but it provides some fascinating insights into the activities of angels and demons in our world. It describes for us the spiritual war that lies behind world history.

Now as we begin our study of this last vision of Daniel let me give you an outline just so you, and if you don't get this down that's fine it'll be on the slides you can see it when you look online later and we'll go through it as we walk our way through. This is just to give you an overview. You have first of all here in chapter 10 verse 1 through chapter 11 verse 1 the introduction to Daniel's final vision. We'll walk through this but it begins with the difficult setting of the vision in the first three verses of chapter 10. Then in verse's 4 through 9, there is a terrifying vision of a heavenly being. We'll look at that tonight. That's followed by the

unsettling explanation of the angel in verse's 10 through 14. And then chapter 10 verse 15 through chapter 11 verse 1 you see the gracious preparation of the prophet to receive the prophecy itself and that bring us to the second part of these three chapters and that is the content of Daniels final vision, that begins in chapter 11 verse 2 and runs all the way to the end of chapter 12. And in this final vision there are prophecies regarding a number of realities. There are prophecies regarding Persia, regarding Greece, regarding Egypt and Syria, regarding a man named Antiochus Epiphanes whom we've already met earlier in this book. Prophecies regarding antichrist in much greater detail than we have seen before, prophecies regarding the great tribulation and it ends, verse 13 of chapter 12 with prophecies regarding Daniel the prophet himself. We are going to see all of that unfold, but that it a broad sweeping outline of what we will discover.

So let's begin where the text begins with the introduction to Daniels final vision. Let's read together Daniel chapter 10 and I'm just going to read the first 9 verses because just honesty in advertising, that's as far as we are getting tonight. So Daniel chapter 10 let's read the first 9 verse's, you follow along.

“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, (or war) but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision. In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. And 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. On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, I lifted up 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. His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightening, 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. 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. So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deadly pallor, and I retained no

strength. 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.”

This is God’s eternal inspired inerrant Word. We need to listen to it.

Now this introduction begins by describing for us as I mentioned to you the difficult setting behind this vision. We encountered this in the first three verses. Notice verse 1 begins, “In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed.” So this final revelation to Daniel, this final vision, this final prophecy that begins in chapter 10, and runs through chapter 12, it came to him in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia. In chapter 7 through 12 there are recorded for us four separate visions that Daniel had, each of them is dated by the timing of the kings. Two of the visions came in the first and third years of Belshazzar and two of the visions came in the first and third years of Cyrus. In chapter 9 it actually calls it the first year of Darius, but that was the same as the first year of Cyrus, so the first and third years of Belshazzar, the first and third years of Cyrus; that means between the two groups of visions, there were about 13 years that passed. Here this last vision comes in the third year of Cyrus. The year would have been about 535 BC. You remember that Cyrus came to power and conquered Babylon and he made an edict that the people could return and this comes three years after those events in the year 535 or perhaps 536 BC. It’s about two years after Gabriel appeared to Daniel in chapter 9 and gave him the seventy weeks prophecy. And it’s only a short time after the first group of Jewish captives would have returned to the land of Israel from Babylon. By the way this happens, what we’re reading here in chapter 10 happens about the same time as Daniel’s incarceration in the lion’s den. We don’t know if it was before or after, but it’s around the same time according to what he records.

Now verse 1 goes on to say, “In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel who was named Belteshazzar.” Daniel mentions his Babylonian name probably to underscore that he’s the very same person that we met back in chapter 1. That’s where he explained that this name was given to him by Nebuchadnezzar. In this year, in the third year of Cyrus, in the year 536 BC, Daniel had, don’t miss this, Daniel had been in captivity for 70 years.

In addition to that he is now probably close to 85 years of age. A faithful man who served his Lord throughout his life and now is nearing the end of that life. Now we aren't told why Daniel is still in Babylon, why he didn't return with that first group of exiles returning. Perhaps it was because of his age and the long and difficult journey to the land of Israel, or perhaps it's because and I think this is where I lean, because he concluded that he could best serve his people by continuing in Babylon where he could be a voice on their behalf, where he could speak for them.

Verse 1 goes on to say, "and the message that I received was true." Daniel says listen I'm going to tell you some extraordinary things that I received and heard, but what I heard is absolutely true. And then he says the message was one of great conflict. The Hebrew text says that the message he received had to do literally with a great war. It concerned a great war. Now this could describe a future war on earth or it could describe the war between demons and angels, between God and Satan. Both of those concepts are contained in these chapters. I think it's all inclusive. I think Daniel means all of the conflict. All of the war that he will unfold in these three chapters, whether they're human wars between nations or whether they are spiritual war between angels and demons. He goes on in verse 1 to say, "but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision." Daniel came as we will see it unfold with the help of an angel to understand the content of the revelation that he had received. And according to verse 12 this understanding came in answer to his prayer and his ongoing prayers. Through the previous three visions that Daniel had received God had already told him a lot about Israel's future but Daniel still wants to understand more. Notice verse 12, "you set your heart to understand" verse 14, "I have come to give you understanding." So he already had received a lot of information, a lot of revelation about what was coming concerning the nation of Israel, but he wanted to better understand it and he wanted to know more.

Now you need the setting here to understand what's going on. Why Daniel is disturbed. Why he's mourning. Why he's praying. By the third year of Cyrus when this vision occurs the first wave of Jewish exiles and captives had returned from Babylon to the land of Israel. But their circumstances there were desperate. Their efforts to rebuild the temple faced immediate and

heavy opposition from the Samaritans. In fact keep your finger here but turn back to Ezra, Ezra chapter 4 documents the opposition that they faced. Notice chapter 4 of Ezra verse 1, “Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the Lord God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers’ and said, “Let us build with you,” this was their first approach, get the people to compromise and undermine the work. When that wasn’t accepted, verse 3. “You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; we will build this house.” Verse 4, “Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building.” So in other words they leave compromises as an approach to undermine the work of God, and they move to intimidation, to fear. “They hired counselors” verse 5 “against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.” In other words they hired professional counselors, professional representatives who would go back to Babylon and who would do everything they could to undermine the building of the temple and the restructuring of the people there in the land. So this is what they were facing, eventually the worst happens. Notice verse 24, “Then the work on the house of God in Jerusalem ceased, and it was stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.” It’s possible that when the events of Daniel chapter 10 are unfolding, construction has already come to a halt. That they had been intimidated out of building, their plans had been frustrated, they have gotten the government of Persia to agree they need to stop building; the enemies of God had gotten that approved. Now if Daniel was still involved in government at this time as he probably was, he would have access to these reports from Israel. If so then, what was happening in the land of Israel led to Daniels heightened level of concern and it would have driven him to prayer. In addition to that we know from history that in the third year of his reign, Cyrus went abroad and he left his son to act as his regent and his son in response to the correspondence from the enemies of Israel in the land issued a formal edict, a formal decree halting the continued rebuilding of the temple as we just read in Ezra. That’s the general introduction to the times in verse 1.

Now after that brief introduction Daniel describes his own circumstances beginning in verse 2. “In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks.” The Hebrew word

translated mourning here is used to refer to mourning of the most heartfelt and heart wrenching kind. It's used for mourning for the dead. It's used for mourning over sin. It's used for mourning because of extreme calamity. And in Hebrew the form of the word that's used, it's a participle, carries the idea of continual mourning. Daniel was in a state of perpetual mourning. Literally the Hebrew text says for three sevens of days. He probably included the sevens of days to keep from confusing it with the sevens of weeks we met back in chapter 9. In other words he's talking about three weeks. And for three weeks Daniel was in mourning and during those three weeks, notice verse 3, "I did not eat any tasty food, nor." Now that Hebrew conjunction translated as nor there can also be translated as even. If that's what Daniel meant he's saying the tasty food that he refused to eat was meat and wine, or he may mean I didn't take any delicacies and I didn't take meat and wine. Either way, what he's saying is that for three weeks he ate only necessary food in a kind of semi-fast. Perhaps he limited himself to bread and water, or to something else restrictive.

Now why does he fast? Understand this the bible doesn't demand fasting in the Old Testament, in the Old Testament law there was only one fast that was demanded and that was the fast on the day of Atonement. Every other fast in the Old Testament law was entirely and completely voluntary. Most of the fasts and you can research it yourself; most of them lasted for only a portion of a day, usually the daylight hours. And fasts were usually connected to circumstances that would naturally lead a person to spend time seeking the Lord in prayer rather than engaging in normal activities like eating. This is why Daniel was fasting. It was to give him time for extended and focused prayer. Notice verse 12, the angel says to Daniel, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before God." This is what was happening through these three weeks, "humbling yourself before God, your words were heard." So he was praying, he was humbling himself, he was setting his heart on trying to understand and the angel says, "I have come in response to your words." It's clear that Daniel was praying because he wanted to better understand the future of Israel, what was going to happen to his people and he fasted and prayed. By the way, fasting and prayer were practiced at times by Moses, David, Esther, Daniel, Paul, and our Lord Himself. Verse 3 goes on to say, "nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were

completed.” In the ancient world fragrant oil was a common part of personal grooming. It was typically put on all the body parts, certainly the ones that were exposed, but often over the entire body, it was even applied to the hair. And so, Daniel says listen for three weeks I’ve abstained from anything but what I absolutely had to have in terms of food and beverage and I committed myself to prayer and fasting and I mourned. I wanted to understand what was going to happen to my people.

So the setting for this vision then was the third year of the Persian king Cyrus after some of the Jewish exiles had returned to Israel they were facing extreme opposition and Daniel had been fasting and praying for three weeks. In response to that came a terrifying vision of a heavenly being. This is what we discover in chapter 10 and verse’s 4 through 9. Notice verse 4, “On the twenty-fourth day of the first month.” The first month of the Jewish calendar was the month Nisan. It’s equivalent to our March/April. Daniel had begun his prayer and fasting three weeks before the twenty-fourth day of Nisan. In other words on the third of Nisan. Now what makes that important, and it is important is it means Daniel was fasting and praying during two of Israel’s most important feasts. Because Passover occurred on the fourteenth of Nisan, and Passover was immediately followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a feast of seven days which lasted from the fifteenth of Nisan to the twenty-first. And so Daniel was fasting through all of that time of feasting, all of those celebrations. It’s almost certain that the time of year and the occasion on the Jewish calendar was crucial in Daniel’s decision of when to fast and pray. Why? Well remember what Passover commemorated. Passover commemorated God’s acting to deliver His people from their captivity in Egypt. That may have prompted Daniel to think about the recent exodus of God’s people from Babylon and their return back to the land of Israel and the very difficult circumstances that they were encountering there. You can only imagine what Daniel thought when he heard that Cyrus had issued a decree to allow the Jewish people to return. If you just use a little sanctified imagination you can think about what he might have gotten excited about. Wow, God is going to re-establish us in the land. Think about how wonderful that’s going to be. Think of the blessing that will come, think of how the temple will be re-built and God will return in the Shekinah glory and all of those things are going to happen. We’re going to be great again as a nation and instead what happened? The people returned and

they face immediate intense opposition from the enemies of God. The temple stops in its rebuilding. And so Daniel instead of feasting fasted and prayed.

Verse 4, “while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris.” Now remember Daniel served most of his political career in the capital of Babylon, the city of Babylon. It was not on the Tigris, it was on the Euphrates. You have a little picture in your mind of the map of the ancient world, that Fertile Crescent there, those two great rivers ran somewhat parallel and the city of Babylon was on the Euphrates but here he finds himself on the Tigris. Apparently Daniel had left the capital of Babylon to spend uninterrupted time in prayer and meditation. He was beside the Tigris River. He was clearly there in person since verse 7 says he had companions with him. This isn’t a vision that takes him there, instead he was actually there. Here is a picture of the Tigris River that is at the closest point to Babylon. You see the Tigris ran several hundred miles, began several hundred miles north of Babylon, it flowed down through the area where Babylon is, modern Iraq, and at one point the Tigris came within about twenty miles of the capital, Babylon and the Euphrates and then it flowed all the way from there down to the Persian Gulf. That means Daniel may have been as close as twenty miles to Babylon or he may have been several hundred miles away, but either way he was on the bank of the Tigris River.

And while he was away from the capital, while he was by the Tigris River devoting himself to mourning and to fasting and to prayer, notice verse 5, “I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man.” The Hebrew word behold, is an interjection that marks surprise, excitement. Daniel was amazed at what he saw. He looked up and he saw a being in the form of a man. Now what exactly did he see? Well go over to chapter 12 verse 5, “Then I, Daniel, looked” and remember this is in the same period of time, this is his final vision. “I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river.” So Daniel’s standing on the bank and now here are two additional angels, one of them standing on one bank and one on the other and it says, verse 6, “And one said to the man dressed in linen,” now watch this, “who was above the waters of the river, “How long will it be until the end of these wonders?” Now go back to chapter 10. Since this same person we’re

going to meet here in chapter 10 is described in chapter 12 as hovering in the air above the Tigris River it's likely that that's what is happening here, that's what Daniel is seeing. Daniel is standing there on the bank of the Tigris, he looked up and he saw this being in the form of a man hovering in the air above the center of the river. Notice how this being is described, verse 5, "He is dressed in linen."

In the Old Testament of course, priests wore linen, Exodus 28:42, Leviticus 6:10, other passages. Also in Ezekiel 9 an angel is described as being clothed in white, likely linen. But I think the primary focus here is not on the kind of cloth, rather it's on the fact that's it linen because of its color. Because linen in the ancient world was normally bleached, it was normally bleached white and white in scripture is often a symbol of purity. We see that here, we'll see it in chapter 11 verse 35 and in chapter 12 verse 10. The saints in heaven are described as wearing white robes to describe their purity. God Himself back in chapter 7 verse 9 is described as being clothed in white to represent His holiness. So whoever this being is, Daniel wants us to understand that he is holy. Verse 5 goes on, "whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz." Likely Daniel is referring to a linen belt. Typically the belts that were worn around the robes in the ancient world were two to six inches in width and this one is apparently embroidered with gold thread and the gold was special gold. It was gold from Uphaz. We don't know exactly where that is, it may be another word for Ophir, a word that's used in First Kings 9:28 and we don't know exactly where that is either, but most guess that it was somewhere in southwest Arabia. It was a place where there was special gold. That's the bottom line so this was like the best gold that could be had. One author points out that in the ancient near east this kind of belt worn with gold thread was worn only by the extremely wealthy and primarily by royalty and so it may be intended to picture that this person is a king, or a great judge.

Verse 6 goes on to say, "His body also was like beryl." The Hebrew word is chrysolite. It occurs a number of times in the Old Testament, it refers, we know this much, it refers to a gold colored precious stone. One commentator writes this, "The stone is said to be the golden topaz of modern times. A flashing stone described by Pliny as a transparent stone with a refulgence

like that of gold.” If you’ve ever seen a golden topaz how it sparkles in the light. His body was like a golden topaz. “His face had the appearance of lightening,” his face was characterized by the blazing brilliance of a flash of lightening. We know what that looks like here in North Texas. How it lights up the night. “His eyes were like flaming torches,” his eyes were piercing like burning lamps, like burning torches. This pictures his wisdom, his intelligence, his penetrating insight. “And his arms and his feet like the gleam of polished bronze,” the parts of his arms and legs that weren’t covered by his garment had the appearance of what we would call polished brass. “And the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.” When he spoke his voice thundered. Leon Wood puts it this way, “As this person began to speak, his voice carried the quality of a vast crowd, speaking in unison, strong, deep and authoritative.” Who is this awesome, magnificent person?

Well there’re only two possibilities. The first is that this is an angel. Most scholars in fact identify this person as an angel. That’s possible but the question comes up if so, who is this angel? He clearly is if not the greatest, one of the greatest of angels and we’ve already met Gabriel in this book. This angel or this person or I should say the angel who will speak later in this chapter refers to Michael, so he’s not Michael. So who is this? Some argue that it must be Gabriel. And we’ve already met him in chapter 8 verse 16, chapter 9 verse 21. That’s not likely however, because if it’s Gabriel then why in the world didn’t Daniel just mention his name like he did before? And also, why would he describe Gabriel in such detail the third time we meet him. That doesn’t make a lot of sense. In addition when Daniel met Gabriel back in chapter 9 verse 21, he wasn’t afraid, he was sort of getting used to this right? But not so here. In this chapter he is so overcome with fear that he apparently passes out three times. So an angel is possible, a second possibility is that this is God Himself. This is a theophany, an Old Testament appearance of God. Specifically a Christophany that is an appearance of Christ, a pre-incarnate appearance of the Messiah. In his commentary on Daniel, Stephen Miller presents several arguments for this and you can understand this. Back in Ezekiel chapter 1, God is described in a way that’s very similar to this description we read here. In Revelation 1, Christ is described in a way, in fact as I work my way through it you probably could hear those phrases coming to your mind from Revelation chapter 1. In Daniel chapter 12 verse 6, this person, the man in linen, as

he's described has knowledge that seems to be greater than that of the other angels. And in chapter 12 verse 7, he actually takes a divine oath, the kind of oath that God would take.

But there is an argument against this position that it's the pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ, and that is the person that starts speaking in verse 10, beginning in verse 10 through verse 14 is clearly not God and is clearly not God's equal. Why is that? Well verse 11 says he was sent to Daniel, he was dispatched, but more importantly verse 13 says that this person in verse's 10 to 14 required the help of Michael to fight against demonic forces. We're going to see that Lord willing next time. And so, he's not God. These are valid points, these arguments against his being God. So who is this person? Well listen carefully, because this is where I think I land. Okay I don't think we can be definitive, but basically it's possible that the man dressed in linen in verse's 5 through 9 and the interpreting angel that we meet beginning in verse 10 are two different people. If so, then Daniel sees the Son of God standing above the waters of the Tigris River in verse's 5 through 9 and then God the Son sends His angel to minister to Daniel in verse's 10 through 14. There are a lot of angels in this vision. There are four different holy angels that are clearly angels in this vision. You have verse's 10 to 14 you have the interpreting angel, we'll meet him next time. That's clearly an angel. In chapter 10 later we'll be introduced to Michael, one of the chief princes, there's a second angel. And then I showed you already chapter 12 verse 5 where there are two other angels, one standing on one bank of the river, one standing on the other and they're talking to this person who's hovering over the river. But the man dressed in linen is in charge. In chapter 12 verse's 6 and 7, I read it to you a moment ago, they're asking him, so when is this going to happen? The other angels are saying tell us when this will come to pass.

So if there are two different people in this chapter, the Son of God in verse's 5 through 9 and an angel in verse's 10 to 14 that shouldn't surprise us, because it reflects exactly the same pattern that we see in the book of Revelation. At times John encounters Christ Himself like he does in chapter 1. At other times he clearly interacts with an angel as he does for example in chapter 17 verse's 1 to 6. So, that happens in Revelation. He interacts with the Son of God, he interacts

with an angel. We can't be absolutely certain and I need to say that good men, great commentators disagree on this issue, but I am inclined to believe and I really think this is true that the man dressed in linen in verse's 5 through 9 is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ and then beginning in verse 10, He's sent His angel to assist Daniel.

So let's look at it together, verse 7. "Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision." The first few words of verse 7 are emphatic in Hebrew. Let me read it to you literally. I saw, I Daniel, I alone. Can you imagine saying that any more strongly? Only Daniel saw this heavenly person. Those who were with him did not. Verse 7 says, "nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves." Although his companions didn't see the person he saw, they apparently sensed a supernatural presence, maybe even heard the voice, and as a result of that literally, again the Hebrew text is very descriptive, 'a great trembling fell on them.' It's like they were so afraid they had a massive earthquake in their own bodies. And they ran to hide. By the way, this was the exact experience the Apostle Paul had on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. In Acts 9:7 we read this, that while he was the only one who saw Jesus, "The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one." In Acts 22 verse 9 as he recounts that experience, he says, "Those who were with me saw the light to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me." And then in Acts 26 verse 14 as he recounts again that experience he says this, "we had all fallen to the ground." And so this is the kind of thing that happens here in verse 7. Verse 8, "So I was left alone and saw this great vision." Daniel found himself completely alone with this awesome being very possibly a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ and it immediately drained him of all strength. Verse 8 says, "yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deadly pallor." The Hebrew essentially says he turned as pale as if he were death itself. "And I retained no strength. 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." Wow, as soon as he heard the Son of God speak, Daniel was overwhelmed. He went into shock. And he was left unconscious with his face on the ground just like John in Revelation 1. What an amazing encounter. Now next time we're going to hear what Daniel heard.

But I want you to think with me for just a moment about the lessons for us from these first nine verses of Daniel 10. First of all understand this; God is far greater and far holier than we can imagine. I mean think about it. If it's true that this was an appearance of the second member of the Trinity, if this was a pre-incarnate appearance of the eternal Son, then this response makes sense. But what if it was an angel who simply represents our Lord? I mean think about that, and look at Daniel's response, if a holy, righteous man who has walked with God for his whole life, for seventy years plus he has walked with God. He's experienced divine revelation, he's experienced the miraculous, and yet he found himself unconscious and without strength before God or even His angel then how awesome and how holy and how great God must be. I re-read this week some of the supposed encounters that modern people, particularly false teachers on television, say they have with God – you know here's a guy shaving and carrying on a conversation with God. That is so unlike every biblical encounter people have with God. They find themselves on their face unconscious. How great God is. Remember the context. God was there. We're going to see it. God was there to encourage and comfort the prophet. That's why He sent His angel as well. But our Lord is so awesome, so breathtaking, so overwhelming that just His appearance stuns Daniel and leaves him completely without strength. We sang together a few moments ago 'behold our God sitting on His throne;' it's a breathtaking, awe inspiring, stunning vision. This is the response of those who know and love Him. This is Daniel. Can you even begin to imagine? Let this sink into your mind for a moment. Can you even begin to imagine what it will be like for God's enemies to stand before Him on the Day of Judgment? Be eternally grateful that by His grace He has brought you to flee to Him for salvation.

Look at Psalm 2, I love this psalm it talks about our Lord, His coming reign, notice verse 10, Psalm 2 verse 10, "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling." With fear, with trembling. "Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way. For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" You will either find the Lord Jesus Christ your refuge at the judgment or you will experience His judgment. Those are the only two options.

There's a second lesson for us and that is our Lord is always with His people especially in their most difficult times. That's what Daniel was experiencing. He was in mourning. He was mourning like one mourns for the dead. He was mourning like one mourns over their sin, like one mourns in the midst of extreme calamity. He was mourning for three weeks and the Lord shows up, this is what He has promised. Psalm 23:4, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death" the darkest valleys in life "I fear no evil, for You are with me." Hebrews chapter 13 verse 5, "be content with what you have," why? Because God Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." I don't know what you find yourself in tonight, but I can promise you this if you know God through His Son Jesus Christ, He has not abandoned you. He is with you. He always is.

Thirdly, the persecution of believers in this world is normal and to be expected. Second Timothy 3:12 says, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." In John 15, Jesus said, if they hated Me, guess what, they're going to hate you. Don't be surprised as animosity grows toward believers in our world, even in our nation. I don't know if you saw this week, the news story out of China about the evangelical pastor of a large church there who was arrested last year, his case finally came to trial and just last week he received a sentence for doing nothing but being a Christian pastor, of nine years in a Chinese prison. The Christian Post states that a Facebook post from a group affiliated with the church said that, "The embattled congregation praised God for the faithful witness of our brother in Christ whose reward is not great in heaven. May the Lord use our pastor's imprisonment to draw many to Himself and bring glory to His name," noted the post, "for we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus also can be manifested in our mortal flesh." Folks, persecution is not unusual, it's normal for Christians. Dale Ralph Davis writes this, "We who live under governments, for all their godlessness, at least do not inflict overt persecution can forget that we are in an abnormal situation. Our brothers and sisters who are daily savaged and ravaged for Christ's sake whether in North Korea, or Myanmar, or Pakistan, or Iraq, China, or elsewhere where they are hated and hunted are wading through what is far more normal for Christ's servants, we need instant recall that both faith in Christ and suffering for Christ are equally gifts of grace as Philippians 1:29 teaches us. Because to you, Philippians says, "it has

been graciously given on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Davis says, “We are not told this to make us morose, but rather to make us prepared.”

Number four, one of the believer’s most important tasks is the strategic work of prayer. Ferguson writes in his commentary, “The rebuilding of Jerusalem will involve heavy labor, action, busyness, controversy, time consuming activity – God already raised up leaders in that area, Ezra, Nehemiah. What these leaders needed most was someone engaged in the hidden strategic work of prayer for the defense and the advance of the kingdom of God. It was apparently in this activity that Daniel was already engaged when he received a further heavenly visitation. He prayed for blessing he would never personally witness. What commitment his decision to remain in Babylon displayed.” He committed himself to pray for God’s people. Let me ask you a question and I really want you to answer this question in your heart. It’s a question I have to ask myself. Do you really believe what the psalmist writes? That when the righteous cries, the Lord hears. Do you believe that? And if you believe that can you say that you are personally committed to the strategic work of prayer like Daniel was? May God make us men and women of prayer. Let’s pray together.

Father, thank You for the powerful lessons we see in this text. Thank You for the reminder about persecution. Help us not to be surprised, not to live in fear or to lose our joy over it, but rather just to be prepared. Father thank You for the powerful reminder of Your greatness of Your holiness, help us to see that increasingly clearly and to worship You as You deserve. We long for the day we see You in person and we will have the same response that Daniel did and You will be just as gracious to us as You were to him. And Father, I pray that You would remind us about the importance of prayer, that we would engage ourselves in lifting up our voices to You knowing that when the righteous cry, You hear and You respond. Lord, we, each of us have seen You answer prayer in our lives. Forgive us for knowing that and not praying more. And Father thank You most of all for what seems here in this chapter to be a fresh glimpse of the glory of Jesus Christ. Help us to see Him in His glory and to worship Him, we pray it in His name, Amen.