

### **Daniel 10:1-11:1**

Did everyone get enough turkey, ham and pumpkin pie to last for a while? Do you know why we are so inclined to have New Year's resolutions after the holidays? It's because the holidays tend to be a time of indulgence and excess and by the time you get to New Year's Day, you are not only feeling a little broke, but a little over stuffed as well. I have been a member of the Viroqua Fitness center for over eleven years and every year I see the same pattern. In January I see a spike in the number of people exercising, trying to sweat off the three dozen cookies and leftover pecan pie that they ate. The spike lasts for a few weeks and then the crowds begin to thin back to their normal levels after people lose their motivation.

Many of us will be scaling back our caloric intake starting about Wednesday of this coming week. Some of you will be starting a fast of some kind. You may recall that I lampooned the ["Daniel Fast"](#) that so many churches are promoting as another form of silly church growth. When Daniel was fifteen years old and a newly arrived captive in Babylon, his request not to defile himself with the king's food was not a fast but rather a test of his character. But here in chapter ten, as an 85 year old man, Daniel did do a fast—at least a partial fast. For three weeks he avoided the delicacies of wine and meat. But he didn't do it in order to lose weight or as a type of toxin cleanse—he did it out of a hunger for God.<sup>1</sup>

Daniel was in a season of great mourning. He poured out his heart to the Lord for three straight weeks because he was starving to hear from God. The appetite of his soul longed for one thing and one thing only—to feast on the presence of God and to satisfy his hunger for God. And by the grace of God, this is exactly what Daniel received.

*1 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. 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, 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 withstood 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."*

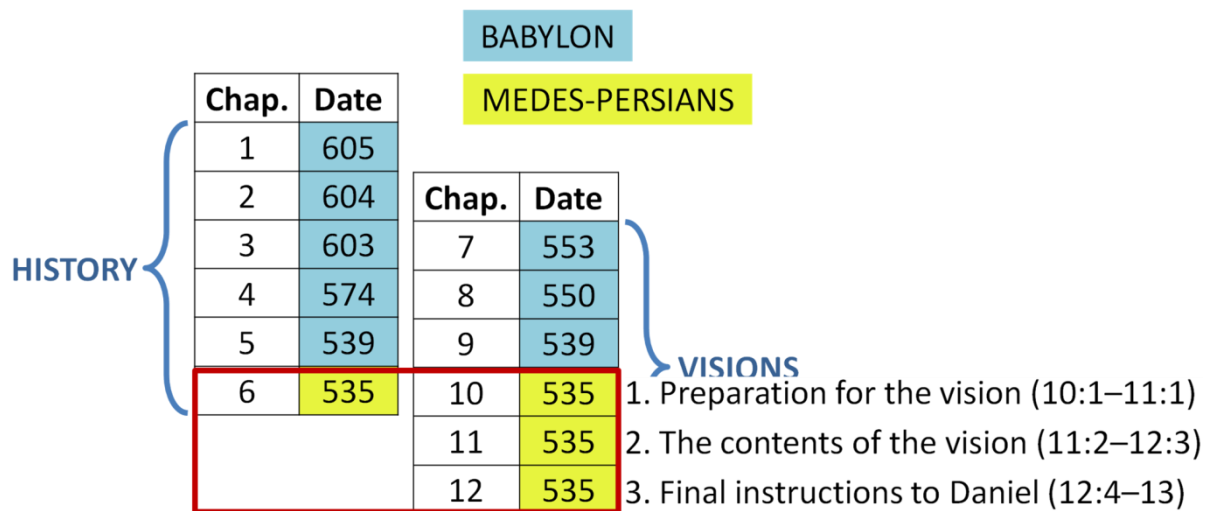
*15 When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute. 16 And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, "O my lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon 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.*

*11:1 And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.*

Let me remind you of the historical context of this chapter. Chapters ten through twelve all occurred at the same time. All of these occurred in the year 535 BC which was also the time period of the events of chapter six. This means that Daniel was cast into the lion's den either a little before or a little after this vision.<sup>2</sup> Chapters ten through twelve form a unit with three parts. Chapter ten is the preparation for the vision. Chapter eleven is the content of the vision and chapter twelve are the final words to Daniel after the vision.

## CHRONOLOGY OF DANIEL



### 1. Daniel started and finished strong

Among other reasons, these last three chapters are so encouraging because we see that Daniel not only began his life with a strong and bold character, but he also finished his life strong. The Bible is filled with people who had a great start to their spiritual lives but then finished either very weak or in utter failure. King Saul worshipped foreign gods and was so desperate at the end of his life that he consulted a witch. King Solomon over indulged himself with wealth, women and power and not only did he have very little hunger for God at the end of his life, the legacy he left became the beginning of the end of the nation of Israel. King Hezekiah trusted in the Lord against overwhelmingly powerful armies early in life but as an old man he boasted and bragged and turned into a self-centered monarch who only possessed a hunger for personal comfort and not for God.

But if you are a young child or well into your retirement years, you can relate to Daniel. If you are ten to twelve years old, you can imagine the great faith of Daniel and wonder if you could strive to attain a little of what Daniel had. You can ask yourself, “What will my faith look like when I am fifteen or eighteen or twenty? What should I do now to strengthen my faith during my teen years?” If you are approaching the twilight of your life, you can ask yourself, “Am I on a trajectory that will continue to grow and nurture my faith, or am I in danger of finishing as a spiritual weakling?”

### 2. Practicing Humility, Prayer and Fasting

There is an important piece of this story that we are not told—Why was Daniel mourning, praying and fasting for three weeks? The chapter simply does not tell us but one good guess would be his concern for the Jews who had recently returned to Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> In chapter nine we read of Daniel’s amazing prayer of repentance in preparation for the end of the seventy years of captivity in Babylon but the timing of chapter ten was such that the Jews had already returned to Jerusalem about two years prior. Even though the Persian king Cyrus wrote a royal decree and

supplied the Jews with more than all they needed to begin rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, we know from the book of Ezra that soon after they began building they experienced severe opposition. You can imagine that after waiting for seventy years that Daniel would have been terribly upset by learning of this awful news.

The timing and depth of Daniel's concern<sup>4</sup> seem to point to the opposition in Jerusalem, but we will never know for sure but the main point to take from this is that Daniel was deep in prayer. But it was his attitude in prayer that stood out. In verse 12 the angel said to Daniel, "*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.*" This is the only possible attitude in prayer that we can have—humility. True prayer is humility, is it not? How can I approach the Lord of the universe with a chip on my shoulder?



During the months of September and October, a Christian in the UK started the Atheist Prayer Experiment. The challenge was presented to atheists to pray for 2 minutes a day for forty days and see what happens. One woman

named Kati took up the challenge and posted her conclusion.

"I prayed every day that God would reveal himself to me. I got absolutely nothing. I know supposedly he's revealed himself already through the Bible, but that just made me think much less of him, and I wasn't that impressed by the way he revealed himself in nature, either."<sup>5</sup>

Jesus said that the true seeker will indeed find him but a prayer like Kati's does not seem to be very filled with humility, does it? But you and I don't pray like that, do we? Well, in reality, much of our prayers are like this. Like these atheists, we wonder if God will actually hear us or not. We don't doubt that he exists but we do doubt whether we will hear from him. We approach prayer—and God in general—like a practical atheist.

On this past Tuesday, we received an email prayer request from our former church about a man who was admitted to the hospital for lung cancer. The email contained the typical requests for prayer for wisdom and healing for the cancer. Twenty four hours later we received a second email saying that Chuck had died.

Did God hear their cries for help? Do we expect him to act in a certain way and if he doesn't, do we doubt that he answers prayer at all? We can easily become practical atheists in regard to our prayer instead of approaching God in utter humility such that his will is done and not our will.

### **3. Seeking the Presence of Christ**

We are not sure what Daniel was praying about so it is not possible to know if he received what he had prayed for. But we do know he received a special blessing—the very presence of Jesus

Christ. This can be confusing for some, because if Jesus was born about 4 BC, how could he have appeared in 535 BC?

First of all, let me present the evidence as to why this was an appearance of Jesus.<sup>6</sup> If you compare the description of this man to the one in Revelation 2, which is indisputably Jesus, I think you will see that they are one and the same person.

<b>Daniel 10</b>	<b>Revelation 2</b>
I looked up and there before me was a man	among the lampstands was someone “like a son of man”
dressed in linen	dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet
with a belt of the finest gold around his waist	with a golden sash around his chest
his face like lightning	His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance
his eyes like flaming torches	his eyes were like blazing fire
his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze	His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace
voice like the sound of a multitude	out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword
I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless	When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead

This is what is called a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, also called a Christophany, which simply means an appearance of Christ.<sup>7</sup> I don’t think Daniel realized that this was the wonderful counselor, prince of peace, root of Jesse and suffering servant predicted in Isaiah, but his response to Christ demonstrates that he knew he was in the presence of holiness.

#### **4. Engaged in Spiritual Warfare**

We need to make a clear distinction between Jesus in verses 5-9 and the person who touched Daniel and spoke to him starting in verse ten. This is not Jesus because this person was detained by the prince of Persia for three weeks and it is impossible to think that anyone could detain Jesus for any length of time.

What we have here is a fascinating behind the scenes look into spiritual warfare in the heavenlies. If you recall, in chapter nine, the angel Gabriel was dispatched at the very start of Daniel’s prayer and came to Daniel before he had finished praying<sup>8</sup> but here the angel was delayed by three weeks by someone called the “prince of Persia,”<sup>9</sup> which is obviously an evil angel, probably a high ranking demon similar to Michael and Gabriel. He was in fact powerful enough to delay the messenger by three weeks and required “reinforcements”<sup>10</sup> from Michael.<sup>11</sup>

Based upon this passage, we can draw several principles regarding angels.

1. They are real.
2. There are good and evil angels.
3. They can be related to geographical areas. Persia and Jerusalem were the most important places on the planet at this time so it makes sense that Satan would have focused his attention in this region of the world. Does this mean that there is also a ‘prince of Viroqua’? Is there a demonic hierarchy over our city with the stronger, more authoritative demons at the top and lesser demons below? Humans are organized in this fashion and since Michael is called an archangel, or chief angel, there seems to be an

authority structure in the angelic realm. I think we can safely conclude that the demonic forces also have some kind of authority structure and organization in place. Some Christians use this principle and attempt to pray against the demonic forces in their city or region in order to restrain their power and release the power of the gospel. I don't see any Biblical precedent for this and I am not comfortable recommending it.

4. They are powerful and seem to vary in power. Whoever this unnamed angel was, by himself, he was not strong enough to defeat the prince of Persia without Michael's help.<sup>12</sup>
5. They probably are engaged in continual battle. In verse 20, the angel said, *But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia*. It would not surprise us to know that this spiritual battle rages 24 hours a day.
6. They influence governments and people. Satan is the father of lies and the demonic forces certainly use the same strategy.
7. They probably are concentrated in areas of the greatest human power. This just makes logical sense based upon the other principles.<sup>13</sup>

The final question that strikes me about this story is this—Why did God allow this delay? Why not give an immediate answer to prayer as it happened in chapter 9? What purpose did God have for Daniel in allowing the delay, especially when you consider that Daniel was in deep distress and mourning for those three weeks.

The question I am ultimately asking is, why does God allow Satan and his cohort so much freedom in this world? The messenger sent to Daniel wrestled with the prince of Persia until Michael came along to help, but couldn't God have struck down the prince of Persia in an instant? He certainly could have done so. From Genesis chapter three when Satan tempted Eve in the garden all the way to Revelation 20 where Satan is thrown into the lake of fire, God allows the demonic realm to have limited power. Even though the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, don't ever forget that he is on a leash. He is given freedom but he can only go so far.

The vision given to Daniel was the detailed plan of God for the future. He was a direct recipient of God's revelation. But it came at a cost—waiting, and mourning; but also a benefit—increased faith and perseverance.

Some of you know a woman named Irene who lives in town. I met her at the community dinner at Christmas and learned that she served as a missionary with New Tribes in South America for forty years. Now she is an old widow who has a hard time getting around. She walked very slowly and carefully down the stairs into the basement of the church because at her age, a fall would probably end her life. As she walked down the steps, she told me, "I thank God for every step that I take that I don't fall."

Do you see her perspective of faith? We wonder why God allows Satan to cause such evil and why God doesn't restrain more evil, but Irene recognizes that God literally guards every last one of her steps. God is continually restraining evil and instead of complaining about the evil that does exist, Irene chooses<sup>14</sup> to thank God for the evil that is restrained and when the prophecy given to Daniel comes to pass, all evil will be utterly vanquished.

<sup>1</sup> 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—Miller, S. R. (2001). *Vol. 18: Daniel* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (279). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Why did Daniel not return to Jerusalem? Would it have not been glorious and awesome to have seen the prophecies of Jeremiah fulfilled? Perhaps it was due to his advanced age and importance to Darius that he remained in Persia.

<sup>3</sup> “The whole assembly together was 42,360, besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337, and they had 200 male and female singers. Their horses were 736, their mules were 245, their camels were 435, and their donkeys were 6,720” (Ezra 2:64-67).

<sup>4</sup> *I turned my face toward the ground and was mute.*

*O my lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength.  
For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me.”*

This shows how emotional and mental anguish affects the human body. We are whole creatures and what we do in one part of the body affects the other parts. On the other hand, what happens to our physical bodies can also affect us emotionally. I doubt there is anyone here who is not affected in their spirit by extreme fatigue.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/crossexamined/2012/09/should-an-atheist-pray/>

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting that right before Christmas we read about Daniel’s visit from Gabriel who announced the birth of Jesus 500 years before it occurred, and who also announced the birth of Jesus to Mary in the gospel of Luke. And now after Christmas we read about the preincarnate visit from Jesus, the Messiah to Daniel.

<sup>7</sup> Only Daniel saw the vision, but the others were afraid and hid. This is nearly identical to Paul’s vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul alone saw the vision of Jesus but the others only heard the voice and were afraid. The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one (Acts 9:7).

<sup>8</sup> “At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you” (Dan. 9:23).

<sup>9</sup> The prince of Persia could have been Satan himself, which is why Gabriel was detained by him and Michael was necessary.

<sup>10</sup> As Michael helped Gabriel in this instance, two years earlier, Gabriel assisted Michael in the ongoing battle. **11:1** *And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.*

<sup>11</sup> Other Biblical references to Michael:

- Michael—12:1,
- Jude 9—But when the **archangel** Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses...
- Rev. 12:7—Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back

<sup>12</sup> “No one except Michael supported Gabriel in his spiritual warfare—not because no one else was available but because no one else was needed.” Miller, S. R. (1994), p. 289.

<sup>13</sup> Several important Scriptures related to angels:

- Eph. 6:12-13—*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of*

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*evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

- 1 Corinthians 6:3—*Do you not know that we are to judge angels?*
- 1 Peter 1:12—*It was revealed to them that they [the prophets] were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.*
- Hebrews 1:14—*Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*
- 1 John 4:4—*Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

<sup>14</sup> Here is a really helpful perspective from C.S. Lewis. “Imagine a set of people all living in the same building. Half of them think it is a hotel, the other half think it is a prison. Those who think it is a hotel might regard it as quite intolerable, and those who thought it was a prison might decide that it was really surprisingly comfortable. So that what seems the ugly doctrine is one that comforts and strengthens you in the end. The people who try to hold an optimistic view of this world would become pessimists: the people who hold a pretty stern view of it become optimistic.”

C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 52.