

“THE INVISIBLE WAR”

Daniel 10:1-21

The year was 536 B.C., the third year after the great Persian king, Cyrus, had overthrown the vast kingdom of Babylon. It looked like the Persian-Babylonian conflict had been the war to end all wars. A new era of peace was spreading, or so it seemed. The Jewish people, so long the victims of antisemitic nations, had been freed from exile and allowed to return to their promised land.

Daniel 10:1... In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and one of great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision.

Daniel interjected his Babylonian name, “Belteshazzar,” apparently to emphasize that he was indeed the same individual spoken of earlier in the book. After all, it had been over 70 years since he had been taken into captivity. He would now have been about eighty-five years of age. Yet he was still alive and serving the Lord.¹

“The message was true and one of great conflict”— The phrase could refer to a great earthly war (or wars) that would occur in the future, or it could even describe spiritual warfare between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. Both interpretations would suit the context well, for a conflict between spiritual forces is described in chapters 10 and 11, and great wars are prophesied in chap. 11:2. At this particular time in history, a major conflict between the Medo-Persian Empire and the Empire of Greece was gathering steam.

¹ Stephen R. Miller, Daniel, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 276–277.

² Stephen R. Miller, Daniel, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 277.

“He understood the message and had an understanding of the vision”—This understanding came as a result of Daniel’s fasting and prayer. Verse 12 informs us that his understanding came in response to his steadfast, passionate, and humble prayers to God. He set his heart to understand, and God honored him with understanding.³

Almost everyone believes that prayer is important. But there is a difference between believing that prayer is important and believing it is essential. “Essential” means there are things that will not happen without prayer. (Dee Duke) Newell, *Expect Great Things*, 225.⁴

Daniel 10–12 constitutes the fourth and final vision that Daniel received from the Lord.

Each of the four visions (chaps. 7–12) is dated, and the visions appear in two groups of two: the first and third years of Belshazzar and the first and third years of Cyrus. Cyrus’s third year would have been 536/535 b.c., two years after Gabriel’s appearance to Daniel in chapter 9.⁵

- **Chapter 10 is the prelude to the detailed vision of chapter 11.**
- **Chapter 12 provides the fitting conclusion to both the vision and the book.**

Chapter 10 pulls back the spiritual curtain and gives us a brief glimpse into a world of spiritual warfare that is real and rages unseen to mortal eyes. An old man now, Daniel had seen so much bloodshed and heartache already. For the next three weeks, he would mourn, fast, and pray. . . .

³ Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 129.

⁴ Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 130.

⁵ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 276.

Daniel 10:2–3... **In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. 3 I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.**

“I, Daniel, had been mourning”— “Mourning” is a participle in the Hebrew that has the force of “continually mourning,” a state of mourning. Years later Nehemiah “mourned” (same Hebrew word) over the condition of the Jews who had returned to Palestine, and this is evidently what so deeply concerned Daniel here. His mourning involved prayer and fasting.⁶

Nehemiah 1:4... When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Look at verse 3. Daniel seems to have engaged in a semi-fast rather than refraining from eating all food for this three-week period. He may have existed on bread and water. **“Nor did I use any ointment at all”** means that Daniel neglected the usual blessings of personal grooming, such as fragrant oil on his hair or body.”

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.⁷

Daniel 10:4–6... **On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, 5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz. 6 His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet**

⁶ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 278.

⁷ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 279.

like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

Passover was celebrated on the fourteenth of Nisan, immediately followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted for seven days. This may have played a part in Daniel's decision to fast and pray. Who was this awesome being levitating above the Tigris River?

I believe this was the preincarnate Son of God. Consider the overwhelming effect of His presence on Daniel (he had to be revived 3 times). Consider the similar Christophany recorded in Revelation 1:12-16.

Revelation 1:12–16... Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; **13** and in the middle of the lampstands *I saw* one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. **14** His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. **15** His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. **16** In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

Bryan Chappell wrote . . .

Who is being described? Clearly this is the Christ, the anointed Son of Man, who represents the glory and purposes of God. There are many intentional reflections between the chief figures in these chapters of Daniel and Revelation. The men described in both are clothed in white robes—priestly garb; both have a gold belt—kingsly apparel. Both have blazing eyes, both have bronze skin, both have roaring voices—all supernatural traits. In Revelation, the one described holds seven stars in his hand and his face blazes like the sun. Perhaps that explains why the appearance of the man in linen to Daniel makes the prophet faint dead away and causes his friends to run away. The one who comes as a spokesman for God is most

readily understood as the Son of God, the Second Person of the Godhead who made the heavens and earth. (*Gospel According to Daniel*, 171–72)⁸

At least 4 angels appear in this vision—***the interpreting angel*** [10:10–14 and throughout chaps. 10–12]; ***Michael*** [10:13, 21]; and ***two others*** [12:5]) appear in this vision. The Lord is unquestionably in charge.⁹

Daniel 12:6–7... And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long *will it be* until the end of *these* wonders?”

7 I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half *a time*; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these *events* will be completed.

The contents of the vision are related by the interpreting angel, who is introduced at v. 10. In the Book of Revelation there is a similar pattern.¹⁰

Daniel 10:7–9... Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. **8** So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. **9** But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Only Daniel saw the Lord in this vision. (**extremely emphatic in the Hebrew—“I saw, I, Daniel, I alone”**) The other men sensed a supernatural presence and they ran and hid. Paul had a similar experience when he met Christ on the Damascus

⁸ Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 131–132.

⁹ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 282.

¹⁰ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 282.

Road (Acts 9:1–7). Only he saw Jesus, but the others with him felt the presence of the Lord and became speechless with fear.

Daniel 10:10–14... **Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.** **11** He said to me, “O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. **12** Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding *this* and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. **13** “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. **14** “Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet *future*.”

Many scholars believe that this interpreting angel was Gabriel since he served as a communicator of God’s messages on several occasions (cf. 8:15–16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26–27). Furthermore, the interpreting angel evidently had great power (cf. 11:1), which would be true of Gabriel.¹¹

Now turn your attention to verse 13. This is certainly a strange account. The angel related that he was coming to bring Daniel the answer to his prayer but was delayed because... **the prince of the kingdom of Persia (a demon/demons, possibly even Satan himself) was withstanding me for twenty-one days.**

Michael is introduced in this verse and is also mentioned in Dan 10:21; 12:1; Jude 9; and Rev 12:7 in Scripture. Michael has been assigned by God as Israel’s prince (10:21); he is “great” in power and protects the Jewish people (12:1). The implications of these statements are clear. Israel has a mighty angelic supporter in the spiritual realm.

¹¹ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 283.

In this instance, within the omniscient wisdom of God and the divine plan of God, the delay was permitted. God permits believers to wait for their prayer answers in order to teach them valuable lessons, for example, spiritual commitment, patience, faith. There are also times when God fully intends to respond affirmatively to a request but in his wisdom delays because he knows that the proper time has not yet come.

Daniel 10:15–19... *When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. 16 And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who was standing before me, “O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 “For how can such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me.” 18 Then this one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me. 19 He said, “O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you (*you are safe*) ; take courage and be courageous!” Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, “May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.”*

Gabriel “touched” his lips and enabled him to speak. In this context “*my lord*” has roughly the force of the English “sir.”

Daniel 10:20–21... *Then he said, “Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come. 21 “However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these *forces* except Michael your prince.*

The angel announced that soon he must “*return to fight against the prince of Persia*”— a battle that would continue for two centuries of Persian rule (539–331 b.c.). This struggle involved all of the decisions and relationships pertaining to the Jews during the Persian period (the reconstruction of the temple,

deliverance for the Jews during the time of Esther, permission for Ezra and Nehemiah to return, and their subsequent construction of the city).¹²

Look at verse 21. The “*Writing of Truth*” figuratively refers to God’s plan for Israel and the world.¹³ Let’s conclude our time by looking at some truths about this *INVISIBLE WAR*. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

- **Angels and demons are real.**
- **They engage each other in spiritual conflict.**
- **Demons can and do influence human affairs.**
- **Angels can and do influence human affairs.**
- **God is sovereign over both demons and angels.**
- **Our prayers are crucial in this cosmic conflict.**

¹² Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 288.

¹³ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 289.