

## Afraid of the Future; Loved by God – Daniel 10:1-21

In the passage we looked at last week, we saw that the angel Gabriel came to Daniel, “at the time of the evening sacrifice”. But Daniel was not able to present a sacrifice in the Temple because there was no Temple. Now, as we turn to chapter 10, Daniel was able to remember the joy he felt when he heard the news 3 years ago that King Cyrus had given the orders for people to return to Jerusalem and start rebuilding the Temple! But now, in Cyrus’ third year, Daniel would have recently received word that the work had been stopped. Political and legal opposition put a roadblock in the way and Daniel would not live to see the day when people could worship again in the Temple in Jerusalem. So he wept, and prayed, at the time when Jews should have been celebrating the Passover Feast in Jerusalem, all he could do was pray, yet again, for his people, his holy city, and the holy hill of God where the bare beginnings of a new Temple lay untouched. The Passover should have been a time of remembering how God had saved in the past and could save His people again. But as Ezra 4:4-5 records, Daniel’s dream of a new Temple would not come true for almost 20 years. And he was now well into his 80s, grieving because of what God had not done. That’s the tone of Daniel’s setting into which God gave another vision—about “a great conflict”—a *long* and terrible season of *warfare* (so the KJV, GNV, etc.)—described point by point in chapter 11. So much worse than when the groundhog sees his shadow, it was going to be a long, hard winter for the Jews before Christmas came.

### Not the answer Daniel was hoping to hear... (vv 2-9)

For three weeks during the month Nisan, Daniel wept for the Temple of God [read vv2-3]. Daniel carefully distinguishes this 3 weeks from the “70 weeks of years” in chapter 9, by calling these “weeks of days”. While he was praying for the Temple, He saw a vision of God. I’ll tell you why I think this Person Daniel saw is God, and then I’ll try and show you why that matters. [read 4] Daniel was away from the city of Babylon, probably on business relating to the court of Cyrus the Great in Persia, since The Tigris was the border between Persia and Babylon. And like the account of Saul in the book of Acts, he was on official business when he encountered Christ: [read 5-9] The book of Daniel has been giving us peaks of this divine Person since chapter 3 when the old king saw a fourth person, like a god, with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. In Daniel 7:13, in Daniel’s first vision, he saw “one like a Son of Man”—a human being become the King of God’s kingdom and receive the honour and rule and glory that belong only to God. In Daniel 8, his second vision, he saw—or rather heard—a Holy One speaking (v13), heard Him answer an angel’s question (v14), and heard Him instruct the angel Gabriel to explain the vision to him (v16); then verse 25 implies that the Holy One he heard speaking is “the Prince of princes”—the Ruler of Rulers. In Daniel 9, Gabriel again comes and tells Daniel the Holy One, the Messiah/Christ/Anointed One, the Ruler or Prince, is going to come and save many by making a once-for-all sacrifice for sin (vv24-27). But now, for the first time as far as we know, Daniel finally sees the divine King of Israel with his own eyes. Surprisingly, according to verse 5 He is dressed with the linen robe and belt of a priest (c.f. Ex 39:1-21); in verse 6 He is clearly supernatural, and radiant with glory. The description is not human, but it is very close to the way Christ appears after His resurrection to John in the beginning of the book of Revelation: [read Rev 1:13-16]. The biblical evidence seems to require that if that is indeed Jesus Christ resurrected in His full unveiled glory in Revelation 1, then this must be the preincarnate Christ, the Messiah and Son of God in Daniel 10.

Why does this matter whether this is Christ or some angel? Because Daniel’s tears had been falling for three weeks, while his prayers rose up to God on account of the terrible news he had heard about the

work on the Temple being stopped by legal red tape and the plots of God's enemies. Seeing God the Son revealed in preincarnate glory—in the clothes of a divine High Priest no less!—this startling vision revealed that Daniel's hopes were misplaced: he had been hoping in the Temple of God, instead of the God of the Temple. I find this comforting when I realize how weak I am in my faith, how spiritually immature compared to a man like Daniel! To see that even one of the Bible's giants of the Faith, as an old man at the end of his life, still needed the same encouragement you and I need so often: not to hope that God will answer our prayers in a specific way, but to hope in the God who hears the prayers of His people! **[read vv7-8]** This vision of Daniel's Messiah and God is so powerful, so awesome and terrifying—even though Christ is revealed in His office as intercessor and priest—that Daniel's companions flee for their lives, and Daniel is left teetering on the verge of collapse. No wonder CS Lewis kept saying that Aslan is not a tame lion! Christ is not a weak Priest! But then Daniel hears Him speak... **[read v9]** and for the second time (c.f. Dan 8:18) Daniel passes out—totally unconscious.

### Whatever we ask in Messiah's name... (vv10-14)

The words in verse 10 suggest it is not Christ's divine hand, but the hand of an angel, probably Gabriel again, who touches Daniel and wakes him up: **[read v10]**. The words are almost the same as what Gabriel said to him (9:22-23), and they give Daniel the strength to stand up and listen **[read vv11]**. So Daniel is ready to hear the angel speak, since He could not bear the full power of the words from the mouth of Christ in His glory: **[read vv12-14]**. Here I want you to notice first that for the 3 weeks that Daniel had been praying and weeping for the Temple, verse 12 says "your words were heard", and that this angel was sent because of Daniel's prayers (v12). It didn't take 3 weeks for God to hear his prayers, it took 3 weeks for the angel to come. Verse 13 tells Daniel why the angel was delayed and then who sent him to Daniel. He was delayed by some evil spirit, a demon apparently known as "the Prince of Persia", but he was helped and sent on his way to Daniel by the authority and power of "Michael one of the chief princes". The name means "who is like God".<sup>i</sup> The Jewish translation (the JPS Tanakh) says, "a prince of the first rank", but as Young's Literal Translation points out, the words can also be taken, "first of the chief princes". It would seem that Michael is the name the angel gives to the Son of God Daniel had just seen. Nowhere in Daniel is Michael called an "angel"—and even in the New Testament He is called "ruler of the angels" (in Greek, *archangel*; Jude 1:9) to whom belong the angels of Heaven (Rev 12:7). In Joshua 5:14, Joshua fell on his face and worshipped this same "Commander of the Army of the LORD"; in 12:1 He is the Great Ruler over Israel who stands up on the day of Judgement to raise His people from the dead, and in 10:21, He is called literally the "Prince" or Ruler of "you" (plural) meaning the Jews. 500 years later when He died on a Roman cross, he wore a crown of thorns and a sign over his head bore the inscription, "the King of the Jews". Being the eternal Son of God, He can never change who He is. But it was because He died as Priest for His people that He will come again as our eternal King. So this angel came to Daniel, having been sent by Christ, in the authority of Christ.

The implications of this verse are tantalizing. It seems angels can only be in one place at one time. And that some evil angels are closely associated with earthly kingdoms. And that God dispatched this angel at some earlier point to fight for the sake of the Jews in the court of the Kings of Persia (v 13 says that's where this angel had previously been busy). But it's also astounding that God's plans are often different from our prayers: in verse 13 Michael/Christ "helps" this angel, not by giving him success over those preventing the work on the Temple, since that work was stopped for another 15 years (c.f. Ezra 4:23f)! But that Christ helped that angel by coming to him in Persia and reassigning him to go to Daniel. Verse

14 tells us why the angel was sent to Daniel: [read v14]. The angel was sent to help Daniel understand what was going to happen to the Jews not right then, but “in the latter days”, in a time “yet to come”.

### We don't know how to pray as we ought... (vv15-17)

Daniel is devastated. Just look at how he takes this news: [read vv15-17] He's left unable to speak and staring at the ground. And an angel, not terrifyingly awesome in supernatural glory, but looking like a human—similar to the “children of man” (not “like a Son of Man” but like plural “sons” of man)—touches Daniel's lips, strengthening poor Daniel enough that he can barely speak. And Daniel just confesses that this answer to his prayers is not what he hoped for, not what he wanted to hear, and that he's too old for this, can't find the strength to stand or even speak, but that he is still obedient, just completely and utterly unable to do anything, much less talk. No prayers for strength or wisdom or courage, just the admission of his total weakness and need. The words of Paul in Romans 8 seem so fitting:

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

<sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

<sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:26-28 ESV)

### Not the decision of earthly kings... (vv18-21)

And again a messenger he can relate to, who is familiarly human-like, touches him to give him strength, and encourages him with words that anticipate the Gospel of Jesus: [read vv18-19a]. The supernatural touch gives his body strength, but the assurance of God's love for Daniel, the words that promise on the authority of Christ that Daniel can rest in the peace of God, and the encouragement, “be strong and of good courage!”—grace words, Gospel words—revive Daniel's soul. And as that angel brought Daniel this little bit of Good News on the authority of Christ Himself, Daniel writes that even while the angel was still speaking, he “was strengthened” so that he was ready to hear the prophecy the angel had come to give him: [read v19b] And what Daniel hears! Oh that we could remember these words when our prayers cling to earthly hopes, sputtering and drooping aimlessly and weakly among the rubble of our shortsighted ambitions and dusty dreams! Couldn't these words brought from Christ to Daniel by this good angel, couldn't this vision lift our prayers to cling to Christ and find satisfaction and strength in His gracious, life-giving promises to never leave us or forsake us? To be with us even to the end of this age?

The angel asks Daniel, [read v20a]. Verse 11 tells us that Daniel was “greatly loved” *because* (for) Christ had sent the angel to him! The understanding and vision the angel was sent to bring was evidence of God's love for Daniel. And verse 12 tells us that the angel came “because of your words”—words that Daniel prayed in humility before God as he asked for God to help him understand what was going on. And as if this is some kind of explanation for why God had sent him to Daniel, the angel now tells Daniel he's going back to resume his fight with the Prince of Persia: [read v20b]. It's as if he is telling Daniel that God has not abandoned the Jews. That God was sending him back to fight on behalf of the Jews in the courts of the Persian kings, frustrating the plans of evil spirits that influence those men who one after another would sit on the throne of Persia—Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther each tell some of that story—what it looked like on this side of the spiritual curtain—when this angel fought for the Jews in the spiritual battles in Persia. But then the angel said that he “will go out” (v20b), and then the “Prince of Greece” will come—and for a while evil will have its day. Chapter 11

narrates these events—the chronicles of the Persian kings followed by the Greeks and the consequences for Daniel’s people. A “great conflict” verse 1 said. Indeed! Great and long. With so many opponents in high places, even on the thrones of Persia and Greece, and including powerful spirits who seek to harm them, what hope did the Jews have against so many enemies? Verse 21 in effect says, “even so, in spite of so many who are against you...” [read v21]. The Hebrew reads like the answer to a rhetorical question: “Who, you ask, is on my side standing against all these enemies? Just Michael, your Prince.” HA! They don’t stand a chance! Paul makes the point Daniel was about to learn: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31 ESV) Daniel’s hopes for the salvation of his people could never be fulfilled in a Temple made by human hands, or in the decrees of kings sitting in Babylon or Persia. His hope was built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. The infinite grounds for hope in this chapter spring from the truth that Michael—*Who Is Like God?*—in all His glorious majesty was wearing the robes of a High Priest, standing ready to be the One Mediator who would bring His people to God:

*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died-- more than that, who was raised-- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

<sup>35</sup> *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?...*

<sup>37</sup> *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

<sup>38</sup> *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,*

<sup>39</sup> *nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord .*

*(Rom. 8:34-39 ESV)*

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<sup>i</sup> Albert Barnes in his commentary says, “who as God”; Adam Clarke says, “he who is like God”; Matthew Poole says, “His name signifies ‘who is like God’. He is the first in dignity above the angels (Heb 1:4-7), called an archangel and the church’s prince.” John Trapp says, “Christ the Lord of angels, head of the church”. The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge gives the marginal reading that “one of the chief princes” can also be taken as “first” of the chief princes, as indeed in 8:25 he is called the Prince of Princes. The Geneva Bible notes say this is “Christ Jesus, head of the angels”. John Calvin prefers to identify Michael as “an epithet of Christ” (see discussion of 12:1). Matthew Henry says “Christ is that great Prince” (c.f. 12:1). Whereas “Gabriel” means “man of God” or “warrior of God” (c.f. Eerdman’s Bible Dictionary), the only other supernatural being named in favour of Israel, in Daniel, is Michael. It would be unusual then, for Gabriel to denote that being’s identity, but for the name “Michael” to be merely a rhetorical question! It seems better to see this name as a title and statement of identity as the name Gabriel functions. This is increasingly unpopular among later Protestant scholars, but their prejudice seems to rise mainly from assuming that Michael is called an angel in the Bible where in fact that is nowhere in Scripture. He is called “your prince” the “great prince” and “ruler of angels” to whom belong the angels (Rev 12:7). Removing that prejudice makes it easier to see that Jude 1:9 puts “Michael” in the place of Yahweh, quoting from Zech 3:2.