

Lesson 28

Daniel 10:15-19

15 And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. 16 And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. 18 Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, 19 And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.

The first thing we likely notice about the closing verses of Chapter 10 (including the two verses we haven't gotten to yet) is that they sound a bit like the opening verses of Chapter 10.

There are many similarities between the first half of Chapter 10 and the second half of Chapter 10.

- Daniel's strength was sapped (twice in 10:8 and twice in 10:16-17).
- Daniel's face was toward the ground (10:9 and 10:15).
- Daniel was roused by an angel (10:10 and 10:18).
- Daniel was called greatly beloved (10:10 and 10:19).
- Daniel was told not to fear (10:12 and 10:19).
- Daniel was told why the angel had come (10:12 and 10:20-21).
- The prince of Persia is mentioned (10:13 and 10:20).

Why did two such similar events occur back to back? We aren't told, and there are some differences, but we may be seeing a very subtle theme here involving the number two.

Have you noticed how often the number two rises to the surface in the book of Daniel? How many people in this book have two names? How many languages are used in this book? (Hebrew and Aramaic) How many kings do we see that come in pairs? (Nabonidus and Belshazzar, Cyrus and Darius)

To what could this be pointing? The two covenants perhaps? Doesn't this book tell us a great deal about the transition between the two covenants? It is also a very interesting study to investigate how often the number two appears just below the surface in the book of Revelation.

Daniel is unable to speak until "one like the similitude of the sons of men" touches his lips in verse 16. In verse 18, Daniel is touched by "one like the appearance of a man."

Most likely these individuals are angels, and most likely they are the same angel - but we are not told that with certainty. (We will see the same angel as before speaking again later in verse 20.)

What we do know with certainty is that Daniel seems to have been completely overwhelmed by what was happening to him in this chapter - and very understandably so when we step back and look at what happened to him here. He has certainly had an encounter with an angel, and possibly with more than one, and he began the chapter by having a vision of Christ.

Daniel is strengthened by the angel in these verses, and for good reason. There is bad news ahead! His people are going to undergo serious trials. Daniel has already been shown that, but soon he will learn more about those trials that lie ahead.

Daniel 10:20-21

20 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. 21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

The question here in verse 20 is rhetorical. The angel had already answered it in verse 14 when he told Daniel that he had come to help Daniel understand what would befall his people in the latter days.

Who is the prince of Grecia? I think we can repeat what we said about the prince of Persia, just with

another earthly kingdom in place of Persia.

But this raises a question: Does every nation have its own fallen angel (or its own good angel, perhaps)?

We know from Daniel 10 that at least Persia and Greece had fallen angels assigned to them by Satan, and we know later from Daniel 12 that Israel had the archangel Michael sent by God.

But was that true of every nation? Is that true of every nation?

Some point to Deuteronomy 32:8 to argue that every nation has its own angel from God.

Deuteronomy 32:8 - When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

That last phrase, "the children of Israel," in the KJV is better translated "the sons of God," and it is the same phrase that we find in Job.

Job 1:6 - Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

The Living Bible (which I do not recommend for serious Bible study or much else) has the following (bad) paraphrase:

When God divided up the world among the nations, He gave each of them a supervising angel!

Whatever that is, it is most certainly not a translation! But it does give an idea of what some believe is being taught there.

Others also point to Isaiah 24 to argue for a linkage between kings on earth and angelic beings.

Isaiah 24:21 - And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.

In short, we don't know. All we know is that Persia and Greece had their own fallen angels during the days of Daniel.

And although we have a picture of spiritual warfare involving the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece, it is important to note that the outcome of the war was never in doubt. God had already told Daniel how the war was going to end!

Daniel was very important to God. How do we know that? Because God's dealings with the powers of the world were seemingly put on hold for a moment so that this angel could answer Daniel's prayer.

Verse 21 says that the angel would show Daniel "that which is noted in the scripture of truth." That is a beautiful description of God's word.

But what Scriptures are being discussed here? It could be Jeremiah, which we saw Daniel studying in the previous chapter, but it could also be the book of Daniel itself - either the part that Daniel had already received or the part he was about to receive.

The scripture of truth shows God's control and knowledge of the future, and the future that God is about to tell Daniel about is so certain that it is already written down. It is as if it had already happened.

Should Daniel have been worried when he heard the end of verse 21? It looks as if this angel and Michael were outnumbered. It looks like they were contending alone against the demonic powers of Persia and Greece. Were they alone?

And was Daniel alone? He may have felt that way at times. He had been living in exile since he was a teenager, and now he was in his eighties. And he lived much of his life in the King's court rather than among his own people. And many of his people had returned home from exile, but not him. Was Daniel alone?

No one is alone or outnumbered when God is on his side.

Romans 8:31 - What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

When I teach Revelation I always end by reading Romans 8:31-39, because in my opinion nothing better captures the central theme of that difficult book.

I think the same can be said about the book of Daniel. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

And God is with us! Amen!

Yes, there will be conflict. Yes, we are at war. But no, we are not alone. And that is the message of Chapter 10.

Daniel 11 Introduction

We have to admit right from the start that Daniel 11 is an unusual chapter, but we should not overstate the point. Here is an example of one commentator who did just that:

If this chapter were indeed the utterance of a prophet in the Babylonian Exile, nearly four hundred years before the events - events of which many are of small comparative importance in the world's history - which are here so enigmatically and yet so minutely depicted, the revelation would be the most unique and perplexing in the whole Scriptures. It would represent a sudden and total departure from every method of God's providence and of God's manifestation of His will to the mind of the prophets. It would stand absolutely and abnormally alone as an abandonment of the limitations of all else which has ever been foretold.

That view of Daniel 11 is completely wrong. Yes, Daniel 11 is unusual, but, no, Daniel 11 is not out of place in the Bible.

The first verse of Hebrews tells us that "God ... at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." So even if Daniel 11 were unique in Scripture, that would prove nothing. But Daniel 11 is not unique in the Bible - we see very detailed prophecies elsewhere in the Bible. Here is how another commentator described just one example:

The prophecy concerning the conquest of Babylon, Jeremiah 50 and 51, offers such exact details that history scarcely can present anything more minute - the city is to be captured by the Medes and the peoples allied with them - to be exact, by the strategy of laying bare of the bed of the Euphrates River (50:38; 51:32, 36) - during the course of a night where all within the city lie sodden with drink (51:39, 57) - the return of the Israelites to their fatherland shall come as a result of the conquest of the city - the conquest of this city marks the beginning of the utter desolation and the virtual disappearance of it.

We could also add Zechariah 9 about Alexander the Great, as well as Isaiah 13, Isaiah 14, and Isaiah 21.

The liberal critics' view of Daniel 11 is just another example of how you can't win with them no matter what you do.

If Daniel 11 had been some general statement that wars would come somewhere sometime, then the liberals would have complained that such general language is not really a prophecy.

But when Daniel 11 does just the opposite by providing very detailed descriptions of future events and wars, the liberals likewise complain that such detailed prophecies are not really prophecies.

Apparently, just like Goldilocks, the liberal critics are waiting for a prophecy that is just right!

Let's consider another question about this strange chapter - why do we have it? Why did God give us Daniel 11?

Why did God give us such a detailed glimpse of the history between Daniel's day and the first century? And why do those details include big events (such as a famous battle seen by everyone as a major turning point in history) along with seemingly minor events by comparison (such as a divorce or a particular tax collector)?

To answer that question, I think all we need to do is ask another question - what is the theme of the book of Daniel? What key theme have we seen chapter after chapter and event after event in this book? GOD IS IN CHARGE!

Yes, we have free will, but we are not God. There is one God, and he is in charge. And nowhere was that more evident than when it came to God's eternal kingdom and the coming of his Son into this world at the perfect time and in the perfect cradle to usher in his eternal kingdom.

No detail was too small when it came to making sure that everything was perfect for Jesus' entrance into this world and for the subsequent spread of the gospel by which God would bless the entire world through Christ.

God is in charge! That is the message of Daniel, and that is the message of Daniel 11! In fact, that I believe is why we have Daniel 11!

So, yes, we need to work our way through Daniel 11 verse by verse, examining each and every detail. But we also need to make sure we stand back and get the big picture message of Daniel 11 because

it is that big picture message that would have been important to Daniel, who received these remarkable prophecies before they were fulfilled, very unlike those of us today who are studying them after their fulfillment. We can pick up a history book and compare it with Daniel 11. Daniel was not able to do that.

But were all of these detailed events necessary for God to bring about his plans to bless the world through Christ in the first century? Is the extreme detail we see here a fair complaint from the liberal crowd? No, it is not.

That we can't see why a particular detail was important or necessary does not mean that it was not important or necessary. I am reminded of all the intricate details given in the old law about the tabernacle and the priestly vestments and activities. For some of them, we might have trouble explaining why this detail or that detail was so important. The short answer, of course, is that it was important because God commanded it. But the book of Hebrews gives us a longer answer.

Hebrews 8:5 - Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

Hebrews 8:5 tells us that the detailed pattern for the tabernacle was a shadow of heavenly things; that is, Moses was copying a heavenly reality that he could not see. God cares about the details, and so should we!

We have already seen in this book of Daniel a spiritual war that is related to the activities on earth. Perhaps these details are likewise related to a spiritual reality that we cannot see.

And, as one commentator noted, there may be another reason why we see so many details (some seemingly minor) in this prophecy:

There is another deeper reason why such details as these are worthy of the work of the Spirit of prophecy, and that is that what is foretold here is in reality, with minor variations, the pattern into which all history falls. Is there not an appalling sameness about this business of leagues and pacts between rival nations, of disagreements, of wars, of alliances, of political marriages, of recriminations, of treachery, of temporary ascendancy, of defeat and utter downfall, of recovery through some aggressive leader; and then the same thing all over again with a slightly different sequence of events? From this point of view there is a drab sameness about history which allows us to say that, in addition to being a prophecy of a particular period of Syrian and Egyptian

history, this may be regarded as a panoramic view of all history

So were all of these events in Daniel 11 preordained before the creation of the world as part of an eternal decree of God so that God here is just reporting to us what will happen - or instead is God telling us what he is going to cause to happen as this history unfolds? That is a very complicated question, but I favor the latter view.

If God wants to show us that he is the one in charge, what makes more sense? That God will just report history to us from the vantage point of a passive observer who is just in a position to see more than we can - or that God will tell us what he will do before the fact and that we can then see God actively doing those things? Which of those options better establishes that God is in charge?

Isaiah 46:11 - Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

That one verse may be the best description in the Bible about how prophecy works in general and how Daniel 11 works in particular.

As we will see, the focus of Daniel 11 is the history of the Jews in the latter days, where the latter days refers to the end of the Jewish age, which occurred with finality in the first century with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The focus in Daniel 11 is not the end of the world, and likewise the focus is not the many other nations that are mentioned. These other nations are important only with regard to how they are involved with the Jews.

Throughout Daniel 11 we will repeatedly see the king of the north and the king of the south. The names of the kings will change as the history unfolds, but for the most part north is Syria (and later, Rome) and south is Egypt - with the people of God sandwiched in between those two warring sides. The focus is not on the two sides of the vice but is rather on what is inside the vice, which is Israel. When we see the king of the north, we should ask north of what? When we see the king of the south, we should ask south of what? God's people were in between.

The prophecies in this chapter are some of the most detailed found anywhere in the Bible, and my view is not the only option. In fact, my view has changed a bit over the 30 years I have been teaching this book. But with that said, there are some thing about this chapter that we should not give on - in particular, this is not a chapter about the end of the world and the so called Antichrist. That view violates many Scriptures as we have already seen, and it also violates the context and the timeframe

that we will see in this chapter.

#daniel