

Behind the Scenes

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[0 : 00] and please take out your Bible and turn to Daniel chapter 10, and let's pray together.

Father, we confess it is because of your great love that we are not overcome, and that means were it not for your great love, we would be overcome.

We would find ourselves unable to respond in ways that honor you, unable to bear up under various loads and weights and adversity that you have called us to carry.

We would be unable to turn our cheeks to those who may strike us. We would be unable to respond with grace to those who speak to us with cutting words.

We would be unable to forgive as we have been forgiven. We would be unable to show compassion and kindness even to those who hurt us.

[1 : 27] And so we confess it is because of your great love to us in our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are not overcome.

As we turn our attention now to your word, please help your people as we hear your word preached.

Help us to hear, to gain some measure of understanding, to believe the things that you have said to us, and to leave this place more fully convinced of your great love to us in Christ.

Father, would you please help me as I continue in worship by preaching? Guard my heart and my mind.

Help me not to say anything that is foolish or unhelpful, anything that would be a distraction from what you have for us from Daniel chapter 10. We want to see Jesus more clearly, and we want to believe more fully the things that you have revealed to us in your word, so that we more joyfully obey and represent you here on this earth.

[2 : 50] Holy Spirit, please give us much help. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Imagine being in an audience and watching a drama or a musical up on the stage, and the curtain closes so that the stage can be prepared for the final act.

Stage managers are giving directions to the crew, and stage hands are scurrying to place the appropriate props, and the orchestra, as orchestras do, turn their pages in unison with one another, preparing to start the score up again.

And each member of the cast strides to their marks on the stage, and they arrive just in time for the curtains to open.

If the final act of the book of Daniel begins in chapter 11, then chapter 10 is like the stage being set. And because this chapter is preparatory and not the drama itself, we may be tempted to skim over it.

[4 : 23] But wouldn't it be sad for us to miss what the Holy Spirit has inspired in order to, quote, get to the good stuff? That would be sad, wouldn't it?

To miss what the Holy Spirit has inspired? Chapter 10 is the good stuff. Even though there are no charging goats or angry little horns for us here to think about.

Do you remember in the movie The Wizard of Oz? I guess I should be careful. I suppose some people have not seen this yet. I will try not to give away too much of the plot.

In the movie The Wizard of Oz, there is a scene where a little dog pulls back the curtain.

And the players, the actors, can see that the wizard, who seems to be so great and powerful, is not nearly as great and powerful as he at first seems.

[5 : 32] As Daniel 10 prepares us for the final act, I want us to see how the Holy Spirit pulls back the curtain, covering the stage.

And instead of everything happening to prepare for the final act, and the curtain is blocking us from being able to see it, instead, instead, the Holy Spirit pulls back the curtain, and we are allowed to

see all of the things that are happening behind the scenes.

We get to watch what the audience normally wouldn't see. This chapter provides unique insights that we would otherwise not have.

It's my privilege to serve you in preaching today, and it is my joy to help you remember that I am weak, but he is strong.

That's where we're going today. You ready? Okay. Looking at verse 1, we can notice that something on this stage seems out of place.

[6 : 54] There's an actor who is not where we expect him to be. That actor is Daniel. And Daniel is still in Babylon.

Why is that strange? Well, in verse 1, we learn that it is the third year of King Cyrus. But in the first year of the reign of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree that effectively ended the exile and freed God's people to return to the promised land, to go back and to rebuild Jerusalem.

Two years have passed since Cyrus made the decree, and Daniel did not go back. Why? Why didn't Daniel return?

Why does he seem out of place? Well, perhaps he was too old to make the journey. Daniel is perhaps somewhere in his late 70s, early 80s, somewhere in there during this time.

Perhaps he's just too old. Perhaps he is too weak. Because when you get back to Jerusalem, there's all kinds of manual labor that needs to happen to rebuild the city and the temple and the wall.

[8 : 12] And maybe Daniel is just too weak. Or perhaps, perhaps, Daniel's prayer life is too important for him to be distracted even by going back to the promised land.

This last reason, I think, seems more likely when we realize the timing of the events of Daniel chapter 10.

We notice down in verse 4 that these events, what we're going to read about in Daniel chapter 10, happen just after the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Even as exiles in a foreign land, foreigners in a foreign land, even there, the time of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a celebratory time for God's people.

It's like the weeks leading up to Christmas for us. All of those weeks are exciting and we are anticipating and celebrating what is to come.

[9 : 28] But Daniel is a bit of a party pooper. He is not celebrating. Instead, throughout this time of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Daniel is mourning.

And rather than eating good food, he is fasting from eating good food and he is not taking care of himself. And he is praying.

Perhaps Daniel's mourning, perhaps his grief is due to relatively few Jews returning to the promised land. Perhaps he is mourning because he has heard that there is opposition to the rebuilding project.

You can read more about that in the book of Nehemiah. Perhaps he is mourning because of deep grief over sin. We noticed last week that that's the kind of person that Daniel is.

Whatever his reason, Daniel's three weeks of mourning has affected his personal hygiene. He's not taking care of himself. He's not showering and cleaning himself up the way that he ought to.

[10 : 47] He is disheveled and hasn't taken, perhaps, a bath. More importantly, God takes notice of Daniel's devotion, his mourning, his fasting, his prayer.

God takes notice. And God hears Daniel's prayers. And God sent someone to encourage Daniel.

Who do you think God sent? Let's read. Chapter 10, verse 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. In those days, I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all for the full three weeks.

On the 24th day of the first month, as I was standing on the banks of the great river, that is the Tigris, 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.

[12 : 24] His body was like beryl, shiny, yellow. 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. 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. So I was alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. 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.

There is some debate about the identity of this man. Some say that he is the angel Gabriel who we have read about in the previous chapters.

[13:47] Others think he may be the archangel Michael who we will read about at the end of chapter 10, and some think this man clothed in linen is the same person who walked with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Nebuchadnezzar's burning, fiery furnace.

Some of us believe that this is the one like the Son of Man that we read about in chapter 7, who rides on the clouds to take his place at the throne.

I think there is good reason to believe that this man who visits Daniel is the second person of the Trinity, the pre-incarnate Christ, the Son of God.

I think there is good reason to believe that this is the Word before he became flesh and dwelt among us. In other words, that this is Jesus before, as Paul writes, the fullness of time had come and God sent forth his Son to be born of a woman.

Can you think of anyone else in the Bible who saw Jesus in all of his glory? The Apostle John did, didn't he?

[15:13] John saw Jesus in Revelation chapter 1. Listen to how John describes him and see if you notice similarities to what Daniel saw.

This is Revelation chapter 1 and I'm going to start reading at verse 12. Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

The hairs of his head were white like white wool like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze refined in a furnace and his voice was like the roar of many waters. Did you notice a few similarities there? White garment gold some kind of a gold sash a gold belt lightning his face looked like lightning.

We should also notice in addition to these physical descriptions that Daniel responds very differently to this man than he did to Gabriel in the preceding chapters when Daniel sees this one he has a total sensory overload.

[16:48] He instantly goes limp his face contorts in shock perhaps this is how like we might describe being frozen in fear.

This was back in verse number eight my radiant appearance was fearfully changed. Kids can you make a face that looks like you're very afraid? Some of those are not as scary as I was expecting but imagine that face being frozen and you fall to the ground.

Daniel's body just seems to shut down. He passes out. He falls flat on his face in the presence of this man dressed in linen.

until someone touches him in verse 10. And behold a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

So he's been face down sensory overload body shut down brain doesn't know how to compute being in the presence of this one he is touched he's able to get himself up on his hands and knees but he is still quivering and shaking.

[18:19] Verse 11 and he said to me oh 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 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 the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days but Michael one of the chief princes came to help me for I was left there with the kings of

Persia 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 what do we learn well this man dressed in linen tells Daniel on the very first day of his mourning and fasting and prayer God sent him to Daniel but for 21 days another

powerful spiritual being the prince of the kingdom of Persia stood between him and Daniel and while Daniel was praying another angel text refers to him as the chief prince one of the chief princes another angel named Michael came to help and finally there was a breakthrough so that the one

God sent could come to Daniel pull back the curtain and show him what happens behind the scenes of world history Daniel's shock at being in the presence of this man makes him unable to speak he is mute but then the man touches Daniel's lips and I want you to notice as we continue reading that Daniel calls this man he refers to this man dressed in linen as my lord three times he doesn't address either Gabriel or Michael this way look at verse 15 when he had spoken to me according to these words I turned my face toward the ground and was mute 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 oh my lord by reason of the vision pains have come upon me and I retain no strength I am weak so weak how can my lord's servant talk with my lord for now no strength remains in me and no breath is left in me have you ever imagined standing face to face with Jesus what would it be like would you stand in his presence or to his knees would you to your knees would you fall would you sing hallelujah would you be able to speak at all more importantly what do you think

Jesus would say to you verse 18 again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me and he said oh 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 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 but I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth there is none who contends by my side except against sorry there is none who contends by my side against these except

[23 : 51] Michael your prince and as for me in the first year of Darius the Mede I stood up to confirm and strengthen him the one that God sent to Daniel in Babylon can't stay in Babylon for long he is needed back in the spiritual realm the war against the prince of Persia is continuing and he intends to fight alongside Michael who we learn is the angelic prince of God's people on earth kings and kingdoms will rise and kings and kingdoms will fall and behind the curtain the curtain that prevents us from normally seeing what is happening behind that curtain in the spiritual realm each king and kingdom is strengthened or weakened by the battle waged by unseen powerful creatures and each battle is influenced by those like

Daniel who engage in spiritual warfare through prayer and all of these events the kings and the kingdoms that we can see and the powerful spiritual warfare that is happening behind the curtain that we normally can't see all of these things all of these events all of it is written in what the man in linen refers to as the book of truth everything that is happening in the world and everything that happens in the invisible realm that we can't see all of it is according to God's plan all of it is according to God's purpose none of it is outside of God's control do you believe this do you believe that there is an invisible but not imaginary realm do you believe that spiritual but not fictional beings are right now waging an ongoing war that influences the events in this world when we think about angels and demons powerful creatures

I suspect that some of us are too influenced by precious moments figurines are some of you know at grandma's house or when you are visiting a nursing home precious moments figurines are little ceramic now if you have some of these at home that's okay I'm not banging on any of that that's okay I just want you to know what's really happening behind the curtain okay precious moments figurines are little ceramic things that you might put on a shelf to look at and they have little cherubic faces little creatures they look like little babies pudgy little babies and they have little wings and they're supposed to represent angels that doesn't sound at all what these angels look like in chapter 10 does it some of us imagine a good angel on one shoulder and a bad angel on the other shoulder right you see this sometimes in goofy cartoons and the one in white is urging you not to do the thing and the one dressed in black or crimson is tempting you to do it perhaps like me some of your first thoughts about this spiritual realm came from

Frank Peretti's books this present darkness and piercing the darkness or maybe from another Christian author or filmmaker and many times when you see the devil in some kind of a secular depiction he is carrying a pitch fork and trying to hide his forked tail and smells like rotten eggs the devil becomes some sort of a joke Daniel 10 corrects our thinking it helps us to avoid two ditches

one ditch is ignoring the invisible spiritual realm where there really is a war being waged and the other ditch is to be wrong about what is happening in that invisible spiritual realm listen to this quote if once the curtain were pulled back and the spiritual world behind it came to view it would expose to our spiritual vision a struggle so intense so convulsive sweeping everything within its rage that the fiercest battle ever fought on earth would seem by comparison a mere game not here but up there that is where the real conflict is waged our earthly struggle drones in its backlash as the man dressed in linen explains to

Daniel there is an invisible but not imaginary realm and there really is a world where spiritual beings do fight but it is not fiction do you believe that there is an invisible spiritual world in second corinthians chapter four paul states his commitment to preaching the gospel paul says that he flatly refuses to manipulate his hearers with clever words i'm not convinced that paul would endorse long emotional appeals to come forward and give your life to Jesus while every head is bowed and every eye is closed paul intends to preach the gospel the gospel that the life death and resurrection of the lord jesus christ is the only hope for helpless godless sinners that forgiveness and a right relationship with god is received by grace alone through faith alone in jesus christ alone this is the gospel that paul says he is committed to preaching and he refuses to tamper with it second corinthians chapter four verse number two but we have renounced disgraceful underhanded ways we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with god's word but by the open statement of the truth we would commend to our commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of god and even if our gospel is veiled it is veiled to those who are perishing in their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of christ friend little ones children if the idea of an invisible spiritual realm seems unbelievable then I humbly submit to you that your unbelief proves that the god of this world has blinded your eyes your unbelief in that spiritual world where the war is being waged your unbelief about that proves that the god of this world the devil himself has blinded your mind you are not able to see reality clearly you are not seeing the gospel you are not seeing the lord jesus clearly and your unbelief is proof that it exists dear friend the stakes could not be higher your eternal soul hangs in the balance if you cannot understand the gospel if you cannot believe the gospel ask god to show you mercy ask him to remove whatever is blinding your mind ask him to help you see jesus hanging on the cross for you as

[34 : 09] your substitute ask god to help you see jesus risen from the dead ascended seated at the right hand of god and interceding for his people beg the holy spirit to overcome all of your stubborn unbelief ask god to grant you life faith and repentance and then repent and believe this gospel and receive god's grace don't wait the apostle paul provides additional commentary on what we have observed behind the scenes in daniel 10 this is ephesians chapter 6 verse 10 finally be strong in the lord and in the strength of his might put on the whole armor of god that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil 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 evil in the heavenly places this is where the battle is waging when

I consider this invisible spiritual world I don't know about you but I feel so small so helpless so insignificant so inconsequential so powerless I feel so weak but Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so little ones little ones like me to him belong they are weak but he is strong Daniel trembles as he stands all wobbly need and mute in the presence of the man dressed in linen with a face like lightning but he must have felt so small so weak as he looks behind the curtain as he sees the spiritual realities playing out behind the world powers

Persia and Greece but then the son of God speaks to Daniel and he speaks words that you and I desperately need to hear you are greatly loved you are greatly loved do you believe that do you believe that you are greatly loved it's such an interesting little word it's the same word used earlier to refer to the fine food that Daniel refused to eat for three weeks you child of God God delights in you he cherishes you he prizes you he thinks you are precious and costly he redeemed you with the precious blood of his son your savior

Jesus is absolutely and infinitely sufficient to stand against the powers of darkness on your behalf so don't be afraid be at peace be at peace be strong even be courageous why because little ones to him belong they are weak but he is strong can we pray about that together let's pray father thank you for inspiring this portion of the book of Daniel for seeing to it that it was preserved for for us thank you for giving it to us in our language so that we can read it and understand it and begin to

glimpse just a little perhaps of what you are doing here thank you for pulling back the curtain and letting us see what happens behind the scenes would you grow our understanding of what it is that happens that we don't often think about and when we do think about it we tend to think about it wrongly help us to think rightly about this spiritual world and help us to engage in spiritual warfare through the power of prayer help us to remember that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against powerful cosmic forces against the prince of the power of the air make us mindful of the God of this world who blinds the minds of unbelievers give us courage and faith as we testify of the gospel father thank you for the words of Jesus to Daniel oh man greatly loved beloved of God would you settle that truth in our hearts do help us to remember your great love we need this reminder of the gospel so often we find ourselves tempted by self righteousness we find ourselves attacked and assaulted by others mean to do us harm we need to be reminded of your great love so that we can be at peace and rest so that as you strengthen us we are strengthened thank you that we are not overcome help us to believe that this is true it is in the name of the
[42 : 07] Lord Jesus that we pray amen