

Spiritual Realities

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[0:00] Daniel chapter 10. We'll read the entire chapter through the first verse of chapter 11.

! In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar. Its message was true, and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision.

At that time, I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food, no meat or wine touched my lips, and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up, and there before me was a man dressed in linen with a belt of finest gold around his waist.

His body was like chrysalite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

[1:26] I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision. The men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision.

I had no strength left. My face turned deathly pale, and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground.

A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.

And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. Then he continued, Do not be afraid, Daniel. Daniel, since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.

But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me 21 days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

[3:01] Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.

While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak.

I said to the one standing before me, I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my Lord, and I am helpless. How can I, your servant, talk with you, my Lord?

My strength is gone, and I can hardly breathe. Again, the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength.

Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed, he said. Peace, be strong now, be strong. When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, Speak, my Lord, since you have given me strength.

[4:15] So he said, Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come.

But first I will tell you what is written in the book of truth. No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.

And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him. Have you ever shown up to an event, maybe underdressed or perhaps overdressed?

You had certain expectations about what kind of event it was, and so based on those false expectations, you dressed in a certain way. Maybe you went to a concert, and a t-shirt, and jeans, and all the other men were wearing suits and ties, and you're looking around, and you're feeling kind of stupid.

That's, I don't know any other way to say it. Or maybe you went to a dance, and you wore the suit and tie, and everyone else wore shorts and a t-shirt.

[5 : 34] I did that once. I did it once, because you feel pretty dumb afterwards. Most of the time, the worst part about dressing up, or dressing inappropriately, is just social embarrassment.

But sometimes not being dressed properly can mean life or death. If you're a fireman, you're not dressed properly for your job, you're not going to last very long as a fireman.

Or if you're a soldier, and you're under some sort of delusion, so you're landing on a beach, and you're in your flip-flops, and you have your goofy Disney hat, and there you are.

You're thinking you're on a vacation to Disney World. You're not going to survive very long. It's an absurd illustration, I know, but it proves the point. If you're dressed inappropriately in some occasions, it's very dangerous.

Now, God doesn't want us to be deluded. He doesn't want us to be under any false expectation about what we are facing in this life, and that's what Daniel 10 is about.

[6 : 43] It is showing us the combat that is all around us. And we're going to get into more of this war that he talks about in verse 1 in the coming weeks when we meet again.

But chapter 10 is the prelude. It shows us, it's preparing us mentally to engage in this combat. It's a wake-up call.

You aren't going to a picnic. You're going to a war. And it's a war that's far bigger than we normally think. So, the first thing that we see in this passage of Daniel 10 that I had read for you is that Daniel is in mourning.

Daniel is in mourning. Verse 1 is an introduction to the passage. And then verse 2 says, At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. So before he has this vision, before he has this revelation given to him by this heavenly visitor, he's in mourning.

He's not eating choice foods. He's not eating the king's food or anything like that. He's not eating meat nor drinking wine. He's on a Spartan diet.

[7 : 54] Very simple diet. He's foregone every physical comfort. In the dry land that he was in, in the desert land, it was very common and normal for you to put lotion or oil on to comfort, to soothe your dry skin.

He hasn't used those for three weeks. And the obvious question that we need to ask, or at least try to come to some sort of answer to, is why is Daniel mourning?

Why is he mourning? And to be totally honest, we have to say we're not absolutely sure. It doesn't say explicitly why he is doing this.

But I think we can make a fairly educated guess based on what we know about what's going on in history at this time, what's going on with God's people at this time, we can make a fairly educated guess that he's mourning for his people, for the Jews.

So when is this historically? Well, verse 1 tells us that it's in the third year of King Cyrus. It's the three years after Cyrus took over. And in Cyrus' first year, he issued a decree telling and saying the Jews now can go back to their land.

[9 : 11] Those who have been exiled can return. And you can read about that in the book of Ezra. Ezra chapter 1, 2, 3, and 4 talk about that. In Ezra, if you look at that, it says about 42,000 people got all their things together.

They got their households together. And they packed up and they went back to Judah, back to Jerusalem. 42,000! It might seem like a lot.

But it really, it wasn't. Can't build a nation with 42,000 people. 42,000 people was hardly the picture that the prophets gave of a massive return.

Only 42,000 out of hundreds of thousands that left came back. Only 42,000 cared enough and said, I want to go.

I want to leave this land, this country, this people, this culture that I'm in, and I want to go and return and be a part of God's people again. Only 42,000 cared enough for the worship of God, for the glory of God, to return.

[10 : 21] And Daniel saw it and he was sad. He mourned. Remember how Daniel, we've seen this in Daniel 9, he longed to see something great.

He longed to see something grand. And this is such a small response. It showed how worldly God's people had become.

His heart longed for the glory of God and for the most part, his people didn't. And so few returned. And those few who did return faced great opposition.

You can continue to read about it in Ezra. Ezra talks about the foundation of the temple was laid. They got off to a very good start. And then some Samaritans came in and they wanted to dilute the worship.

They wanted to join themselves to the worship of the Jews. And the Jews had to refuse them. And in response, the Samaritans started to persecute them. And they even went so far as to hire lawyers to go to work in the capital city against the Jews in the Persian court.

[11:32] And so here the Jews are. They're small. They're persecuted. They're downtrodden. And Daniel takes it to heart. He cares about his brothers far away.

And so he's mourning. He's fasting. He's praying. He's longing to know why. What is going on? Now, we should learn a lesson from this.

And the lesson is this. The battle far away is still our battle. The battle far away is still our battle. And what I mean is we should care about our persecuted brothers and sisters even if they're a world away.

even if they're far away. And Daniel was living in luxury. He wasn't under any persecution apparently at this time.

He was living far away but his heart was connected with his brothers who lived so far away and who were poor and attacked. And I wonder if the same thing could be said about us.

[12:43] That is the kingdom of God so real to us that wherever it is even if it's across the globe that we care about it.

We're burdened for it. Or are we so wrapped up in our American luxury and American freedom that we don't mourn for our brothers who are persecuted and who go without.

Listen to what the author of the Hebrews says. Remember those in prison as if you as if you were their fellow prisoners and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

So did you hear that? You are to remember them as if you were their fellow prisoners if you were in the prison cell with them or as if you yourselves were suffering. So how do you remember them? You remember them in prayer. You remember them in fasting. You remember them in mourning in love in compassion in sacrifice. You remember them. And so Daniel's heart he's so far away he's enjoying luxurious living.

[13:59] He's enjoying freedom. But Daniel's heart was beating for his people and his heart exposes my heart and where I'm at so often because we can be so narrow minded and so narrowly focused I'm too self-centered.

I care too much about my world my life and I forget that my brothers and sisters far away my brothers and sisters who I will spend forever with are doing without are in a hot spot in the war. They're right in the middle of this red-blooded battle and so do I even care about them? I can say that I care about exercising and I care about Christmas presents and I care about watching movies with my family all snuggled up and those are all perfectly good things to care about but if my brothers and sisters in their situation never enter into my consciousness can I really say that I'm remembering them?

Daniel shows us Daniel reminds us and we're to remember them like we're there with them that's what Daniel was doing like he was there with them their pain is to enter into my world and the Jews pain entered into Daniel's world and so the conflict their conflict touched his heart what they were going through it struck a chord in his own heart and he said I can't go on the way I am I just can't keep on living the way I am I'm going to do without the choice food I'm going to do without the meat and the drink and the wine and I'm going to skip the lotions well why did he do that because he was entering into their pain entering into their suffering and he was saying Lord do something do something for your people the battle is raging and we need you so let me ask you what could you do what can you do it's not an easy question to answer but here's something that probably most of you can do practically you can go online to persecution dot com it's a website for the voice of the martyrs and if you go online it will show you and it will explain what's going on in different places in the world and how your brothers and sisters around the world are suffering and it gives you ways to give it gives you ways to pray it gives you ways to write letters to remember and so perhaps that's what you should do this week go online do that or perhaps you can do something else and you can say you know what

I'm going to skip some luxury not sure what it would be some luxury that you have chosen because my brothers and sisters don't have it they go without so I'm going to go without I'm going to enter in to their pain so I can pray for them in a way that is in some way informed because God your people wherever they are they're my people and if they suffer I'm going to suffer with them I love them remember Nehemiah he said how can I be happy when my city the city of my fathers is in ruins and can we say the same thing how can we be!

[17:43] happy when God's people are under attack throughout this world so Daniel's mourning it's in this context that God meets him and next we see the heavenly visitor look with me at verse 5 I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen with a belt of the finest gold around his waist his body was like crystal light his face like lightning his eyes like flaming torches his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze and a voice like the sound of a multitude well who is this you have this heavenly visitor Daniel's in mourning!

and as he's standing by the river he has this vision of this man now many people have thought that this man is a picture of the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ it's a pre-incarnate visitation from Jesus and the reason they think that is because in a number of other places in one in particular where Jesus Christ is described in the book of Revelation there's these startling similarities and I want to read that to you listen to Revelation and among the lamp stands was someone like a son of man that's a Daniel phrase like a son of man dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet with a golden sash around his chest his head and hair were white like wool as white as snow and his eyes were like blazing fire his feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters and so he has the same white clothes he has the same golden belt or sash he has the same blazing bright eyes same glowing bronze like feet and this loud thunderous voice they look very similar now

I don't think it's Jesus and let me tell you one good reason and you can see it in verse 13 in verse 13 the prince of persia is resisting this heavenly visitor he's resisting him for 21 days and then it says michael one of the chief princes came to help me because I was detained there with the king of persia and so the prince of persia which is a demonic figure is fighting with this heavenly visitor resisting him and he holds him up for 21 days and it's only when michael comes that this heavenly visitor is free to go and speak to daniel and so it's totally inconceivable to me to think that this is the second person of the trinity that michael the archangel has to come and help our lord jesus with a demon i think it's best of all to think of this heavenly visitor as an angel perhaps gabriel we don't know and he looks so much like jesus christ because he spends his days standing in the glory of the lord daniel was seeing the reflected glory of god in the face of this angel and as he does he falls over as if he's dead and the people are blind to it but the sense of this person the sense the power of this personality is so strong that they're terrified and they flee away and so the reflected glory of god is so overwhelming that none can stand before it and it was the same thing that we saw last week with the angels when they appeared to the shepherds outside of

Bethlehem the glory of the us that will be us blessed are the pure in heart for they will see god now the pure in heart we look around and everything is grimy and sinful and impure we look in ourselves and there's impurity and sin but jesus says oh there's coming a day when you will see purity itself you will see god and you will be like him they'll see holiness they'll see jesus and they'll be like him and isn't isn't that what john said dear friends now we are children of god and what we will be has not yet been made known but we know that when he appears we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is now can you imagine standing before our lord jesus god and his glory for millions of years what will we be what will we be like well john says it hasn't been made known what we will be but we will but we know this that when we see him we will be like him and so we don't haven't even begun to understand the glory that is going to fill us and is going to change us but we know it's going to be his glory it's going to be his glory that radiates from us and this reminds us what exactly are we about it reminds us of this battle that we are in it wakes us up to reality because brothers and sisters can people like that with that inheritance with that destiny can we meddle and trifle in this world when we rejoice in the hope of the glory of

God that is coming to us so should we fall into loving this world should we fall into the same idolatries of the body that so many people in this world have when our bodies will be glorious with his glory someday and should we be so careless with people should we trifle with people because if you look to your left and you look to your right you see no ordinary person you see someone that someday as C.S.

[24:48] Lewis said will be an immortal horror to you or an everlasting splendor listen to what he says it is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses I hope you know what he means by that not actually god but supernatural people to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which if you saw today you would be strongly tempted to worship or else a horror and a corruption such as you now me if only in a nightmare all day long we are in some degree helping each other to one or other of these destinations it is the light of these overwhelming possibilities it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them that we should conduct all our dealings with one another all friendships all loves all play all politics there are no ordinary people you have never talked to a mere mortal nations cultures arts civilizations these are mortal and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat but it is immortals whom we joke with work with marry snub and exploit immortal horrors or everlasting splendors what we will be has not yet been made known but we will be like him and we see something of the possibility of what we are going to be like in this heavenly visitor he stands before

God's throne and he reflects his glory and that is our future and that is supposed to wake us up to this reality of what we are doing who are we with who are we involved with now the heavenly visitor comes to tell Daniel a vision and the vision is what we'll see next time in Daniel but there's one more lesson that I want us to learn from Daniel 10 and it's this heavenly battle it's the heavenly battle a while ago a number of years ago there was a Disney commercial where a family was sitting around the table and they heard some noise a lot of noise and music going on above their heads coming from the attic and so the dad I think he pulls down the attic stairs and he climbs up the attic stairs and when he sticks his head out up into the attic there it is the whole Disney world is inside their house and that's what I think of when I read

Daniel 10 it sort of blows the top off of our world it sort of opens the attic door and lets us crawl up and just have a quick peek at what is going on above our heads all the time and it leaves us with more questions than answers I'll be honest with that it's such a brief and tempting thing so for example in verse 13 you have this prince of Persia this demonic figure and he's resisting the heavenly visitor for 21 days and so the question is well how do angels and demons fight against each other what does it mean that this demonic figure is the prince of Persia that's he's obviously not talking about Darius or Cyrus he's talking about or any other human figure he's apparently what we're supposed to gather from this is apparently behind human thrones behind earthly powers and earthly governments there are angelic and demonic figures at work that rule from behind the scenes and so what we see in the headlines is not the whole story that's at least what we can gather from Daniel 10 because the headlines are only dealing with the superficial but behind the scenes is the supernatural war that we see going on all the time and so in chapter 11 verse 1 it describes the fall of Babylon and how the angelic visitor says that in that day he took his stand with Michael the prince of God's people and supported him helped him when Darius the Mede overthrew Babylon so why did Babylon fall well we could say Darius the Mede did it his army did it it was his general he is the general that did it but then we take a step back and we get a bigger look at the picture and this verse and it says that Babylon fell because Michael and the angels overthrew it well what does all that mean it's hard to say except to say this that the the war in heaven is reflected in events on earth what goes on in heaven is somehow connected to what goes on in earth on earth you just see it in the fact that

Daniel is praying for 21 days and the reason given that there's such a delay in him getting an answer is because of this angelic argument that they're having this contention and then in verse 20 it says the heavenly visitor says I will return to fight against the prince of Persia and when I go the prince of Greece will come and so there's going to be this switching off the fall of this Persian entity this prince of Persia will be followed by a prince of Greece and we know from history that after Persia fell Greece came and so there's this connection there's a strange connection that's almost impossible to talk about about what goes on in heaven and what goes on in earth I think we get even a hint of it in our gospels the disciples come back to Jesus and they're so happy and so they're so thrilled they've been preaching they've been healing the sick they've been making the lame walk they've been preaching the gospel and they're amazed at the power that they've seen and Jesus answer is yes

[31:42] I saw Satan fall like lightning somehow what was connected to what was going on there and the preaching and the proclamation of the gospel was reflected in heaven and whatever this

means whatever we're involved in here it does mean that we're in a battle and not a picnic our struggle is not against flesh and blood if it were against flesh and blood this would be a very different battle but it's not against flesh and blood it's against the rulers against the authorities against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms have you thought about your Christian life in that way lately that every day I go to battle not against flesh and blood but against evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realms one reason the Christian life is so hard is the flesh another reason one is the world and another is Satan and all of his horde and so

Daniel 10 reminds us of that world of this battle that you face that I face every day and we're we're involved in it every day we face it and so what we do here is reflected there and what goes on there is reflected here and if we're fighting the powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms it means that they are too strong for us they are too strong for us that's a theme of Daniel 10 Daniel has no strength he has no strength repeatedly Daniel's falling down repeatedly he's saying I'm not strong enough repeatedly the angel is giving him strength if Daniel doesn't have the strength to hear an angelic visitor how could any of us have the strength to fight against evil powers in the heavenly realms they're far craftier than we can imagine they're older than we are they're wiser than we are in many ways but we are not ignorant of Satan's devices Satan seems to have two main ploys as far as this battle goes one is he wants to make it seem like it's not real he wants to make it seem as if it's unreal as possible and another thing is the other the exact opposite is that he wants to make it seem like it's everywhere that Satan is under every rock that behind everything there's he's at work and there's no doubt in our culture in our time in your life in my life the direction that we are leaning as a group as a culture is that we lean towards thinking demonic forces have nothing to do with my life that they're not real we have a very closed a very small a very natural world and that is perfectly fine with him he doesn't need you to think he's real to be real he doesn't need you to think he's real it doesn't matter to him as long as you're not fighting and so as we end

I want to think how can we fight this battle how should we be fighting this battle if we are fighting spiritual forces in the heavenly places well how should we fight it well we should fight it boldly that might sound strange yes our foes are too strong for us they are too strong for me they're too strong for you we're fighting against supernatural beings but in Jesus Christ we have authority even over them this is a part of our inheritance this is a part of the gospel this is what he has given us authority even over these we are seated in heavenly places we are seated in heavenly places brothers and sisters when we're joined to Christ in his exaltation he took the highest place and Paul said we are seated with them we have that authority we have authority over powers and authorities and so we don't have to give in to fear yes they are real yes they are powerful but do we have to be afraid no we do not resist the devil and he will flee from you well why will he do that because the one who is in us is stronger than the one who is against us he will resist us or he will flee from us if we resist him and so by nature we're outmatched no doubt but in

Christ we are new creatures with new authority in Christ we can fight boldly for another reason those who are with us are stronger than those who are against us and those who are for us are more than those who are against us we don't talk about it very much the Bible doesn't say a lot about it but the good angels far outnumber the bad angels revelation said a third of the stars fell third of the angels fell and even if it's not a literal third the point is clear there are more angels that stayed faithful and true than fell the majority stayed and Hebrew says that they are the servants of those who will inherit salvation and then we have the archangel Michael who fights for us how and all the rest

[38:01] I don't know it doesn't say the Bible doesn't say but it does say he's the prince of God's people he's the angel that corresponds to us as God's people Jude said he contended with Satan over Moses body revelation says that Michael threw Satan out of heaven Michael's mentioned in our passing passage and it's only in these passing glimpses that we see him but wherever we see Michael in scripture he's a mighty warrior for God's people and it will be probably his trumpet call that will be the last trumpet that starts the invasion of this world by Jesus Christ and his followers it will be the final assault will be launched by Michael and his trumpet call so how should we fight this war we should fight it boldly and we should fight it in faith in faith in Jesus

Christ as we go about this we have more than Michael and we have more than the angels we have the Lord Jesus who is Lord Sabaoth and the NIV it's translated Lord Almighty and the SV it's the

Lord of hosts he's the Lord of the armies of heaven and he's already won the decisive battle he's already won the decisive battle we mentioned it earlier but on the cross Jesus disarmed the powers and the authorities that were against us he snatched the only weapon that they had against us that did anything against us he snatched that away from him he snatched the written code with all of its regulations that condemned us he grabbed it and he nailed it to the tree and so Jesus has triumphed over them and so our victory has been won it's already decided our victory is guaranteed there was only one weapon that was effective against us and they don't have it anymore and so now there's nothing they can say there's nothing they can say there's nothing they can say against you for your everlasting harm your everlasting ruin they've lost authority over you because they've lost the one thing that they could say about you and that is that you broke the law you deserve to die

Jesus came in and took that away and he paid the price so they lost authority they lost power over you they lost their accusation against you and so now they lie Colossians says embarrassed at Jesus feet so how do we fight this battle that we're in we do it by believing in Jesus what's going to give you strength and grace to wake up tomorrow and really think you know what today I'm going to be facing evil forces in the heavenly realms what's going to give you courage to resist the devil just this that he has nothing against you he has nothing that he can say about you for your everlasting ruin he might destroy me physically he might destroy you physically I don't know it's possible who knows but there's nothing that he can do to now take me out of my father's hands I'm secure and so what can give you grace to stay in the battle to admit the battle to fight the battle to keep your head thinking about the right things only this that

Jesus died for me he died for me to give me authority over them he died for me to rescue me from them he died for me to take their weapon away from them and so now he's brought me into his family and more than that he's enlisted me in his army I'm called to fight the good fight and it's my privilege to fight for him the one who loved me and gave himself up for me and so let me ask you what are you expecting this life to be a picnic a vacation to Disney World Daniel says think again think about what you're about think about the people that you're with think about the enemies that you're facing there is a war going on and so let's fight and let's endure as good soldiers and let's know let's do it knowing that the outcome is secure

Jesus is one and we merely have to do the cleanup effort here the mopping up of the enemy forces let's pray our heavenly father I pray that you would give us grace to understand your word this passage is difficult and full of mysteries things that you haven't told us any more about so I pray that we would not fall into harmful speculation but that we would confess what we know and what we don't know that what we what you have clearly revealed that we would hold on to it even if it seems so curious and strange to our ears I pray that you would give us faith to believe and then Lord I pray that you would give us faith to see who we are facing who we are doing battle with but at the same time show us who is for us that we would not grow afraid we help us this week to resist!

[43 : 50] the devil to overcome evil with good I pray Lord that you would do this for Jesus sake for his glory and his it's in his name I pray amen