Daniel 10

The War Behind the Answer: Heard from the First Day

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Behind the news of nations is a war in the heavens. Daniel humbled himself and prayed; God heard him the first day, but the answer had to fight its way through. God strengthens His weak servants, calls them highly esteemed, and tells them not to be afraid.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

DANIEL 10 (KJV), MARKED

Gold God — His character & actions
Green Command / instruction
Sky Key repeated word
Rose Sin / warning
Violet Promise / blessing
Amber Time / place / contrast

1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.

2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.

3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel;

5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz:

6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

8 Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.

11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

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.

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.

Marked in the text

- **v1** ◷ the third year of Cyrus
- **v1** ▲ the thing was true
- **v2** ◷ mourning three full weeks
- **v3** ▮▮ I ate no pleasant bread
- **v4** ◷ the great river, which is Hiddekel
- **v5** ▲ a certain man clothed in linen
- **v6** ▲ his eyes as lamps of fire
- **v8** ⇄ strength *(every occurrence)*
- **v10** ★ an hand touched me
- **v11** ★ a man greatly beloved *(every occurrence)*
- **v12** ▮▮ Fear not *(every occurrence)*
- **v12** ◷ from the first day
- **v12** ★ thy words were heard
- **v13** ⚠ the prince of the kingdom of Persia
- **v13** ◷ one and twenty days
- **v13** ★ Michael *(every occurrence)*
- **v14** ◷ the latter days
- **v19** ▮▮ be strong, yea, be strong
- **v20** ⚠ the prince of Grecia
- **v21** ▲ the scripture of truth

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. KJV "Hiddekel" is the Tigris; "greatly beloved" is the NASB95's "man of high esteem"; "the scripture of truth" is "the writing of truth." From 8:1 on, Daniel is written in Hebrew again.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 10:5–6 (KJV)

5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold ▲ a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and ▲ his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

Setting

"In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel … and the message was true and one of great conflict" (v1). It is about 536 BC. Two years earlier Cyrus had let the Jews go home (Ezra 1:1–4), and about fifty thousand had returned. Daniel, now in his mid-eighties, stayed

behind. Chapters 10–12 are one final vision; chapter 10 is the introduction, chapter 11 the message, chapter 12 the conclusion. The book is back in Hebrew (8:1–12:13).

Structure

- vv1–3 — **Daniel mourns:** "In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. 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" (vv2–3).
- vv4–9 — **the man dressed in linen:** on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, by the Tigris (v4), "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" (v5). "His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult" (v6). Only Daniel sees it; the men with him run and hide (v7). "No strength was left in me" (v8). He falls into a deep sleep, face to the ground (v9).
- vv10–14 — **the answer and the delay:** a hand touches him and sets him trembling on his hands and knees (v10). "O Daniel, man of high esteem … stand upright, for I have now been sent to you" (v11). "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" (v12). "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" (v13). He has come to explain "what will happen to your people in the latter days" (v14).
- vv15–19 — **strength given:** Daniel is speechless, face down (v15). One "who resembled a human being" touches his lips (v16): "as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength" (v16). He is touched again and strengthened (v18): "O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!" (v19). "May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me" (v19).
- vv20–21 — **the war behind history:** "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" (v20). "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" (v21).

Repeated words

strength / strengthened (vv8, 16, 17, 18, 19); touched (vv10, 16, 18); words / message (vv1, 6, 9, 11, 12, 15); understand / understanding (vv1, 11, 12, 14); man of high esteem (vv11, 19); do not be afraid (vv12, 19); prince(s) (vv13, 20, 21); Persia (vv1, 13, 20); Michael (vv13, 21); the vision (vv1, 7, 8, 14, 16); face to the ground (vv9, 15).

Contrasts

Daniel's three weeks of humbling (vv2–3) ⟷ heard "from the first day" (v12). The answer sent at once (v12) ⟷ delayed twenty-one days (v13). The men who fled (v7) ⟷ Daniel left alone with God (v8). No strength left (vv8, 16–17) ⟷ "take courage and be courageous!" (v19). Kings of Persia and Greece on earth ⟷ princes of Persia and Greece in the heavens (vv13, 20). A small band of returned exiles ⟷ Michael standing for them (v21).

Chapter theme (my words)

Behind the news of nations is a war in the heavens. Daniel humbled himself and prayed; God heard him the first day, but the answer had to fight its way through. God strengthens His weak servants, calls them highly esteemed, and tells them not to be afraid.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 10:12–13 (KJV)

12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. 13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

Why was Daniel mourning? (vv1–3)

The exiles had gone home, but Ezra tells us their work on the temple was stopped by local opposition (Ezra 4:4–5, 24). Guzik suggests Daniel was grieving that so few returned and that the rebuilding had stalled. Note what he did: three weeks of humbling — not a total fast, but giving up "tasty food," meat, wine and ointment (v3). The word "humbling" in v12 is the same idea used for afflicting the soul on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29–31). His mourning ran right through Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (first month, 14th–21st; Exod 12:18). Walvoord, in Guzik, describes the message as about a period "long and strenuous … involving great conflict and trouble for the people of God."

The man in linen (vv4–9)

Who is he? Commentators divide:

- **Christ before His incarnation** — the description closely matches John's vision of the risen Jesus: a long robe, a golden sash, eyes like fire, feet like bronze, a voice like many waters (Rev 1:13–15; compare Ezek 1:26–28). Daniel's reaction and his companions' terror resemble Paul's on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3–7).
- **A great angel** — because the one speaking in vv12–14 was resisted for twenty-one days and needed Michael's help, which seems unlike Christ.

Guzik notes both views. Many solve it by seeing the man of vv5–6 as Christ, and the one who touches and speaks to Daniel afterward (vv10–21) as an angel — perhaps Gabriel, who explained Daniel's earlier visions (8:16; 9:21). Either way, the vision is overwhelming: Daniel's "natural color turned to a deathly pallor" (v8). Baldwin: the experience was "not one to envy."

"From the first day … your words were heard" (v12)

God heard Daniel the moment he humbled himself and set his heart to understand. The answer was sent right away. Spurgeon, in Guzik: the assurance that you are loved by God doesn't make you proud

— it humbles you. Daniel is "man of high esteem" (literally "man of desires," one greatly treasured — also 9:23; 10:19).

The prince of Persia (v13)

This prince can't be a human king — he resisted a heavenly messenger for three weeks. He is an evil spiritual power assigned to the Persian empire. Scripture describes ranks of spiritual powers (Eph 1:21; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:15), Satan as "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and demonic forces behind nations (Deut 32:8, 17; Rev 12:7–9; 16:13–14). The delay was not because God was slow, but because there was a battle. Michael — "one of the chief princes," later called "the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people" (12:1) — is the archangel (Jude 9; Rev 12:7). Archer, in Guzik, warns that a believer might quit praying on the twentieth day when the answer is almost there.

A caution: the passage shows the reality of spiritual conflict, but it doesn't give a method for "binding" territorial spirits. Daniel didn't address the prince of Persia at all. He prayed to God, humbled himself, and kept seeking. The battle was fought by God's messengers in response.

Strengthened (vv15–19)

Three times Daniel is touched: set on his hands and knees (v10), his lips touched so he can speak (v16), and strengthened (v18). The word for "anguish" in v16 means the pangs of labor — Daniel was doubled over. God doesn't scold his weakness; He gives strength, peace and courage, and repeats Daniel's worth: "O man of high esteem, do not be afraid" (v19; compare Isa 40:29–31; 2 Cor 12:9).

Persia, then Greece (vv20–21)

The messenger must return to fight the prince of Persia, and the prince of Greece is coming next — exactly the order of empires in chapters 2, 7 and 8. Baldwin, in Guzik: "The heavenly warfare is to be directed against first Persia and then Greece." What happens on earth among kings reflects a conflict in the heavens. "The writing of truth" (v21) is God's settled plan — history written before it happens (Ps 139:16; Isa 46:9–10). And Israel, a handful of exiles, has the mightiest defender: "Michael your prince."

Word study (Hebrew)

- **message — *dabar* (H1697):** word, matter, thing.
- **great conflict — *tsaba gadol* (H6635 + H1419):** literally "a great host / warfare" — hard service, conflict.
- **mourning — *ʾabal* (H56):** to mourn, lament.
- **tasty food — *chamudah* (H2532):** desirable, precious things — the same root as "high esteem."
- **linen — *bad* (H906):** white linen, the priestly cloth (Lev 16:4).
- **beryl — *tarshish* (H8658):** a precious stone, perhaps topaz or chrysolite.
- **tumult — *hamon* (H1995):** a roar, the sound of a multitude.
- **deathly pallor — *mashchith* (H4889):** ruin, corruption — his face was ruined.
- **man of high esteem — *ʾish chamudoth* (H376 + H2532):** a man greatly desired, treasured.
- **humbling yourself — *ʿanah* (H6031):** to afflict, humble oneself.
- **prince — *sar* (H8269):** a chief, commander, ruler.
- **withstanding — *ʿamad le-neged* (H5975 + H5048):** stood in front of, opposed.

- **Michael — *Mikaʾel* (H4317):** "Who is like God?"
- **anguish — *tsir* (H6735):** a pang, the pains of childbirth.
- **take courage — *chazaq* (H2388):** be strong, be firm.
- **writing of truth — *kethab ʾemeth* (H3791 + H571):** the book of truth, God's record.

Cross-references

Lev 16:29–31; Deut 32:8; 2 Kgs 6:15–17; Ezra 1:1–4; Ezra 4:4–5, 24; Job 1:6–12; Ps 34:7; Ps 139:16; Isa 40:29–31; Isa 46:9–10; Isa 65:24; Ezek 1:26–28; Dan 8:15–19; Dan 9:20–23; Dan 12:1; Matt 6:16–18; Luke 18:1–8; Acts 9:3–7; 2 Cor 10:3–5; 2 Cor 12:9; Eph 6:10–18; Col 2:15; James 4:7–10; 1 Pet 5:8–9; Jude 9; Rev 1:12–17; Rev 12:7–9.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 10:18–19 (KJV)

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.

Command to obey — "do not be afraid … take courage."

Twice the messenger says it (vv12, 19). God's servants still face things that drain all their strength. The word to them is the same: do not fear; be strong. I'll take the command personally today and act on it — not because I feel strong, but because He strengthens me (Phil 4:13).

Sin to confess — quitting on the twentieth day

Daniel kept seeking for three weeks without knowing a battle was being fought for him. I've given up on prayers too soon and decided God wasn't listening. I'll name one prayer I quit praying and start again (Luke 18:1). For the men I disciple, who have prayed for a son, a marriage or their freedom for years: don't quit on day twenty.

Warning to heed — the battle is real

"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood" (Eph 6:12). There is real opposition to God's work — in nations, in families, in a man's recovery. But I don't fight it with formulas or by talking to demons. I fight it the way Daniel did: humbling myself, praying, standing on God's Word, and trusting God's messengers to do the fighting (James 4:7).

Promise to trust — heard from the first day

"From the first day … your words were heard" (v12). Delay is not denial. God may answer before I finish asking (Isa 65:24), even when I can't yet see the answer. My prayers are not lost in the air.

Example to follow — a mourner for God's people

Daniel was in his eighties and comfortable in Babylon, yet he grieved for the struggling exiles in Jerusalem and gave up comforts to pray for them. I want a heart that mourns for the people of God and for the men I serve — and that gives up something to pray for them.

Worship

Behind every headline and every empire is a God who writes history before it happens and sends His messengers in answer to prayer. "Who is like God?" — that's what Michael's name asks. No one.

Prayer

Lord, thank You that You heard me from the first day. Forgive me for quitting when the answer was on its way. Strengthen me where I have no strength, and speak peace to me. Teach me to humble myself and keep seeking You, and to trust You with the battles I can't see. Who is like You? Amen.