



PERSONAL APPLICATION – DANIEL 11:2-11:45

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“I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold [from Uphaz] around his waist. 6 His body was like topaz, 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. (10:5-6 NIV)”

The last three chapters (10-12) comprise the fourth and final vision given to Daniel. Chapter 10 consists of an encounter with a mysterious and awesome stranger, and a reference to Michael the archangel. It is followed by a detailed description of the rise and fall of the Persian and Greek dynasties (chapter 11), concluding with a glimpse of the end times (chapter 12). In this narrative we will concentrate on chapter 10 with an emphasis on the role of angels.

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE MAN

The account begins in the third person establishing the date and purpose of the vision. This episode happened three years after Daniel's last vision (9:1) during the reign of Darius, 539 BC. Because of this, some scholars believe that Darius the Mede and Cyrus are the same person since it is now in the third year of the reign of Cyrus which makes it 536 BC. However, this is easily explained if we assume Cyrus had taken full control of the region (which he had temporarily assigned to Darius). Otherwise, why would Daniel make a distinction in names (9:1, 10:1)? Notice too, that Darius is said to rule Babylonia while Cyrus is king of Persia. We know Babylonia was captured by Cyrus in 539 BC which makes Darius a regional ruler at Cyrus' behest and in his absence. The purpose of the vision is to foretell the details of an impending great war (actually, a series of conflicts) that will impact God's holy people and the land of Israel.

The story then moves back to the first person account of Daniel. Standing by the banks of the Tigris River, Daniel tells us he has just finished a three week period of mourning which involved fasting, abstaining from strong drink and foregoing personal grooming (10:2). Although not mentioned directly, we presume he had been grieving over the slow progress of the restoration of Jerusalem. It had now been 3 years since Cyrus gave the edict freeing the Jews as well as heavily financing their return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Whether it was discouraging news from Sheshbazzar, leader of the first band of exiles to return to the ruins of Jerusalem, or the fact that many

Jews chose to stay in Babylon, Daniel was still distressed. Daniel himself was advanced in age and unable to go, so his frustration is understandable. What makes this mourning period more significant is that Daniel apparently didn't eat the Passover meal that year since we are told the vision occurred on the 24th of Nisan (10:4), and Passover would have been celebrated on the 14-15th of Nisan during his three week mourning period. Certainly, Daniel's grief about not being able to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem in the restored Temple must have been extremely depressing.

It was at this point he experienced a startling encounter. He suddenly sees a man (Hebrew=*ish*) dressed in white linen. The description is overwhelming.

I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold [from Uphaz] around his waist. ⁶His body was like topaz, 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. (10:5-6 NIV)

Daniel points out that the other people who were with him did not see the specter, yet were frightened and fled in terror. We are reminded of Saul's (Paul's) vision along the Damascus road with similar responses by his companions (Acts 9:3-8). In that instance, the voice was that of the ascended Jesus making direct contact with Paul. Thus, many interpreters feel Daniel's encounter was with the pre-incarnate Jesus and not just another angel. Evidence of this can be drawn from John the evangelist's vision in the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:12-18), where the ascended Christ reveals himself in similar appearance. Note the comparisons:

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and among the lampstands was someone 'like a son of man', dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. (Revelation 1:12-15)

The similarities are undeniable (see also Ezekiel 1:26-28), and yet some scholars argue that the heavenly messenger may be the Angel of Yahweh who, according to Zechariah, defends Joshua ben Jozadak, the high priest, against satanic accusations (Zechariah 3:1-7). Be that as it may, the awesome entity comforts the trembling Daniel reassuring him that he is highly esteemed (ESV= 'loved'). Daniel is encouraged enough to stand up, but still trembling (v. 10-11). As in almost all encounters with the Lord himself or with angels of God, the visitor's first words are "be not afraid." (See other examples: Genesis 15:1, 26:24, 46:3, Deuteronomy 3:2, Joshua 8:1, Judges 6:22-23, 2 Kings 1:15, Jeremiah 1:8-9, Matthew 1:20, 28:5, Luke 1:13, 1:30, 2:10, Acts 18:9, Revelation 1:17).

At this point the divine visitor says that he has come because of Daniel's prayers, but adds that he has been delayed. He then reveals the reason. Apparently, there has been a heavenly battle corresponding to the earthly battles among nations. The visitor explains he has been in conflict with a spiritual entity called the "prince of Persia" who has detained him for three weeks (10:12-13). Here we get a glimpse into heavenly conflicts alluded to sporadically through Scripture where holy angels battle spiritual entities (Satan and his fallen angels) all of whom (good and bad) ultimately are accountable to God (Psalms 82:1, 6; 89:5-7; Job 1:6-7; 2:1-2; 1 Kings 22:19-23). There was a belief among the Jews that considered the boundaries of nations were established by God (Psalm 2, Deuteronomy 32:9, Job 38:4-7, Romans 13:1) and these corresponded to heavenly boundaries. The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) translates Deuteronomy 32:8-9: "*When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God.*" Most English translations say "sons of God" (ESV) or "sons of Israel" (NIV), but the notion that earthly affairs are governed by heavenly battles finds substance in this passage from Daniel.

The messenger seems to describe a situation where demonic entities (fallen angels? Isaiah 14:12, Revelation 9:1, 11, 12:7-9) contend with God's heavenly host led by God's Son and the archangel Michael, said to be the defender of Israel. Since the aggressor was called "prince of Persia," and later the prince of Greece (cf. 10:20), the heavenly conflict seems to be related to the

historical periods of both empires. In the New Testament Paul speaks of restraints upon the “secret power of lawlessness” in the present age (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Paul also reminds us we do not contend merely with nations, ¹² *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* (Ephesians 6:12). Even now the heavenly battle continues even though the Son of God has secured the ultimate victory (Revelation 12:10-12).

The heavenly messenger, reassures Daniel a second time, encouraging him not to be afraid, but to listen to and write down what he is about to reveal from the Book of Truth. This is not to be confused with the Book of Life, in which the names of the saved are listed (Psalms 69:28, 139:16, Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 20:15, 21:27), but a book of truth describing the course of God’s divine plan with corresponding fulfillments in mankind’s history. In the next chapter the divine messenger provides a detailed discourse of the waning Persian dynasty and the rising Greek empire to illustrate the interwoven nature of that plan.

He concludes with a cryptic remark about fighting the battle alone, except for the help of Michael (10:20-21, 11:1). Some argue against a pre-incarnate Christ on this point, contending that Jesus would not need help from an angel. But this very revelation enhances the pre-incarnate interpretation when you consider the entire message of the Gospel. Jesus indeed was attended by a multitude of angels at his birth (Luke 2:13-14), who protect him and the holy family in Egypt (Matthew 2:13), and was ministered by angels in the wilderness (Matthew 4:11). He was assisted by angels during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43), and had a legion of angels at his disposal when he was arrested (Matthew 26:52-54), although, in this case, he refused assistance because the defeat of sin, death, and the devil was his task alone. Billy Graham in his book *Angels: God’s Secret Agents*, writes:

“He refused to call for their help. The angels were under orders not to intervene at this terrible, holy moment. Even the angels could not minister to the Son of God at Calvary. He died alone in order to take the full death penalty you and I deserved.”

As Jesus said, it was necessary that he suffer, die, and

be raised on the third day (Matthew 16:21), in order that atonement be made for sin (Mark 10:45, Luke 24:46-47).

Not only Jesus, but we, too, are being ministered unto by angels, as we read in Hebrews 1:14, *“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”* Jesus spoke of guardian angels (Matthew 18:10). Angels have a particular interest in our salvation, as Jesus noted, *“...I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”* (Luke 15:10). For further evidence of the ministering and protective function of angels you can refer to the partial list below*. Note that the Bible only names two angels (Michael and Gabriel), but lists groups like Seraphim (Isa. 6:1-7) and Cherubim (Genesis 3:24, Ezekiel 10:15-22, and 1 Kings 6:23-28).

After all this, Daniel was near to passing out, but the divine messenger strengthened him once more to prepare him for the revelation from the Book of Truth (10:17-19). In Chapter 11 Daniel records the prophecy, after which the Lord returns to do heavenly battle protecting the Persian king for the sake of the Jews until the restoration of the promised land in the near future, and the fulfillment of the whole plan of salvation in the longer view (10:20-21, 11:1).

* To Abraham, Gen. 18:2, 22:11-18; Hagar, in the wilderness, Gen. 16:7; Lot, in Sodom, Genesis 19:1-17; Jacob, in his various visions, Genesis 28:12; Moses, Ex. 3:2; Israelites, Ex. 14:19, Judg. 2:1-4; Balaam, Numbers 22:31; Joshua, “the captain of the Lord’s army,” Josh. 5:15; Gideon, Judges 6:11-22; Manoah, Judges 13:6, 15-21; David, at the threshing floor of Araunah, 2 Samuel 24:16, 17, 1 Chronicles 21:15, 16; Elijah, while he lay under the juniper tree, 1 Kings 19:5-8; Daniel, in the lions’ den, Daniel 6:22, 8:16, 9:21, 10:5-10, 16, 18, 12:5-7; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the fiery furnace, Daniel 3:25, 28; Zechariah, in a vision, Zechariah 2:3, 3:1, 3, 4:1; Joseph, in a dream, Matthew 1:20, 2:13, 19; Mary, by Gabriel, Luke 1:26-33; at the resurrection, John 20:11-13, etc.

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Heavenly Father, you control the history of mankind despite man's machinations and humanity's hubris. What often seems as the unstoppable plans of despots and tyrants eventually come to nothing. But for those who trust in you, they will find peace and eternal bliss. Help us to remain faithful, especially in times of trial and tribulation, that we may give you glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REVIEW

The Book of Daniel circles through history going back and forth from one dynasty or kingdom to another. Now, in Chapter 11, Daniel briefly revisits the Medo-Persian empire, but especially concentrates on the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires covered in Chapter 8, but with greater detail.

- Chapter 11 is a continuation of the vision begun in Chapter 10.

Who is still speaking? (10:5-6, 9-14)

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- Verse 11:2 says three more Persian kings will appear. Who was the earlier more famous king before those three? (10:1)

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- The Bible doesn't mention every king, but historical records tell us that the fourth king was Darius I, followed by Xerxes (aka: Ahasuerus).

What do you remember about Ahasuerus? (Review Esther 2 and 8)

Going outside of Persia, what country did he stir up? (v. 2b)

Alexander the Great responded with his army. How does verse 3 describe him?

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- You will recall from 8:22 the "4 horns" were his generals, now in 11:4 they are called the "four winds." You might also remember from the Narrative on Chapter 8, these four Greek kingdoms settled into four stable power blocks: the Ptolemaic Kingdom of North Africa, the Seleucid Empire of Mesopotamia, the Kingdom of Pergamum in Asia Minor, and the Macedon Kingdom in Greece.

Of the four kingdoms, two fought over the Holy Land. By what "directional" names are these kingdoms called in this chapter? (v. 9)

By what familiar names (countries) were these two empires called? (See GNT [or TEV] versions)

Subsequent rulers of these two empires would continue to vie for the Holy Land. They would sometimes battle, sometimes secure a truce, intermarry, conduct coups, commit assassinations, and embark on political intrigues to rival Hollywood plots. Most are recorded in history books, not in the Bible, nor the Apocrypha. You will need to consult the accompanying Narrative on chapter 11 to associate these historical events with the corresponding verses in Daniel chapter 11:5-20.

5. Summarizing 11:5-20, what would you say was the general attitude and ambition of kings during this period?
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6. Caught in between these warring factions was Israel along with its capital Jerusalem. By what exalted term is it described in verses 16, 41 and 45?
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7. Tension between the north (Syria) and south (Egypt) escalated. Eventually the most ruthless tyrant emerged, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Relate again what Gabriel prophesized. (8:11-14)
Who stopped his territorial expansion according to 11:30? (See GNT or TEV)
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- In his rage, what did he do? (vv. 29-31)
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8. Into what two groups would the Jews align themselves during this period? (11:32-35)
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9. In view of the atrocities by Antiochus IV...
What surprising comment is made at the end of v. 36?
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- What does this say about God's hand in history? (Daniel 2:20-21, 4:17)
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10. We know another "abomination" occurred in 70 AD by the Roman Emperor, Titus, which desecrated, then destroyed the temple. But the world went on. What does this tell you? (Mark 13:7)
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11. Scholars have determined that verses 40-45 have no corresponding events during the Ptolemaic and Seleucid history. It is surmised that the events described may yet be in the future.
What did Jesus say about the future? (Matthew 24:15-21)
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- How does Paul describe the coming antichrist? (2 Thessalonians 2:3-8)
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- John tells us there will be even worse events. Describe them. (Revelation 13:11-18)
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- How does Peter describe the end of the world? (2 Peter 3:10)
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12. Given the uncertainty of the future, what should we be doing? (2 Peter 3:11-15, Ephesians 5:14-20)
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