

DANIEL

Part 8: “A Prophecy of Hope”

Daniel 10–12

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Summary

In this final sermon of this series, we will explore the concluding chapters of Daniel (chapters 10 through 12), which unravel a vision of spiritual and earthly wars that shaped history. As this mysterious passage unfolds, glimpse the final defeat of evil and the eternal hope of resurrection.

Scripture Reading

“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 twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank 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. His body was like beryl, 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 left 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. And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. And he said to me, ‘O 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” (Daniel 10:1–11, ESV).

Introduction

Today, we come to the final section and the conclusion of our study of the Old Testament book of Daniel.

As chapter 10 begins, it is “*the third year of Cyrus king of Persia*” (Dan 10:1). This is important to know because, by now, the famous edict of Cyrus has gone forth. The edict of Cyrus was a decree all the people who were once captives of the Babylonian Empire

have now have permission to return to their homeland to rebuild their cities and their places of worship.

As the Old Testament book of Ezra tells us, many Jewish people leave Babylon for their ancient homeland of Judea. They return to the holy city of Jerusalem, where they intend to rebuild the temple and city walls.

But even though tens of thousands of the Jewish exiles return home, they face immediate challenges and resistance from the people who now live in the land. It will take decades before the Second Temple is rebuilt and nearly a century before the walls of Jerusalem are restored.

Meanwhile, far from Jerusalem, the prophet Daniel is nearing the end of his life. He is now too old to make the journey home. So, even though the exile has technically ended, Daniel now confronts that he will end his days in a foreign land and the Jewish people are weak and vulnerable.

So, Daniel leaves the city and goes into the desert, where he will mourn and seek the Lord. As he did at the beginning of his exile, he refuses to drink wine or eat meat (cf. Dan 1:8). Instead, he commits himself to fasting and prayer near the great Tigris River [show **The Tigris**]. And for three long weeks, Daniel prays in the wilderness until he beholds a sight that astonishes and overpowers him.

A supernatural being emanating brilliant light appears. He wears a linen robe and golden sash. The appearance of this being so overwhelms Daniel that he has to search for words to describe what he sees. He compares his body to a sparkling gem and burnished bronze. His face is as bright as a flash of lightning. His eyes are like a burning fire, and his voice is like the sound of of a multitude.

Who is this supernatural being? Some have thought that Daniel is seeing an angel. Others have wondered if Daniel is seeing something much more. Perhaps Daniel is standing before the very glory of God (see Rev 1:12-15)!

The answer is not clear. What is clear is that Daniel is utterly overwhelmed by the experience. He falls down before this Holy One. And when he is commanded to stand, he is given *one last revelation*. What follows, then, is *a single prophetic word* that spans Daniel chapters 10 through 12.

It is the last prophecy for Daniel the prophet, and it is "**A Prophecy of Hope.**" As we will see, this prophecy is composed of three elements: **1.) A Prophecy of Spiritual War, 2.) A Prophecy of Earthly War, and 3.) A Prophecy of the End of All War.**

1.) A Prophecy of Spiritual War

The first thing Daniel learns is that, above and beyond his situation, there is very real and very unseen spiritual war. I admit that what is described in Daniel 10 is far outside of our modern paradigm, but it is also fascinating.

Daniel is told by the spiritual being that he has been opposed and contested by a being known as “*the prince of the kingdom of Persia.*” This prince of Persia apparently seeks to wage war against the will of God and the well-being of God’s people.

The text reads: “*The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one 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*” (Dan 10:13–14).

There’s a lot going on here. But what should be very apparent is that the prince of Persia is not a physical prince. Rather, it is a spiritual being that seems to possess spiritual dominion over the nation of Persia. This text goes to show us that there are other “princes” or spiritual beings that possess dominion over other nations, such as Greece (cf. Dan 10:20).

Likewise, this text is the first biblical reference to the angel (or archangel) Michael [show [Le Grand Saint Michel by Rafael \(1518\)](#)]. Michael will appear a few other times in this final portion of Daniel, and he will show up again toward the end of the New Testament in books like Jude and Revelation (cf. Jude 9; Rev 12:7).

We don’t know a lot about Michael. But in every instance that he appears in Scripture, he is an angel who battles against Satan and demons and defends the people of God.

Thus, before Daniel learns about the earthly wars that are to come in future days, he must first understand that there is a spiritual reality and a spiritual war that surrounds us at all points in time.

Daniel 10 shows us there are spiritual beings that are a part of the created order. Some spiritual beings serve God and his people—these we typically call “angels.” Likewise, some spiritual beings have rebelled against God and seek to oppose God’s people—these we typically call “demons.”

Elsewhere, in the Bible, we learn that as humanity fell into sin, many nations of the world turned toward idolatry and the worship of false gods that were actually demons (c.f. Deut 32:17). These false gods are what other Old Testament authors term the “gods of the nations” (c.f. Ps 96:5). They are what the Apostle Paul refers to as “rulers and authorities,” and what the old King James Version calls “principalities and powers” (cf. Eph 6:12; Col 2:15).

Admittedly, this is all a stretch for us who live in a highly scientific, post-Enlightenment world. Yet, this is what the Bible reveals to be true about the nature of reality. Our world is more than mere matter in motion. And if we fail to understand the spiritual aspects of evil in our world, we will fail to understand why evil endures and why, at times, evil seems to have a sense of agency to it.

However, we must not despair. The Bible teaches us that the "principalities and powers" of this world are real, and they are dangerous—but they are also doomed.

When Jesus died on the cross and rose again from the grave, he broke the claim that the powers of darkness held upon us and upon our world. As Paul writes, *"He [God] disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him [Christ]"* (Col 2:15).

At the cross, Christ has dethroned the principalities of this world. But though they are defeated, they are not yet destroyed. They still seek to deceive and delude us. They aim to distract and divide us. They wish to disarm and destroy us.

Thus, we will still endure times and seasons of intense spiritual attack. Yet, passages like Daniel 10 help us not be surprised when such spiritual attack comes our way. Daniel 10 also shows us that our prayers are more powerful than we could ever imagine.

So when spiritual trials come your way—when you feel overwhelmed and discouraged, and it feels like the powers of this world have conspired to destroy you—do not forsake the power of prayer. Pray fervently. Pray diligently. Pray with other believers. And most importantly, pray in the name of Jesus.

For the power of God in Christ is infinitely greater than all powers of darkness. Christ has been enthroned above all rule and authority and power and dominion (c.f. Eph 1:12). And when we stand together, we stand in Christ, we stand in the reality of Christ's victory over the powers.

As Paul commands us, *"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"* (Eph 6:10–12).

2.) A Prophecy of Earthy War

Next, Daniel is given a word and a vision to come regarding his own people—that is, the Jewish people (Dan 10:14). Thus, what follows is a foretelling of what awaits the Jewish people after exile, during what is known what many have called the "intertestamental" period (i.e. the period of time that occurred between the closing of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament).¹

Daniel 11, then, is a prophetic picture of history of Jewish history during this "intertestamental" period. In fact, many would call Daniel 11 the most detailed prophecy in the Bible. So, what does it foretell?

¹ It should be noted most religious and biblical scholars prefer to refer to this term as the Second Temple Period. I use the more antiquated term intertestamental because I feel that it is clearer to the general reader/listener.

Daniel 11 will show that the Jewish people will indeed return to their ancient homeland. But they will not be free, and they will not restore the former glory of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Instead, they will fall victim to a succession of warring empires, and their homeland will often be reduced to a warzone.

First, the mighty Persian Empire will fall. Persian will have a few more kings; the strongest and most wealthy of these will be King Xerxes. Xerxes will seek to expand his empire westward, where he will be defeated and repelled by the Greeks.

But then, more than a century later, a far mightier king would rise to power and conquer much of the known world. This king is Alexander the Great[show [Alexander the Great](#)]. And it will be Alexander who will crush the power of Persia and rule a land from eastern Europe all the way to Western India. But the empire of Alexander will not last.

As the prophecy of Daniel foretells, *“And now I will show you the truth. Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them. And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills. And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these”* (Dan 11:2–4).

In the year 323 B.C., Alexander the Great dies of illness in the city of Babylon. His rule will end with no clear plan of succession. As a result, his kingdom does not pass to any descendant. Instead, his vast empire is broken into four main pieces and divided among his most powerful generals.

But the prophecy of Daniel 11 isn't as much concerned about all four kingdoms that fractured out of Alexander's dominion. The main focus of this chapter is about how the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish people are caught between two rival kingdoms that rise as a result of this fallout.

These two rival kingdoms are referred to in Daniel 11 as “the king of the south” and “the king of the north.” The reference point of these two kingdoms is Jerusalem [show [Map of the Kings of the North and South](#)].

The “king of the South” refers to the Ptolemaic dynasty, which was centered in Egypt and lasted nearly three hundred years. The first ruler of the Ptolemaic dynasty was Alexander's general Ptolemy. Interestingly, the last ruler of the Ptolemaic dynasty was the famous Cleopatra.

The “king of the North” refers to the Seleucid dynasty that ruled out of what we would call modern-day Syria and Turkey.

Initially, the city of Jerusalem and the land of Judea will fall under the power of the Ptolemies, or the “king of the South.” But eventually, as Daniel 11 shows us, the Seleucids (or the “king of the North”) will take the land of Judea from the king of the south by force.

I won’t go into all of the gory details, but the events of Daniel chapter 11 span centuries. They recount chronicles of conflicts and battles; marriages and betrayals; political intrigue and assassination. All the while, the Jewish people are quite literally caught in the middle of a vicious power struggle, and they will bear the brunt of unjust suffering that comes from incessant war.

But these visions all lead up to one of the great villains of Jewish history—King Antiochus IV [show Antiochus IV]. Antiochus IV, was a member of the Seleucid dynasty, meaning he was one of the kings of the north.

Antiochus despised the religion and customs of the Jewish people. He believed that Greek culture was superior to all other cultures, and so he wanted to force the Jewish people into adopting Greek cultural norms by any means necessary.

Some Jewish people were able to be seduced by flattery and wealth and power to reject their Jewish culture. But others refused. In fact, the Jewish people have had a remarkable tendency to retain their culture and their heritage despite living under the dominion of various empires and cultures.

So, Antiochus decided he would crush the Jewish people into submission by threatening them with violence and commandeering their most holy site. So in the year 167 B.C. Antiochus takes control of the temple in Jerusalem, builds an altar to the Greek god Zeus within it, and sacrifices animals on it that are unclean according to Jewish law. In the mindset of the Jews, this was an act of vile defilement and desecration. It was an abomination.

As Daniel 11 describes, *“Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action”* (Dan 11:31–32).

Antiochus's actions so enraged the Jewish people that they ignited a resistance movement known as the Maccabean Revolt. Amazingly, the Jews rose up, retook Jerusalem, and cleansed the temple.² In fact, the cleansing of the temple during the Maccabean era is what is now celebrated in the Jewish festival of Hannukah.

² As a result of the Maccabean Revolt, the Jewish people even established a very brief independent kingdom under the Hasmonean dynasty, which lasted just shy of a century. Hasmonean rule began with a lot of promising hope but ended with compromise and corruption. Jewish independence ended with the conquest of Rome under the general Pompey in 63 B.C.

Antiochus was such an evil figure that he became an embodiment of evil and oppression against God's people by the kingdoms of this world. In fact, as the chapter goes on, the image of this wicked king morphs into something that seems bigger and beyond the mere figure of Antiochus IV.

The text says, *“And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done”* (Dan 11:36).

It's true that Antiochus would later present himself as a god on his currency and coinage [show [Antiochus IV Epiphanes or God Manifest](#)]. He even named himself Antiochus IV Epiphanes, literally meaning "Antiochus the Manifestation of God."

But as bad as Antiochus was, he was not alone in this act of blasphemy. The later Roman Emperors also exalted themselves to deity, and were even worshipped in the Roman Imperial cult. Even more, the Romans did more than just defile the temple—in the year A.D. 70, they destroyed it.³ So which one event was the true “Abomination of Desolation”? The answer is “yes.”

It is a prophecy with multiple fulfillments in history. So, too, this evil king at the end of Daniel 11 might also refer to not one, but multiple figures in history. Like the kings of the north and the south, this final king may refer to a type of dynasty of antichrist figures that have and will exalt themselves against God throughout time.

In this way, prophecy is not microscopic in its view of the future—it is *telescopic*. Think of it this way: when you look at the nighttime sky and see a constellation, to you, that constellation appears like a two-dimensional group of stars [show [Orion Constellation](#)]. The image of the constellation appears flat, and all of the stars seem equally far away.

However, if you were to see that same constellation in three dimensions, you would see that the stars vastly vary in their distance from our planet [show [Orion Stars Distance from Earth](#)]. In fact, they are even thousands of light years apart from one another.

So, too, the prophecies of the Bible often appear two dimensional to us. They may seem like they refer to a single event or person. But in reality, they pierce through multiple eras of history and time.

The point in all of this is not to lead us on a quest to solve the mystery or predict the identity of a future antichrist at the end of time. Rather, Daniel 11 is a reminder that so many struggles for power in history are failed attempts of men to make themselves into God.

³ Jesus clearly saw the destruction of the Jerusalem temple as another fulfillment of the “abomination of desolation” (see and compare: Matt 24:15–20; Luke 21:20–24).

So when the nations rage and hard times come, we must not lose faith and succumb to fear. Our God who is the author of history is not surprised, and he is not afraid.

As Daniel prophesies of the great and wicked king, *“And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him”* (Dan 11:45).

There is a day coming when the dominion of evil will come to an everlasting end. And that leads us to our final point.

3.) A Prophecy of the End of All War

Daniel is told that there will be a final battle—a cataclysm at the end of history—but then deliverance will come. History will come to an end. Death will be swallowed up by life. And God’s people will be vindicated forever.

Daniel 12 begins with the words, *“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever”* (Dan 12:1–3).

This is not just a vision of justice—it is a vision of final and ultimate judgment upon all evil. It is not just a vision of hope—it is a vision of *resurrection*.

In fact, Daniel 12 is one of the clearest places in the Old Testament where we find the doctrine of the final resurrection. It is the day at the end of time when the dead will rise and stand in judgment before God.

And there is a practical purpose to this prophecy. The people of God are to live with this eternal end in mind. When the world seeks to lull us into complacency, the doctrine of final judgment is a truth that awakens us to what really matters most. The truth of eternal justice should compel us to turn away from sin and to seek the Lord with pure hearts. Our vision of the future should cause us to see trial as an opportunity for our faith to be purified and refined (Dan 12:10; c.f. James 1:2–4; 1 Pet 1:6–7). And above all, our vision of God’s final victory, should cause us to be a people of undefeatable hope.

The words of God are faithful and true. Yet, many mysteries still remain. Indeed, even the angels of heaven marvel and wonder when all these visions of Scripture will be fulfilled.

In fact, the final scene of Daniel is of the Holy One with a white robe, a shining face, and eyes of fire standing above the waters of the river. Beside him, on either side of the river, are two angels who ask him a question.

The text reads, “Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, ‘How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?’” (Dan 12:5–6).

The Holy One lifts his hand as a sign of making an oath. He utters more riddles of numbers and tells Daniel that these words will be shut and sealed until "the time of the end" and "the end of days" (Dan 12:9; 13).

This reminds us that there are some truths that will remain hidden until the end of time; there will be some truths mystify even the angels; some truths into which even angels long to look (c.f. 1 Pet 1:12).

But what strikes me about this final passage is not what this heavenly figure says but the *visual image* this final scene creates. It is a vision of a Holy One who is lifted up and seemingly exalted and enthroned between two angels. And for careful readers of the Old Testament, this is not an accidental image [show **The Ark of the Covenant**]*—it is a reference to the Ark of the Covenant, the holiest object in the temple of Jerusalem, the footstool of God's throne on earth. It is an image of God's divine presence.*

But why is Daniel see this vision over the Tigris River and not in the Jerusalem temple? The vision is a statement God’s presence and authority is in no way limited to land of Judah or the temple of Jerusalem. God is the sovereign Lord over *all* creation.

And as he was present with Daniel at the end of his life, so too, our God is present in our pain and our sorrow no matter where we are. He is enthroned even in our exile. He is sovereign over time and history. And he is bending all things toward a day when eternal life prevails, and the reign of death is vanquished!

Conclusion

Today, like Daniel, we have the opportunity to witness a vision of the future that awaits as we will get to witness the baptism of several our new brothers and sisters in Christ who have confessed their faith in Christ.

Baptism is a display of our union with Christ. As Christ died on the cross and was buried for our sins, so to believers are plunged beneath the waters of baptism as a symbol of our union with Christ in his death. But as Christ triumphed over the power of death by his resurrection, we are raised out of the waters as a foretaste of our everlasting resurrection life in Christ.

So today, witness these baptisms see more than the water. Have eyes that are unveiled by the Spirit to see a vision of hope. In an age of war and chaos, may behold that our God is enthroned over the waters, the times of sorrow are numbered, and the promise of resurrection draws closer each day. AMEN.