

ARCHANGELS: DIVINITY WAR

DANIEL 10:1-11:1 MARCH 20, 2019

More and more the word “war” is being used in regard to our relationship with China. You hear about the “trade war,” or that we’re headed to a new “cold war” with them. But some would say that we are *already* at war with China in the unseen cyber realm. An article on [TheNation.com](https://www.thenation.com/article/the-us-is-already-at-war-with-china/) writes: “...*little information is available on US-Chinese cyberwarfare. All that can be said with confidence is that an intense war is now being waged between the two countries in cyberspace.*”¹

In Daniel chapter 10 we learn about another intense, invisible war. It’s not just between 2 countries, but spans the globe and the centuries. It’s being waged in the spiritual realm, where angelic beings engage one another, each fighting on behalf of their kingdom. While the outcome is absolutely decided, the battles have very real consequences in this world.

As we start in on verse 1, we’ve come to the final portion of the book. One last, fantastic vision in the life of this incredible servant of God.

Daniel 10:1 - In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision.

This is 3 years after chapter 9. Daniel is probably around 90 years old. The first group of Jews have returned to Jerusalem, but, the work had stopped. If you’ve been with us on Sundays as we study Ezra we saw there was a 15 year gap in the effort to build the Temple.

Here we’re told that Daniel received a message in a vision. This message concerned a particular time described there in the New King James as “long.” Scholars point out that this is one of those difficult to translate phrases. Its possible meaning is that it referred to things that were going to happen far in the future, we’ll see that’s true. It can also be translated as being about a great conflict, a great war, or that it was a vision which detailed suffering that was out of the ordinary in degree and magnitude. All of these descriptions fit with what was revealed to Daniel.

Daniel 10:2 - ²In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.

Why was Daniel in mourning? There are a variety of reasons suggested for why Daniel is so upset here in verse 2. One is that he must have heard that the Jews who returned from exile had encountered difficulty and the work on the Temple had stopped. This, it’s suggested, broke Daniel’s heart. Another suggestion is that, after that relatively *small* group of Jews left Babylon for Judea, Daniel surveyed the state of the much *larger* group of God’s people who were content to stay behind in the pagan land and that *that* broke his heart. A third option is that Daniel had seen this terrifying vision, realized it signaled intense future suffering for God’s people, that they would be brought almost to the point of extinction, and *that’s* what caused him to mourn. His mental process isn’t spelled out for us, so we’re left to guess and wrestle. At any rate, here’s what Daniel’s mourning looked like:

Daniel 10:3 - ³I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

¹ <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-us-is-already-at-war-with-china/>

Here's what I want us to note about this verse: Daniel's mourning was done in a *spiritual* framework. Whatever was going on in Daniel's life - whether he was about to be executed or being promoted or facing temptation or given a message to share - he always approached these situations with a heavenly mindset. What was the *spiritual* response? What was the *Godly* response?

It's a reminder to us of our responsibility to live with that same mindset day by day. Paul commanded us in Philippians 1:27 to "let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ." Peter wrote: "Be holy in *all* your behavior." We cannot control our circumstances. In many cases we cannot even control what sort of feelings flood our hearts and thoughts. But we *can* walk worthy of Christ. And that means that we follow Daniel's example and behave in a holy, spiritual way. If you're mourning, mourn as a Christian. If you're being promoted, ascend in holiness. If you're being tempted or assigned or threatened, whatever it is, let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel.

Daniel 10:4 - ⁴ Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that *is*, the Tigris,

Daniel hadn't gone back with the returning exiles to Jerusalem. At his advanced age it probably would've been near impossible for him to make the trip. Not to mention his position in the Persian government. Perhaps the king wouldn't allow him to go. We don't know why, but we can be sure that he *would* have if he *could* have. After all, he was still setting his clock by Temple time. It must've been a *huge* disappointment for him, personally. I mean, think about what we know about Daniel. About his faithfulness. His love for the city of God, the house of God. He miraculously lived *all the way through* the exile in Babylon, and now, he can't go back.

We're used to getting what we want, and usually getting it pretty fast. But in our walk with Christ, that's not always how it's going to work. And this is one reason why it's so important for us to develop our *trust* in the Lord. We know Daniel had piles and piles of trust in God, even when everything seemed impossible. But when a person really trusts God and disappointment comes, they're able to say things like, "The Lord gives, the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." And, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." Daniel is an incredible example of being content in the Lord, even in the face of life-changing disappointment.

Daniel 10:5-6 - ⁵ I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! ⁶ His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

The rest of our chapter revolves around this vision of what is commonly called "The Glorious Man." The question is: Who is this? He's variously identified by commentators as God, Gabriel, Michael, some unnamed superior angel, or a Pre-Incarnate appearance of Christ.² Most guys line up in 1 of 2 camps. They'll either say it is *Jesus* or they will say it is simply *a powerful angel*. The problem with saying this is just an angel is that the description here is almost *identical* to what John sees in Revelation 1, and *that* Being is identified as Christ Himself, the Alpha and the Omega.

But some guys see a problem with identifying this as Jesus because in verse 13 the angelic being who speaks with Daniel says that he wasn't strong enough to overcome a character known as the "prince of Persia" and that Michael the Archangel had to come help out. So, they say, this Glorious

² Layman's Bible Book Commentary Ezekiel, Daniel

Man *can't* be Jesus. Those who feel this way interpret that the angel speaking in the rest of chapter 10 is the same as this glorious man. That there's only *one* angelic being that Daniel sees in this text.

However, there is no reason to think that there's only this one, gold-girded being and no one else with Daniel in the rest of the verses. What seems to be happening is that Daniel sees this Glorious Man, an appearance of Pre-Incarnate Christ, and then *another* heavenly being (an angel) comes to speak with Daniel about what he's seeing. In fact, depending on how you read the verses there may even be a third angel in the mix.

When we look on this Glorious Man, we're to be *astounded* with the power, the purity, the strength and the marvelousness of this individual. Even His eyes and His voice are intense fountains of omnipotence. I was thinking about how the eyes aren't very important in superhero movies right now. It's the biceps our culture cares about. But even what is considered small and superfluous to us is absolutely limitless in power when you're talking about God.

Daniel 10:7-9 - ⁷ And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. ⁸ Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. ⁹ Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Daniel is totally overwhelmed by the presence of God. This man, who could look Nebuchadnezzar in the eye, who spent a night in a den full of savage lions, a man who had multiple times been in the company of angels, who had helped oversee 2 of the greatest world empires the world has ever known, this man catches a glimpse of the Lord and collapses. He had complete inability to move or stand. In fact, we'll see that he wasn't even able to speak or *breathe*. We would all do well to dwell on the unspeakable power of our God.

Daniel 10:10-11 - ¹⁰ Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands. ¹¹ And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

At this point it seems a new character enters: An angel, who helps lift Daniel onto his hands and knees and speaks to him, eventually getting Daniel up on his feet. Remember this: When God ministers to you, His child, His desire is to *lift* you. He's the *Lifter* of our heads. He sets our feet upon solid rock. He's not cruel or mean. He wants to lift you up with the tender love we see demonstrated here. Once again, Daniel is identified as one "greatly beloved." We talked about that last week. And Daniel, for his part, had no pride or swagger. He was very humble, despite all his life experience and spiritual success. Beware of so-called ministers who behave with arrogance or braggadocio. The Bible says that God *resists* the proud and that they cannot stand in His presence.

Daniel 10:12-13 - ¹² Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.

Before we get to what's next, take this to heart: Your prayers are *heard* and they *matter*. God responds to the prayers of His people. This passage not only proves that, but also gives us a good lesson on why we should *keep* praying for things until we're given a response or told to stop.

Daniel 10:13 - ¹³ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.

This angel very casually takes Daniel (and us) through the looking glass here and shows the unseen spiritual realm where a cosmic war is being waged. The "Prince of Persia" cannot be a man, for no man could stand against an angel. Rather, he is identified in a similar way as Michael, the archangel. They're both called *princes*. What we learn here is that there are holy angels and fallen angels, organized in a way not unlike a military, and some of these angels are assigned to specific, geographic locales. Their role is to influence the human societies and leaders in that location on behalf of either God or Satan.

Now, this is an incredible thing for God to reveal to us. In the New Testament we're told about how people and governments are under the sway of spiritual forces, that there are powers and principalities acting in ways we cannot perceive, but here we get a real example of it. And this has many implications for us. First of all, it gives us a lot of reason to be in prayer for our leaders and the leaders of the world, that God would be influencing them for good. Second, it means that when we as free individuals in a democratic society go to the voting booth, it's not enough to have the "right" man or woman in office. We should be doing whatever we can to advance *righteous* men and women into leadership. People like Daniel. Because, it does no good to have a well qualified person if that person is going to be corrupted by sinister forces.

Third, when it comes to prayer, we can be greatly encouraged by how this played out. Just because it seems like nothing is happening doesn't mean nothing is happening. Something intense and significant may be happening behind the scenes. We can't see the heavenly realm. So keep praying.

In this case, the holy angel who was stationed in Persia had been instructed to go and speak with Daniel, but as he set out on his mission, he was engaged in battle with his fallen counterpart. It's not clear exactly how this conflict took shape. Perhaps they were doing angel jiu jitsu, or maybe they were using natural means there in the palace of Persia to try to gain the upper hand over one another. Either way, whatever was going on was enough to keep this angel from getting to Daniel for 3 weeks, and at that point they were in a stalemate, neither party retreating. So, Michael, an Archangel who (by the way) we're told in chapter 12 is assigned to the protection of Israel, he tags in to fight this Prince of Persia so the other angel can get on with his mission.

Daniel 10:14 - ¹⁴ Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come."

Once again, the focus of this prophetic message is the nation of Israel. And the scope of the vision will cover the near future for Daniel all the way till the establishment of the Kingdom after the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ. Chapters 10 through 12 are all about this vision. That's a *quarter* of the book! As we move through it in the coming weeks, we'll see that it is complex and detailed.

Daniel 10:15-17 - ¹⁵ When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. ¹⁶ And suddenly, one having the likeness of the sons of men

touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, “My lord, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength. ¹⁷ For how can this servant of my lord talk with you, my lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me.”

Some feel that we have the entrance of a third angel here, that you have the the Glorious Man (who is Christ), then the speaking angel arriving at verse 10, then a third angel who appears in verse 16.

Daniel’s words here are what incline me to think that his mourning in verse 2 had to do with the fact that he had seen the suffering of God’s people in this vision that is now going to be explained to him. In chapter 12, verse 7 here’s how it’s described: “the power of the holy people has been completely shattered.” This was a hard thing to see and understand for a man like Daniel who loved God’s people so much.

A great devotional thought here is to, once again, notice the tender ministry the Lord gave to Daniel, his weakened servant. 3 times Daniel is strengthened. And God doesn’t yell at him to toughen up. He comes with a personal touch and helps him and strengthens him and lifts him. The Lord’s ministry is the *helpful* kind. It’s compassionate. He understands our weakness. He’s not offended by it. He remembers us in our weakness and supplies our every need.

Daniel 10:18-19a - ¹⁸ Then again, *the one having the likeness of a man* touched me and strengthened me. ¹⁹ And he said, “O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace *be* to you; be strong, yes, be strong!”

Here is the character of God’s feelings toward you. His word is given to build you up, not to condemn you, but to invigorate you. That’s for Christians, by the way. If you’re not a believer, then God’s word *does* condemn you. It reveals that you are condemned to death and eternal punishment in hell unless you receive Christ as your Savior. You are not *in* the beloved unless you’ve been adopted as a son or daughter through Christ.

Daniel 10:19b - So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.”

By earthly standards, Daniel’s days of strength were over. But God is always able to invigorate us for service, no matter how weak we may feel. And, notice here: God’s word in Daniel’s life actually made a difference. It was an *effective* grace. Does God’s word actually give you power for living? It should. It’s designed to. Apply it and let it do its work.

Daniel 10:20-11:1 - ²⁰ Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. ²¹ But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince. ^{11v1} “Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him.)

This angel would have to return to the front line and fight once again. But before that he’d flesh out this final vision for Daniel. It would, of course, be in line with the prophecies he had already seen, starting way back in chapter 2 and on through the long decades there in Babylon.

We learn here that God's prophetic plan is written down. It's set in stone in something called The Scripture of Truth. This refers to some sort of unchanging document in heaven. There's a theological position called open theism that suggests that God doesn't actually know how things are going to play out. He's simply reacting to what we're all doing down here. But texts like this one show that the Lord has a plan and He will have His way. While He has given free will to mankind, His prophetic plan *will* come to pass in the particular way that He has revealed.

One more quick and passing application before we close: We see how the angels here help each other out and labor with one another. In the Church we too are commanded to bear one another's burdens and build each other up.

Daniel 10 gives us a shocking look into what's going on in the heavenly realm around us. But, the Bible goes further than that and says that these things aren't just going on *around* us, but we're part of the fight too. We've been drafted into the war and told to get the full armor of God on so that we can do our part. It's not just angels contending with demons, *we're* also wrestling against principalities and powers. It's like those scenes in movies where the hero hands the person they're protecting a pistol and says, "do you know how to use a gun?" You're in the fight already. Put on your equipment, take aim and take your stand.