

The Vision of Daniel 10

Hebrew¹

Dan. 10:1 In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia (לְכוֹרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ פָּרְסִי) (Κύρου τοῦ βασιλέως Περσῶν), a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. The message was true and one of great conflict (וְהָיָה אֵלַי וְהָיָה לְעַמְּךָ וְהָיָה לְכָל הָעָם) (καὶ ἀληθὲς τὸ ὄραμα καὶ τὸ πρόσταγμα καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τὸ ἰσχυρὸν), and he gained an understanding of the message and an understanding of the vision (וַיִּבִּין אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים וַיִּבִּין לֵאמֹר) (διανοηθήσεται τὸ πρόσταγμα, καὶ διενοήθη αὐτὸ ἐν ὄράματι).²

Cyrus the Great³ –

Third year of Cyrus' rule over Babylon
With actually Darius the Mede in Babylon

559-529 B.C.

536 B.C.

Dan. 10:2 In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks.⁴

Dan. 10:3 I did not eat any tasty food. Nor did meat or wine enter my mouth. I also did not use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.

Dan. 10:4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris (הַדְּקָל) (Τίγρης),⁵

Dan. 10:5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen (אִישׁ-אֶזְרָאָה לְבָשׁוּת לִיְנָת) (ἄνθρωπος εἷς ἐνδεδυμένος βύσσινά), whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz.⁶

Dan. 10:6 His body also was like beryl. His face had the appearance of lightning. His eyes were like flaming torches. His arms and feet were like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words were like the sound of a tumult.⁷

¹ Daniel 1:1-2:4 is written in Hebrew, along with 8:1-12:13. The rest of Daniel, 2:5-7:28 is written in Aramaic.

² Daniel is most likely referring to the third year of Cyrus' ruling over Babylon as the king of Persia. Thus, these events take place in 536 B.C., after Cyrus had conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.

³ **Babylonian Persian (Mede) Greek Syrian Greek Egyptian Greek Roman M.E. Messianic**

⁴ In spite of the way that Daniel introduces these next verses in the Hebrew text, i.e., literally “In those days... (בַּיָּמֵי) (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις), because the man speaks in v. 12 of Daniel's wanting to understand, it makes more sense to view v. 1 as describing his receiving the message mentioned that was true and involved great conflict, which then caused Daniel to mourn and long to understand it completely. V.1 says that he certainly did understand the message and vision, which moved him to such profound sadness. However, he just did not understand all of it completely the way that he wanted to. This is what the man means in v. 12 that Daniel had set his heart to understand it.

⁵ 24 Nisan (just ten days after Passover). The city of Babylon is on the Euphrates River, not the Tigris. Daniel is therefore north of Babylon on this other major river of the Mesopotamian valley, and he is traveling with several companions. While Daniel is not imagining his being in the area of the Tigris River, he does imagine the man's standing there and speaking to him, because his companies neither hear nor see the man (v. 7).

⁶ An *angelos* of Yahweh? Cf. Exodus 3:2, הַדְּבָרִים אֲנִי מְשַׁלֵּחַ (ἄγγελος κυρίου). Probably not, because this “man” is inhibited from acting by “the kings of Persia.” But neither does this have to be a conventional angel who perpetually inhabits the heavenly realm so to speak, especially since Daniel alone is imagining all this. It is not physically real in front of him. Thus, this man is simply an imagined created being in Daniel's mind who is a messenger (“angel”) of specific information from God.

cf. Revelation 1:12-15, “Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.”

⁷ Beryl is a transparent, pale green, blue, or yellow mineral consisting of beryllium and aluminum.

Dan. 10:7 Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision (אֲנִי בְּלֹדֵי אֲנִי רָאִיתִי אֶת-הַחֲזוֹן) (τὴν ὄρασιν τὴν μεγάλην ταύτην), while the men who were with me did not see the vision (אֲנִי בְּלֹדֵי אֲנִי רָאִיתִי אֶת-הַחֲזוֹן לֹא רָאִוּ) (οὐκ εἶδοσαν τὴν ὄρασιν ταύτην). Nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves.⁸

Dan. 10:8 Consequently, I was left alone to see this great vision (אֲנִי בְּלֹדֵי אֲנִי רָאִיתִי אֶת-הַחֲזוֹן) (τὴν ὄρασιν τὴν μεγάλην ταύτην). Yet, no strength was left in me, while my natural color turned to a deathly pallor. Thus, I retained no strength.

Dan. 10:9 I heard the sound of his words, and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Dan. 10:10 Then, behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.⁹

Dan. 10:11 He said to me, “Daniel, man of high regard (אִישׁ מְבֹרָךְ) (ἄνθρωπος ἐλεεινός), understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, because I have now been sent to you.” When he had spoken this statement to me, I stood up trembling.¹⁰

Dan. 10:12 Then, he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, because, from the first day that you set your heart on understanding and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.¹¹

Dan. 10:13 “However, the prince of the kingdom of Persia (אֲנִי בְּלֹדֵי אֲנִי רָאִיתִי אֶת-הַחֲזוֹן) (καὶ ὁ στρατηγὸς βασιλέως περσῶν) was standing opposite me for twenty-one days. Then, behold, Michael, one of the chief princes (אִישׁ מְבֹרָךְ) (εἷς τῶν ἀρχόντων τῶν πρώτων), came to help me, because I had been left there with the kings of Persia (אֲנִי בְּלֹדֵי אֲנִי רָאִיתִי אֶת-הַחֲזוֹן) (καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς περσῶν).”

⁸ [Expositor’s Bible Commentary – “One who sees a heavenly being must be spiritually alert. And so Daniel was left to face this awesome messenger of God.”]

But what in the text requires that the responsibility for being able to see a miraculous dream from God be put on the shoulders of human beings? Even in the example of Paul on the road to Damascus, which was not a dream but when only he saw Jesus and heard his words, while his companions could only hear Jesus’ voice but saw nothing (Acts 9:7 – “The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one (οἱ δὲ ἄνδρες οἱ συνοδεύοντες αὐτῷ εἰστήκεισαν ἔννεοι, ἀκούοντες μὲν τῆς φωνῆς, μηδὲνα δὲ θεωροῦντες).” Was this because Paul, as a man hell-bent on destroying Christianity, was more spiritual than his companions because he had been fasting and praying, which enabled him not only to see Jesus but also to hear and understand what he was telling him? Does this really make sense? No. Therefore, the more reasonable conclusion in even Daniel’s case in chapter 10 is that God sovereignly chose to write His story of the creation at this point in such a way that only Daniel saw the vision and dream. Nevertheless, the other men with him, for whatever reason, became profoundly afraid of what was happening to Daniel and fled.

⁹ The hand of the man in Daniel’s mind. He imagines this man’s touching him.

¹⁰ [Again, EBC interprets the statement of the man as praise of Daniel for being so spiritually alert and attuned to God that He responds to Daniel by using him – “But observe that Daniel’s privileged status as one especially precious to God resulted from his complete absorption in the will and glory of the Lord to whom he had yielded his heart. His was the whole-souled devotion of a Paul or a Moses.”]

Instead, it is more reasonable to interpret this as the man’s saying that God has independently chosen Daniel to be someone whom He is giving a special role within the history of Israel in the same manner in which God chose Aaron to be a messiah, i.e., the first anointed high priest (Exodus 28-29, especially 29:7, “Then you shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him (וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הַשֶּׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה וַיִּזְקֹק עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּשְׁחָ וַיִּשְׁחָ אֶת-הַמִּשְׁחָה וַיִּזְקֹק עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּשְׁחָ) (καὶ λήμψη τοῦ ἐλαίου τοῦ χρίσματος καὶ ἐπιχεῖς αὐτὸ ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ χρίσεις αὐτόν))”.

¹¹ [EBC – “These verses give us a fascinating insight into the supernatural forces involved when a believer engages in protracted and earnest prayer. Though James 5:16 tells us that ‘prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective,’ we may not realize the mighty forces that are unleashed when we really devote ourselves to intercession before the throne of grace.”]

Another, more reasonable interpretation, is that God had chosen Daniel to appeal to Him in line with His promises for Israel, and now it is time not only to begin to fulfill the promise of the Jews’ return to the land, but also to give Daniel a peek into the future of their history.

Besides, this is a dream, and this man is coming to Daniel in his imagination.

אֲנִי מְבֹרָךְ (μετὰ τοῦ στρατηγού τοῦ βασιλέως Περσῶν).¹²

Dan. 10:14 “I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the last days (אֲנִי מְבֹרָךְ לְעֵמֶךָ בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים) (τί ὑπαντήσεται ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν), because the vision pertains to days yet to come (בְּיָמַי לְיָמֵי דָּבָר) (ἔτι γὰρ ὄρασις εἰς ἡμέρας).”¹³

Dan. 10:15 When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless.

Dan. 10:16 But, behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips. Then, I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who was standing before me, “O my lord, as a result of the vision, anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength.”¹⁴

Dan. 10:17 “For how can a servant of my Lord, this person, talk with my Lord, this person (הֲיִשָּׁר יְדַבֵּר עִבְדְּךָ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה לְדָבָר עִם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה) (καὶ πῶς δυνήσεται ὁ παῖς λαλῆσαι μετὰ τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ)? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me. Nor has any breath been left in me.”¹⁵

¹² [EBC – “The powers of evil apparently have the capacity to bring about hindrances and delays, even of the delivery of the answers to believers whose requests God is minded to answer. God’s response was immediate, so far as his intention was concerned. But ‘the prince of the Persian kingdom’ (v.13)—apparently the satanic agent assigned to the sponsorship and control of the Persian realm—put up a determined opposition to the actual delivery of the divine answer. While God can, of course, override the united resistance of all the forces of hell if he chooses to do so, he accords to demons certain limited powers of obstruction and rebellion somewhat like those he allows humans. In both cases the exercise of free will in opposition to the Lord of heaven is permitted by him when he sees fit.”] This perspective by the commentary is typical of Christians, who view God as existing basically on the same level as created beings, but only maybe a little higher. Therefore, for them, God is not the sole and transcendent author of all of created reality at every moment of time. He is its Creator at the beginning and intervenes in its history at certain chosen moments. Otherwise, the creation proceeds along its own path according to the free-will choices of those who have the ability to act independently of God.”

Instead, the Bible presents a completely different perspective, whereby God is the absolute origin of every aspect of the creation at every moment, including the typical misunderstandings of Christians, as He writes the story that He has planned and purposed from before He brought the creation into existence and started writing the story.

In the light of this, how is it best to understand what the man is saying in v. 12? The key is to continue interpreting what is happening to Daniel as a vision or dream that is appearing in his mind. It is not that “heavenly” evil spiritual forces are preventing “heavenly” good forces from delivering a message to Daniel.

¹³ Cf. Genesis 49:1 – Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים) (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν).” The Jews have always been told that there would be an end to the present realm and that they would play an important role in this end. In other words, God’s goal for the present realm is for it to come to end, in order to provide a transition to the eternal Kingdom of God. In Jacob’s statements to his sons, clearly Judah will play the most important role within Israel, to the extent that he will rule over the rest of them. We know the final ruler to be the Davidic King of the eternal Kingdom of God, Jesus of Nazareth, as the final and complete Messiah.

Thus, the man is telling Daniel that the message that he received from God three weeks ago is information mainly about the future of the Jewish people, leading right up to the end of the present realm. This is why it can make sense that 11:36ff. Can transition from Antiochus IV in the 2nd century B.C. to the man of lawlessness, whom the apostle Paul mentions in 2 Thessalonians 2 and who is still future to us.

¹⁴ There is another person in Daniel’s dream who now touches his lips, resulting in his speaking to the original man in linen. Daniel explicitly indicates that fear, anguish, and sadness have so overwhelmed him that he has no strength to speak.

¹⁵ The syntax is difficult, but it would seem that Daniel is viewing this “man” as an angelos of Yahweh, a theophany, at least in his dream. This man is a created representation of God, i.e., “my Lord,” for Daniel. And Daniel is wondering how it is that God would be willing to appear, even in a dream, and speak with a morally depraved human being such as Daniel. Of course, God’s appearing and speaking with morally depraved human beings has occurred before in OT history, and Daniel must be aware of this, the same way that he was aware of what Jeremiah had written about the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile (cf. Daniel 9:2). Nevertheless, Daniel is now experiencing first-hand what it is for God to appear to a human being who deserves His wrath and condemnation, and he cannot help himself but say, “How is this even possible?”

Dan. 10:18 Then, the one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me.

Dan. 10:19 He said, “O man of high esteem (אִישׁ־גָּדוֹל־כְּבוֹד) (“Ανθρωπος ἐλεεινός), do not be afraid. Shalom to you (שָׁלוֹם לָךְ) (ὁ γίαινε). Take courage and be courageous!” As soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, “May my Lord speak, for you have strengthened me.”¹⁶

Dan. 10:20 Then he said, “Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia (עִמְּךָ לְהִלָּחֵם עִם־שָׂרֵי־פָרְס) (μετὰ τοῦ στρατηγού βασιλέως τῶν Περσῶν). I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece (שָׂרֵי־יִוֹן) (στρατηγὸς Ἑλλήνων) is about to come.¹⁷

Dan. 10:21 “However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth (בְּכַתָּב אֱמֻנָה) (τὰ πρῶτα ἐν ἀπογραφῇ ἀληθείας). Yet, there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael, your prince.¹⁸

Because of both the impression that Daniel has gotten so far from the original message mentioned in v. 1 and God’s being willing to speak to him, Daniel admits that it has all sapped his strength from him.

¹⁶ The newly appeared one resembling a man has touched Daniel again in v. 18. Now the man in linen speaks, and Daniel gives him credit for strengthening him through the other man-like being. This same angelos of Yahweh addresses Daniel as a person whom God has specifically chosen to play an important role in the lives of the Jews.

¹⁷ Specific reference to both Persia and Greece, the latter being a kingdom that has not risen yet to dominate the Middle East the way it will under Alexander the Great.

¹⁸ The statement “what is inscribed in the writing of truth” (בְּכַתָּב אֱמֻנָה) (τὰ πρῶτα ἐν ἀπογραφῇ ἀληθείας) seems to be a reference not only to the vision, but also to the fact that this vision is from God, the transcendent Creator of the story of reality. There is no mention of anything actually being written somewhere in front of Daniel that constitutes part of the vision or dream. Thus, the man in linen is saying that God has “written” a story in His mind, and it is unfolding as He desires, and he is going to let Daniel in on what God has written with respect to the kingdoms that will eventually result in the man of lawlessness of 11:36ff.