
The Heavenly Vision

Daniel 10

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Heraclitus, an early Greek philosopher who lived around 500 b.c. in Greece maintained that strife and change are the natural conditions of the universe. He was known to say, “There is nothing permanent except change”.

Are we today able to identify with Heraclitus? We see this:

- In our families – I’ve been married for 17 yrs...
- In our jobs – current unemployment and rewriting job descriptions
- In our government – last 80 days
- In our culture – redefining marriage, parenting,
- In our world – N. Korea, China, Iran

Changes and challenges are steady for each of us. The temptation it seems to me that is to lose heart and give up. Changes, challenges, pain, perplexity = they all can avalanche upon our hope and dash it upon the rocks.

This is what the Jews faced as they were allowed to leave Babylon after 70 years and return to their home land; the Promise Land. Under the decree of Cyrus the king of Persia, the Jews were able to go back to the Land of God’s blessings. They were allowed to rebuild the Temple. All of this was promising. All of this pointed to God’s presence, God’s protection and God’s provision for their sins. Hope increased. Joy was in the air.

Now listen as I read Ezra 4:4f

4 Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Can you sense their despair in the midst of this crisis? Can you pick up from this reading how threatening the situation was? What does a crisis-stricken community of faith need? As this last vision unfolds for the reader, Daniel offers encouragement and hope for people whose hopes are dashed. The collapse of the political kingdoms does not mean that the LORD is less powerful than the “gods” of the nations, nor that the LORD ceased to care, nor that the LORD’s universal rule has been disrupted, nor that he has abandoned his intention to establish His kingdom forever. The Lord has not broken His promises. The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; the Lord who made His covenant with His people does not go back on His Word.

Rather, all those who do call upon him do have reason to put their hope in him. And yet, this kingdom hope presented in the last three chapters of Daniel may cause human faith to be stretched to its limits – for 5th century B.C. followers of God and for 21st century A.D. followers of Jesus Christ.

When we are stretched to our limits and wavering over assurance that God will keep his promise with His people who don’t desire his goodness what is it that we need?

I come to you this morning with a word from God. I submit to each of you that when you are weak, when you are scared, when hope seems to be but a word – in the midst of changes and challenges you need what we see in Daniel 10. You need: *The Heavenly Vision*.

The Heavenly Vision

The title for this morning's message is the topic of the text. *The Heavenly Vision* dominates this chapter and points its readers to the basic message. This message can be heard as we pay attention to three facets to *The Heavenly Vision*. <Open to Daniel 10 and pray for help>

1. Comes to a humble man

v.1-3

In v.1-3 we come to the first facet of *The Heavenly Vision*. We notice that ***The Heavenly Vision comes to a humble man.***

v.1-3 set the stage. Here we come to the setting for the last three chapters in the book of Daniel. In this introduction, we notice two things about Daniel. His location – where he is when he receives *the heavenly vision* and his condition – what state he is in when he receives *the heavenly vision*.

Notice this as I read v.1-3.

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. And d the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And e he understood the word and had understanding of the vision.2 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. 3 I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.

As we pay attention to Daniel we come to see what type of person it is to whom God gives *The Heavenly Vision* (see Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 11:1-13; James 4:8). Pr. 2:1-5 - An example of who gets it

*My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,
then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.*

Caring for God's plan

First notice Daniel's location. In v.1 we see that *The Heavenly Vision* was understood "in the third year of Cyrus". The first wave of Jews had returned to the Land according to 2Chr.36:22-23. Drop down to v.4 in our text for today and we will clearly see that Daniel had remained in Babylon. So the first question we need to ask is "why is Daniel still in Babylon"? He could have gone home two years ago. Why did he not accompany the returnees?

Perhaps he was too old to return? He likely is in his mid 80's. There was much difficulty and danger in returning to the Land. The work load was immense for the returnees. He may have just settled into Babylon as his retirement center and desired to die there. Or maybe he was of such importance that being in the presence of new leadership like Zerubbabel would not have helped move the work forward.

These are possible answers but better still, I believe Sinclair Ferguson is on to something. He writes, "What these leaders needed most, as Moses had needed before, was someone who would engage in the hidden but strategic work of prayer for the defense and advance of the kingdom of God."

Ferguson suggests that the reason for his staying behind was strategic. Daniel was involved behind the scenes in the work of rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple through humble prayer. In light of v.12, we understand that Daniel in Babylon was humbly praying for understanding. He humbled himself and set

his heart to understand what was happening back in Jerusalem. His mind was dominated not by his own purposes or comforts but by the purposes of God's kingdom.

The first characteristic of humility based on this passage is *a love and concern for God's plan*. Caring for God's plan is a trait of a humble man.

Crying for God's people

Second, to understand what type of person would receive *The Heavenly Vision* notice Daniel's condition. He is crying for God's people. Verse 2 tells us that he was grieving for 3 weeks. Verse 3 goes on with the description. It lets the reader know that he was fasting and praying throughout these three weeks. So my second question for us is this: Why fasting and mourning for three weeks?

Verse 12 once again is instructive. In that verse we see that he set his heart to understand. To understand what is the question. It doesn't appear that what he was trying to understand was the vision seeing that v.1 is a recap or summary of all that happened. No, his deep concerns were over God's people. The answer to why he is crying is seen in other texts that describe the small accomplishments of the returnees and the opposition to the building program in Jerusalem. Daniel was deeply concerned over God's plan and God's people.

The second characteristic of humility based on this passage is *a love and concern for God's people*. Crying for God's people is a trait of a humble man.

So we conclude that God's people needed help in the midst of crisis. They were thwarted and threatened as they left Babylon to come back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple and city. There they faced setbacks, sin, persecution and disappointments. They needed this vision of chapter 10 to regain strength and peace amid changes and challenges. And as observed from the first few verses *the heavenly vision comes to a humble man*.

2. Centers on the Heavenly Man

v.4-9

Having looked at the first facet to *The Heavenly Vision*, we now come across the second feature to this vision. This is found in v.4-9. We see that *The Heavenly Vision* not only comes to a humble man but more importantly it *centers on the Heavenly Man*.

This passage is completely incomprehensible apart from revelation and faith. This heavenly man has been viewed as an angel by some commentators. But the sheer similarities with Eze.1 and Rev.1 point me to conclude that this is none other than Jesus Christ pre-incarnate. The spiritual beauty, the breathtaking excellence, the heart-stopping majesty and yet the hope-producing mercy of Jesus Christ is found in v.4-9. Notice two aspects of Christ as I read v.4-9.

4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris) 5 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. 6 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 multitude. 7 And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. 8 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. 9 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.

The clothing of the Heavenly Man = High Priest = Mercy = your Lamb

The Heavenly Vision that came to a humble man centers on the heavenly man: Christ Jesus the LORD. Jesus can be seen in this passage first by noticing his clothing. The description "*Clothed in linen with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist*" points back to Leviticus 16 and the Day of Atonement ritual. In that passage Moses describes how and for what purpose Aaron the chief

priest was to enter the Most Holy Place. In Lev.16:4 we read “*He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist...these are the holy garments*”. The clothing in Dan.10:4 communicates priestly attire.

Now why this view of Christ and why now?

As we think back to Daniel 9 and his concerns for the mercies of God for his people because of their sins, we can see why Jesus discloses Himself as the High Priest who will lift up and take away the sins of His people. The people back in the Land facing unpromising circumstances can almost be heard asking, “will God keep his kingdom promises with people who don’t deserve His goodness”? Are we being punished for our sins? Will we need to pay for all these sins?

Oh, when they and we waiver under the weight of guilt and weakening in assurance, we need the heavenly vision that centers on the heavenly Man. We need to see afresh Jesus Christ and his high priestly work on the Cross (talk about mercy coming from Cross).

The countenance of the Heavenly Man = High King = Majesty = Your Lord

For those returned to the land after captivity, for those remaining in Babylon and living in various communities outside the land, for those whose work on the Temple was stopped, for those of us who crave for the kingdom now but must wait, for those of us who face difficult times that suggest God’s promise and presence have failed and become faint – for all of God’s people who are in the midst of changes and challenges we need *The Heavenly Vision*.

We have seen that the heavenly vision comes to the humble man. We have seen that the heavenly vision centers on Jesus Christ and his forgiveness. Now we come to one more angle on Jesus designed to increase hope. This fact of Him can be seen as we notice His countenance. His face is like lightening, his eyes like flaming torches – his whole body glows with indescribable magnificence. These descriptions are to point to Jesus as King. His majesty and not just his mercy must be emphasized. The power and glory we see in His face reminds us of Sinai where thunder and lightning indicated power.

As seen in v.7-8 this sheer power and authority frightened the people who were in its presence. The men with Daniel did not see the vision but were greatly alarmed. They fled leaving Daniel alone to experience the vision. Stunned by the vision of Christ but brought into a deep sleep by the words of Christ Daniel is about to be revived. He is about to regain sight and strength needed to understand the vision. The process of bringing a hurting man strength and peace are seen in the next paragraph.

3. Causes strength & peace for a hurting man v.10-21

To regain hope amid changes and challenges we have said that we need *The Heavenly Vision*. *This heavenly vision comes to a humble man, centers on the heavenly Man and lastly causes strength and peace for a hurting man*. In v.10-21 we come to the end of the message as we see the effects of the heavenly vision. We see that it ultimately causes strength and peace for the hurting man. Picking up the passage in v.10 we read:

10 And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. 11 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. 12 Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. 13 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, 14 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.”

15 When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute. 16 And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips. Then I opened my

mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, "O my lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength. 17 How can my lord's servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me."

18 Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. 19 And he said, "O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage." And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me." 20 Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come. 21 But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince."

In this section we see Daniel progressively brought back to himself and thus strengthened. Through the angel Gabriel that Christ sent to help Daniel, we see Daniel recover from the devastating affect of the presence of Christ. This recovery is seen in degrees.

In v.10 Daniel is brought back to his knees. In v.11 we see him brought back to his feet. And lastly, in v.19 we see Daniel standing and strong. By touching Daniel, calling him "o man greatly loved" and continuing to reassure him Daniel was revived.

Now this paragraph is thick with supernatural phenomena. I suppose we could spend many hours pondering and probing the awesome realities of the cosmic warfare. This is why tonight we want to make plain what engaging in spiritual warfare means to each of us. Daniel 10 is not the passage to understand that. We will use Ephesians 6:10-20 to get a good sense of our engagement in this battle.

For now, however, we don't want to miss the obvious flow of thought in this remarkable piece of Scripture. We have said that this text is talking about *The Heavenly Vision*. What we have noticed is that this heavenly vision comes to a humble man and centers on the heavenly man. Now in the closing section of this passage, we witness the results of the heavenly vision upon the humble yet hurting man. We see that the heavenly vision causes (ultimately) strength for the hurting man.

Daniel humbled himself to understand God's plan over God's people. He was greatly distressed over the unpromising circumstances in which God's people were living. Daniel set his heart to understand this and pray for help. At that point his words were heard in the throne room of God. God responded to his humble prayer by sending an angel to assist him in understanding God's plan for God's people. The reason why it took three weeks for Daniel to receive an answer to his prayer was not because God was slow. It was because of the great cosmic conflict in the heavenly realms. According to v.21, we notice the angelic forces of good and evil battle over whether or not humans will understand the "book of truth" (see Mark 4:15; 2Cor.4:1-4).

Here we are introduced to the prince of Persia, the prince of Greece and the Prince of Israel. All these references are referring to angelic forces. Here in this passage we come to see that over earthly kings and earthly empires we see heavenly influence; either evil in the form of demons and Satan or good in the form of angels sent by God.

The details of the rise and fall of earthly empires throughout the history of God's people will be taken up in Daniel 11-12 by Pastor Russ. What I aim to do with Daniel 10 is what Daniel 10 aims to do; namely to introduce the final conflict and to make clear that these dangerous and difficult conflicts for God's people reflect conflicts in the heavens and will continue to the end when God ultimately triumphs. In this passage we see the veil pulled back. We get a glimpse of both the air raid over God's truth and the aid for God's people. We see the invisible realities of the spiritual war. We therefore no longer must be afraid but rather have strength, courage and peace in changing and challenging times.

And so, in conclusion what we come away with is the fact that *The Heavenly Vision comes to a humble man, is centered on the Heavenly Man and causes strength for a hurting man.*

The take-away from this message can change our lives as we **believe**:

- ▣ that Biblical Christianity is supernatural,
- ▣ that there is spiritual war in the world in which we live,
- ▣ that this cosmic battle is over the Truth being understood by God's people,
- ▣ that God's people will go through much difficulty but will be delivered from much difficulty,
- ▣ that God answers His people and gives them strength when His people are caring about His plan and crying for His people,
- ▣ and that Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of all prophecy and the goal of all history!