

Daniel 10:1-11:1 “Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow” March 11, 2018

The interplay between word and touch in this passage is fascinating.

The appearance of this “man clothed in linen” causes Daniel to lose all strength (v8).

Then the sound of his words puts Daniel to sleep (v9).

Only the *touch* of “a hand” (whose hand? We don’t know!) aroused Daniel
and set him on hands and knees (v10).

Then the words of the man raise Daniel to his feet (v11).

But the words of the man result in Daniel becoming mute (v15)

Only the touch of “one in the likeness of the children of man”

upon Daniel’s lips restores speech –

although in his speech, Daniel says that “no strength remains in me,
and no breath is left in me.” (v17)

And so again, the *touch* of the “one having the appearance of a man”
strengthens him. (v18)

We live in a day where “touch” has been sexualized.

We can’t ignore that!

We can’t pretend that our culture doesn’t exist.

It does – and it affects us!

But we need to recognize that there is a power in *touch*

that is *not* sexual –

and *must not be perverted!*

Because there is a *danger* in touch!

The closer we get, the more harm I can do.

Think of the *kiss*.

In our day we tend to relegate kissing to romantic relationships –
or parents with small children.

But in scripture, the *kiss* has many functions.

There is the *holy kiss* – the kiss of peace –

that expresses the intimacy of the body of Christ.

But of course, the holy kiss – the kiss of peace –

also reminds us that Judas betrayed Jesus *with a kiss*.

The closer we get, the more harm we can do!

So it might seem that it would be better to keep everyone at arm’s length!

Stay out of my personal space!!

If I keep everyone at arm’s length – then I can’t get stabbed in the back!

If no one gets close – then I can’t get hurt!

But look at Daniel.

If no one gets close – then he will remain passed out on the ground.

Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is a great picture of this!
Literally giving *your breath* to someone else!

There is a positive place for *touch* that brings life and strength –
as when Jesus touched the leper –
or when we anoint the sick with oil.

We need to recapture that *non-sexual* approach to *touch*.

Chapters 10-12 consist of a single vision.
It's too much for one sermon –
but we need to see how it all fits together:

10:1 is the summary statement about the word.
10:2-11:1 is the lengthy introduction to the word.
11:2-12:4 is the “word” that was revealed.
12:5-13 is the final instruction to Daniel regarding the word.

1. “A Word Was Revealed” (10:1)

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.^[a]

The third year of Cyrus would be around 536 B.C.
This is two years after the vision of chapter 9.
It is the last date in the book of Daniel –
since Daniel is now well over 80 years old.

This final vision covers three chapters.
It is the longest and most comprehensive vision –
tying together themes from earlier in his life and ministry,
bringing them together in a grand conclusion.

Three times in verse 1 this is referred to as a “word.”
The KJV translated it “a thing” was revealed.
It's true that the Hebrew “dabar” has a broader meaning than just “word.”
You can translate it “word, thing, matter” –
as in “the matter was made known to the king.”
I think the ESV translators wanted you to see the connection between verse 1 (dabar)
and the eight more uses of “dabar” in chapter 10 –
(verses 6, 9, 11, 12, and 15).

Just understand that when verse 1 says that “a word” was revealed to Daniel,
that does not mean that there is some secret, special “word” that was revealed.

Rather, it refers to the *whole situation* that is revealed in chapters 10-12.
And the word was true – and it was a great conflict.

Not that Daniel had any difficulty in understanding (see the next line!) –
rather, the conflict refers to the subject matter of the word –
namely, a great *war!*

If you think that life is supposed to be about your personal peace and happiness
well, no – it’s not!

Whether you like it or not, you have been caught up in a great war between heaven and hell –
between the powers of light and darkness –
between the kingdoms of this age and the glorious kingdom of the Son of God.

“I wish it need not have happened in my time,” said Frodo.
“So do I,” said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times.
But that is not for them to decide.
All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”

If you pretend that there is no war –
then all you will do is hasten the victory of the powers of darkness.

And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision.
Sometimes Daniel has not understood what is happening.
But this time he does.

And part of the reason *why* Daniel understands
is because he is already engaged in that warfare.
He understands the relationship between the seen and the unseen.
That’s why...

2. “Understand the Words That I Speak”: The Vision of a Man (10:2-11:1) **a. Context: Daniel’s Mourning (v2-3)**

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.*

Notice that Daniel does not use the word “fasting” here –
but *mourning*.

As we saw a couple weeks ago, *fasting* in the Bible generally refers to abstaining from food.
It is entirely appropriate to abstain from other things as well –
or, as Daniel does here, to abstain for a time from *certain foods*.
At age 80, it would probably not do for Daniel to fast for three weeks!
So instead he abstains from all delicacies – as well as from meat and wine.

He only eats simple, plain food.

And he does not anoint himself – in other words, he does not use the oils and lotions that would have been used by ancient peoples in order to make himself smell better.

In our day, the equivalent would be not taking a shower and not putting on deodorant.

Jesus warns against doing your fasts in order to be seen by men.

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites,
for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret.
And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matt 6:16-18)

Jesus is not condemning Daniel.

Jesus is not saying that it is wrong to abstain from anointing your head.

Rather, he is saying that *point* of fasting is to be seen by God –

so if you are tempted to make an outward show to be seen by others,
don't make an outward show!

On the other hand, it is still useful to afflict your body
(without afflicting others!).

(So, for you teenage boys – if you are going to fast – that's great!

But unless you are going to spend your fast out in the woods,
you still need to use deodorant!)

But why is Daniel doing this?

Why does he spend three weeks in mourning?

We hear a bit of the answer in verse 12 –

“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.”

There is something that Daniel wants to understand.

It has been two years since the vision of chapter 9.

Cyrus's decree has gone out – and the people of Israel are starting to go home.

But already, by the third year of Cyrus, opposition has arisen –
the work on the temple has stopped – as Ezra 4 reports.

Daniel already knows that *this* is not the “great restoration” –
but he grieves over the afflictions of his people.

He sees the suffering of Israel – both in Babylon and in Jerusalem –
and so he afflicts himself in prayer and mourning –
longing to understand,
so that he might bring comfort to the afflicted!

Sometimes you may need to fast and pray and mourn for your *own* sin –
other times you may need to fast and pray and mourn so that you may comfort others.

b. “No Strength Was Left in Me”: The Appearance of the Man (v4-8)

⁴ *On the twenty-fourth day of the first month,*

On the 24th day of the first month...

What day is this?

Passover was from the 14th-21st of the first month –
so we are just after the Passover.

Indeed, Daniel may have chosen this time to mourn –
because there was *still* no temple –

no place for the Passover lamb to be sacrificed!

Therefore, he ate no meat.

Not even on Passover!

Imagine Daniel, sitting at his table on the 14th of Nissan –

breaking bread with his friends –

looking at the empty dish that would usually have held the Passover lamb...

Not this year, my friends...

Next year – at Jerusalem!

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

(but what a man it was!!)

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 a multitude.

Who is this?

Commentators debate over whether this is Gabriel again –
or if it is the pre-incarnate Christ (or some other figure).

Certainly the description of the man sounds a lot like Christ in Revelation 1 –
in Revelation 1 he is clothed in a robe,

he has a golden sash,

his eyes were like a flame of fire,

his face was like the sun shining in full strength,

his feet were like burnished bronze,

and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

So the description fits almost exactly the picture of Christ in Revelation 1.

(Indeed, Revelation 1 intentionally depicts Christ in the language of Daniel 10)

The chief reason why some think otherwise

is because in verse 13, the man says that the prince of Persia resisted him 21 days, and he needed the help of Michael, “one of the chief princes.”
And they think it unworthy of the Son of God
that he could be resisted by the prince of Persia.
How could the second person of the Trinity need *help* against the powers?

The simple answer is that God uses means.

C. S. Lewis’s portrayal of Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is on point.

Aslan will not act contrary to the Emperor’s magic – to his own magic.

When God gave dominion of the earth to Adam,
he committed himself *not to* exercise dominion over the earth –
but to entrust that dominion to Adam and Eve.

When Adam and Eve surrendered that dominion to the Serpent,
that meant that the earth was under the dominion of the devil.

And therefore, the Son of God could be resisted by the powers of the air.

According to his absolute power – he *could have* smashed them to bits!
But he had ordained that they would only be smashed to bits by the cross!

So he needed help.

We shouldn’t be surprised!

Our God has always been in the habit of humbling himself.

The incarnation was not the first time –
it was simply the most amazing time!

So, I think we need to say that this *is* the pre-incarnate Son of God
who appears to Daniel.

Indeed, the result of his appearance is very much like what happens to Saul
on the road to Damascus:

⁷ 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. ⁸ So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed,^[b] and I retained no strength.

The appearance of this man causes the whole world to turn upside down.
All strength is gone.

You sometimes hear people talk about “visions of Jesus” that they have had.

I don’t doubt that visions *may* happen.

But all of the *genuine* visions recorded in scripture
have a catastrophic effect on the one who sees them!

If someone says that he had a vision of Jesus while he was shaving –

and they just had a casual chat –
that wasn't Jesus that he saw!

Not only in the OT, but also in the NT –
when John sees Jesus – he fell on his face as one dead.
That's John – the beloved disciple – the one who reclined at table in Jesus' bosom.

If the *real* Jesus shows up in a vision – *you'll know!*
We like to think that Jesus is our friend –
and he *is* – but do not confuse “friend” with “buddy.”
A buddy is someone you can have a beer and casual conversation with.
A friend is something different.
A friend is someone who has your back.
A friend is someone you can rely on in any situation.

Jesus is *not* your buddy – but he *is* your friend!

c. “I Have Come Because of Your Words”: Word and Touch (v9-14)

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 rest of the chapter is going to be about getting Daniel into condition to hear the word!
Because the sound of his words fells Daniel to the ground.
Just the sound of his voice is enough to render Daniel unconscious!

You think that it's difficult to sit and listen to a sermon!
What if the preacher had a voice that could knock you out!

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.*

But notice how word and touch work together to strengthen Daniel.
First, a hand touches him and sets him trembling on hands and knees.
Then, he said to me,
“O Daniel, man greatly loved...”

The word describes and identifies us.
And here, the word gives Daniel the strength to stand –
albeit he is still trembling!
And notice also that while the touch of the hand set him on his knees –
Daniel did nothing in response to the touch! –

Daniel now takes the action of standing upright.

You see here how God's grace always comes first in giving life and strength –
but then God's word always calls for a *response* on our part!

And so *Daniel* stands up.

And

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."*

"I have come because of your words."

In other words, if Daniel had not humbled himself –
if Daniel had not spent those three weeks in prayer and mourning –
abstaining from meat and wine and delicacies –
then we would not have Daniel 10-12 in our Bibles.

Yes, it was God's purpose to reveal this to us through Daniel –
but only if Daniel actually *did* humble himself like this!

God uses means.

He *could* do everything all by himself without any help.
But *that* sort of deity would not have created *this world*.

Think of it.

He makes this beautiful world with all the creatures –
saying, over and over again, "It is good."

And then he forms the man of dust from the ground.

And then he says, "It is not good."

It is not good for man to be alone.

So God said "poof!" and there was woman!!

No.

That's not the way God works!

It never has been!

First, God set Adam to work naming the animals –
to see if a suitable helper could be found.

A helper is not an "assistant" – rather,

a helper is one who does for you what you could not possibly do for yourself.

Adam has been told to be fruitful and multiply –
he needs someone to *help* with that!!

Didn't God know that there was no suitable helper among the animals?!
Of course!
But he was teaching us about *how he does things*.
And then, after no suitable helper is found,
God continues to take the long way around
and puts Adam to sleep, and builds Eve out of his side.

From the beginning, God has emphasized the importance of *means* –
using ordinary means – using ordinary people – to accomplish his purposes.

Think of Mordecai's exhortation to Esther –
if you don't stand up to the King –
then, yes, God will save his people some other way –
but you and your father's house will perish!

We have no promise from God that *we* will be the means of deliverance!
But we *do* have the promise from God
that he will use ordinary faithfulness in extraordinary ways!

Think of Daniel – “left behind” in Babylon as the faithful have returned to Jerusalem.
He is too old to return.
He is too old to direct the rebuilding of the temple –
too old to lift the burdens or even manage the supplies.
What use is he?

He is the one who calls down angels from heaven to protect and deliver his people!
Sinclair Ferguson writes of people who “in their latter years, like Daniel himself,
have devoted themselves to fast, mourn, and pray for the church of God.” (192)

“Christian leaders like Daniel who devote their energy
to seeking the word of God and the face of God
rather than to seeking one-way tickets to Babylon might be people the affluent
and busy twenty-first century church would find difficult to understand.”

As one author notes: while “the church is looking for better methods,
God is looking for better men.
For people are God's methods.” (193)

And you can have confidence
that when you set yourself to pray for the coming of God's kingdom,
your God will hear and answer your prayers.
Augustine tells the story of his mother, Monnica,
who prayed diligently, with many tears, for the salvation of her son.
He was convinced that those prayers and tears
were a significant part of the reason he was saved.

d. “Be Strong and of Good Courage”: Touch and Word (v15-19)

But when Daniel hears these words,
he can say nothing:

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.

Again, the touch brings a measure of healing –
and finally Daniel speaks:

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.”

I have no strength.
I have no breath.
The vision has brought me pain and suffering.

But in the final response, we see word and touch brought together:

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.”

A second time he says, “O man greatly loved” –
but this time he adds, “fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.”

These are three of the most common things that God says when meets with his people.

Fear not.

Do not be afraid.

If God is for us, who can be against us?

There is nothing to fear!

What are you afraid of?

Daniel is afraid that his people are falling back into idolatry and sin.

Only a handful have returned to Jerusalem –

and they have given up on rebuilding the temple.

What are you afraid of?

Are you afraid that all your hopes and dreams may end in vain?

The things you wanted to do and to be may turn out to be pipe dreams?

Fear not!

O man greatly loved!

Peace be with you.

Shalom.

May it be *well* with you!

Be strong and of good courage.

You can have confidence that the one who stilled the storm by his word
will also work all things together for good –
for those who love him –
for those who are called according to his purpose.

And as he spoke to me,

I was strengthened – while the touch of our Lord brought healing to many,
it is in the end his *word* that brings life to the dead!

e. “I Stood Up to Confirm and Strengthen Him”: Why I Have Come (v20-11:1)

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. 11 “And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.

Verse 21 makes clear that our speaker is the primary one who does battle.

Michael, your prince – the “archangel” Michael –
contends “by my side.”

Scripture doesn’t say a whole lot about these beings.

Paul will speak of the principalities and powers –
and it is clear that the “prince of Persia” and the “prince of Greece”
refer not to human kings, but to spiritual powers.

Some have thought that each nation has a “prince.”

So, just as there was a prince of Persia and a prince of Greece,
there would also be a prince of Denmark and a prince of Uruguay.

But remember what we have seen about the “kingdoms” in the book of Daniel.

In Daniel 2, there was *one* image.

Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold –
but Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome
were all part of the same image.

Likewise in Daniel 7, the fourth beast – the fourth kingdom – was different.

You see lots of suggestions in Daniel
that all of these kingdoms are representative of the “kingdom of man” –
or even, the “kingdom of the devil.”

After all, when we hear about the “prince of Persia” and the “prince of Greece,”
the assumption seems to be that when Greece comes to *power*
the prince of Persia will go away.

There is a sense in which Daniel’s vision only allows for *one* prince at a time
who leads the opposition to the Son of God.

So in that respect, there is no prince of Denmark or prince of Uruguay –
and for that matter, there is no prince of America or Russia.

Why not?

Because when Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father,
he was enthroned *above* all principalities and powers.
The reason why Daniel's vision ends with something like the Roman empire
is because there *will be* no further prince of the power of the air.

Satan has been cast down.

As Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning."
As Revelation 12:7-8 says,
"Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon.
And the dragon and his angels fought back,
but he was defeated,
and there was no longer any place for them in heaven."

Sure, he still roams around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour!
But he does so on *earth* – no longer in the heavens –
no longer able to accuse the brethren before the throne of heaven!
His *dominion* has been destroyed!

Jesus now reigns.
The Son of God has come as the Second Adam
to overthrow the power of the devil,
so that he might establish *his kingdom* and *his dominion*
over all the earth and heaven.

Sure, there are still demonic powers at work behind the scenes in this age.
But their prince has been cast down.
The *war* (in that sense) was over in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
And demonic powers are not just manifest in the bizarre.
When we think of demons, we often think of witch doctors in African jungles.
But the demonic is just as likely to be found in a bank, in a courtroom,
or in a church that has gone astray from following Jesus!

When the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
resulted in serious harm to the church of Jesus Christ in those lands,
you could see the working of demonic powers to try to crush the people of God!
But when you see whole mosques being converted into churches –
you see the power of God's Spirit –
you see King Jesus ruling from his heavenly throne
to overrule even the folly of kings for the glory of his Kingdom!

3. "I Will Show You the Truth": The Word of the Days Yet to Come (11:2-12:4)
4. "How Long?" Final Instructions (12:5-13)