

Evergreen Presbyterian Church

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Feb. 23rd, 2025

Sermon Title: The Son of Man, Robed in Glory and Fear

Sermon Text: Daniel 10:1-11:1

Dan. 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. And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision.

Dan. 10:2 ¶ In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks.

Dan. 10:3 I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.

Dan. 10:4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris)

Dan. 10:5 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.

Dan. 10:6 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.

Dan. 10:7 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.

Dan. 10:8 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.

Dan. 10:9 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.

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

Dan. 10:11 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.

Dan. 10:12 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.

Dan. 10:13 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,

Dan. 10:14 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.”

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

Dan. 10:16 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.

Dan. 10:17 How can my lord’s servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me.”

Dan. 10:18 ¶ Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me.

Dan. 10:19 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.”

Dan. 10:20 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.

Dan. 10:21 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.

Dan. 11:1 ¶ “And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.

Main Point: God encourages his people, not by hiding the truth about the universe and spiritual warfare from them, but by pulling back the curtain and showing them the truth.

Outline:

1. The Vision of the Son of Man (10:1-8)
2. The Voice of the Son of Man (10:9-14)
3. The Victory from the Son of Man (10:15-21)

Introduction

Today’s passage is the last event in the book of Daniel that we can attach a date to. The third year of Cyrus means the third year after he conquered Babylon, which would mean today’s passage took place around 537 BC. By this point, Daniel is quite old, he’s now in his late 80s. Today’s reading is after the return of 50,000 exiles from Babylon back to the land. And you’ll notice, Daniel is not among them. The journey by road would be almost 1000 miles, and it is very probable that Daniel simply was not in the age and condition to make such a journey by this point in his life.

As the passage opens, verses 2-3 tell us that Daniel was mourning and abstaining from rich foods, and it looks like in general he has begun a form of ascetic self-denial. We don’t know what exactly he was mourning, or what prompted this, but we do know that his mourning is the occasion of the vision that comes to him here.

Today’s passage is the beginning of the end of the book of Daniel. Our reading today – the entire passage is really about Daniel’s encounter with the man clothed in linen, his reaction to this man, and the words of comfort that this man gives to

Daniel. Next week we will enter into the substance of the message that he has come to deliver to Daniel.

But here is the thing that I find so striking, and that I want us to focus on today as we're introduced to this man in linen: Here, God encourages his people, not by hiding the truth about the universe and spiritual warfare from them, but by pulling back the curtain and revealing the realities of spiritual conflict.

In particular today we see three things that will lead us through this passage: first, the vision of the son of man. Second, the voice of the son of man. Then third, the victory of the Son of Man.

Not every commentator believes that the man in linen here is Jesus Christ, but I hope that you will see what I see: that this fellow here who strengthens Daniel is in fact the second person of the Trinity himself. And in seeing Christ here, I want all of us to be encouraged when we find ourselves mourning and weak like Daniel is.

1. The Vision of the Son of Man (10:1-8)

First today, Daniel presents us with the vision of the son of man. The appearance is fearful and intimidating. One of the big question marks over this chapter for some is the identity of this Son of Man.

I will put my cards all on the table. I am quite convinced that this man clothed in linen is a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God. I was neutral on whether the Son of God was the fourth man in the furnace since I think the text just didn't give us enough to go off of. That is not the case here, however. There are several reasons why this text is pointing us toward seeing the Son of God here.

First of all, this description of the man in verses 5 and 6 are nearly identical to John's description of Jesus in Revelation chapter 1. To my mind, this is enough to remove all doubt. John, in Revelation, was directly telling us the identity of the person he saw by drawing his description from his previous appearance to Daniel in today's reading.

Second, look at the words that Jesus speaks in Revelation 1: Jesus places his hand on John and says, "Fear not" (Rev. 1:17). Then in Daniel, this person speaks to him

and stands him up and says, "Fear not, Daniel" (v. 12) after he also falls with his face to the ground.

An additional piece of evidence here is the similarity between this moment and what happens in Ezekiel 1. When Ezekiel sees a vision of the glory of God he also falls face down and the Lord himself also stands him back on his feet. Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 1 are not appearances by mere angels; they are both appearances by the Lord himself. This is good evidence that this figure here is the Lord himself, also, and not merely an angel.

Third, I would argue that there is a strong and obvious connection between the person Daniel sees here and the person Paul encounters in Acts chapter 9, where Paul's companions also do not see the vision. Whom does Paul see in Acts chapter 9? It's none other than Jesus whom Paul was persecuting.

I do know that there are a variety of interpretations about who this figure is here, and it may be that you aren't persuaded. I would say this: the message of the man in linen is not fundamentally changed based on his identity. I definitely hold out the possibility that I am wrong and that the man in linen here is perhaps an angel of God, but not the Son of God. I don't think everything else we are going to see here today hinges on all of us being totally agreed on this.

But I do take it for granted that this figure here *is*, in fact, a preincarnate vision of Christ. I want to clarify something. Jesus Christ is the name of the God-man who has a divine and human nature, who was born to the virgin Mary. Until the incarnation, it is proper to refer to the pre-incarnate second person of the Trinity as "the Son." And if I was going to be technical here I would just keep calling this figure the Son. But I'm going to be a little sloppy with my Trinitarianism and call him by his incarnate name here. Sometimes I'll call him Christ, sometimes I'll call him the man in linen.

Now, I need to point out one more thing about this vision. Daniel has a very different experience here than those with him have. Because while Daniel sees the vision of Christ, and he ends up being strengthened. But those who are with Daniel see nothing, and yet according to verse 7 they are filled with fear and trembling and they actually end up running away and leaving him completely alone. Now Matthew Henry points something out here:

“Many have a spirit of bondage of fear who never receive a spirit of adoption, to whom Christ has been and will be never otherwise than a terror. Now the fright that Daniel’s attendants were in is a confirmation of the truth of the vision; it could not be Daniel’s fancy, or the product of a heated imagination of his own, for it had a real, powerful, and strange effect upon those about him.”

Even Daniel – verse 8 tells us – was left with no strength after he saw Christ. Even the greatest of people cannot bear the divine glory. If we do, in any sense, it has to be God that enables us to do so.

There will be a day coming when we see God in some sense. Now, God in his divine nature does not have a body, but we will in some sense behold God.

1 John 3:2 says, “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”

Paul tells us that “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12).

What does that mean? To see the living God who has no body? I think Calvin is helpful here. He says this:

“We shall behold God, not obscurely, nor by reflection, but directly... We shall see God face to face, not by the sight of our bodily eyes, but by the knowledge which He will communicate to us.”

We won’t see him with the sight of our bodily eye, but with the eye of the soul.

Here’s how Jonathan Edwards put it:

“The sight of God’s glory and love fills the soul with admiration and joy. In heaven, the saints shall see God in the fullness of His majesty and beauty, and this vision will satisfy their utmost desires.”

That day is coming. If you are a child of God, this thought should fill you with incredible expectation and joy. We should rejoice even to think about it. To know that its fulfillment is on the horizon.

Now, does that mean that once we see God, that's it? We'll never be happier? Well Edwards says that in heaven we will see and receive more and more of God because there is no beginning or end to him. Listen to this:

“The happiness of heaven is progressive and has an infinite increase, because the saints will eternally see more and more of God's glory and beauty, and this will fill them with ever-growing joy.”

The joy of God which we will have when we see him where we are free of sin is one that never ends and always increases. Can you imagine being as happy as you've ever been, but finding out that there is more happiness to come? That's a tiny glimpse of what it is like to be in God's presence.

Might I say, that when you gather to worship with God's people you're getting a foretaste of that? It's hardly worth comparing, but it is at least a foretaste, an appetizer perhaps.

Perhaps you are weary yourself, right now, today. God wants you to know that he himself will strengthen you, and you will one day have your own heart completely purified so that you can see him as he is.

Now, there is something about this being Jesus that has troubled some commentators, and I want to take that up in our next point because it relates to something that he tells Daniel.

2. The Voice of the Son of Man (10:9-14)

This brings us to our second point, which is the voice of the son of man.

So after Daniel's companions run for the hills and Daniel himself falls on his face, Christ lifts him up and tells him that he is greatly loved, and because of this he has a message.

In verse 12 he says to Daniel that his prayers were heard immediately, but then he explains why there was a three week delay between when he began praying and when Christ appeared to Daniel. What has been going on?

He explains this:

“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. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me” (v.12-13).

So think about this: Daniel doesn't know anything about this before the Lord speaks. He knows nothing of this conflict between the man in linen and the prince of the kingdom of Persia. This Prince of Persia does indeed seem to be a reference to a spiritual entity that has some sort of regional presence in Persia that is preventing Daniel from being reached. It's hard to imagine that this prince of Persia being spoken of here is human since it seems that only a supernatural entity could delay the man in linen.

The picture that starts to appear at this point is that unseen powers actually do exert an influence and control over the kingdoms and governments of this world in order to bring harm and trouble on the people of God. There are forces at work that we scarcely can comprehend.

Verses 12 and 13 speak of Christ as being “withstood” for 3 weeks by the prince of the kingdom of Persia. So this is it. This the question for many readers which is, are we really to believe that anyone can resist the son of God? From what I've seen in the commentaries that I have, this is generally *the* chief reason why commentators believe this could not possibly be the Son of God. For how could anyone possibly withstand the Son of God?

Yet we also know that God's universe is one that is full of beings that are beyond our knowledge, and certainly that the cosmos are filled with strife, struggle, and warfare that is not merely human in its nature.

We also know that of course human beings can and do resist God. When Stephen preaches in Acts 7:51 he says this: “You stiff-necked people...you always resist the Holy Spirit.” Some people might think, “Wait a minute. How can anyone possibly resist the holy spirit? He's God.” Well Stephen says they don't just resist the Holy Spirit, but that they “always” resist the holy spirit. Why would this not be the case with a spiritual entity like this prince of Persia? I just see no theological problem at all with the idea that the prince resists Christ.

That does not mean that God cannot or will not ultimately overcome the hardness of the human heart, or that the Bible doesn't teach irresistible grace (which it does). Nor does it mean that the Son of God does not have the power to destroy or overcome his enemies (even this prince of Persia). He does, of course.

But it does mean that spiritual warfare is a both/and proposition. Spiritual beings resist God and make war against him and his anointed, and at the same time God ultimately sovereignly triumphs. None of these ideas are mutually exclusive.

Stephen shows us that it isn't inappropriate to speak of a sinner as resisting God. We do know that ultimately God can soften and change the sinner's heart, but we do little service to God when we downplay peoples' resistance to Him. And the same things are true of all spiritual enemies of God.

Spiritual wrestling and warfare are very real things. I think those realities make us uncomfortable because they aren't immediately rational and reasonable to us. They don't fit into a predictable and orderly vision of the universe (at least from our human perspective). Instead spiritual conflicts are invisible and harder to understand.

I think another factor here is that we are so used to thinking of the sovereignty of God in terms of direct control (the theological word we use for this is primary causation) that we often forget that God wills all that takes place in the universe, but that he normally uses secondary means to accomplish his ends. So he doesn't just decree that Daniel will be encouraged, but he sovereignly wills that there will be an incredible spiritual struggle that precedes Daniel's encouragement.

God doesn't simply will that Christ in the incarnation comes to earth and steamrolls the forces of evil. Instead God's sovereignty dictates that there will be a struggle – that actually Christ will come, and Satan will do battle against him – that Satan will tempt Christ, and that Christ will overcome temptation, and emerge sinless in that battle.

In other words, it is entirely in keeping with God's holiness and sovereignty that spiritual entities in this universe do make war against God and against his people. Even though Christ ultimately conquers his and our enemies, we also know that this victory comes at incredible cost.

Here is the challenge I would make for all of us: have we become so imbued with the spirit of rationalism that we have forgotten that the cosmos around us is, in fact, a place of conflict in which there really are enemies of God? Is it possible that we instinctively dismiss those things which are outside of our knowledge or our expectations?

We need to have such a vision of God such that we recognize that he is always free to simply will, on his own, apart from secondary means, to sovereignly destroy his enemies, and that he has the ability to do that. Think about Gideon and his army, and how he whittled down Gideon's forces to nothing before defeating Israel's enemies.

The assumption of those who think this man in linen is not God the Son is that there is no way the Prince of Persia could prevent the Son from coming immediately to Daniel.

But we also need to know that often God wills to do things in a way that you might call "inefficient." Think of what he does here: he moves his servant Daniel to pray for his people, and then he wills for the man in linen to come through great struggle and strife to bring God's answer and comfort. As Ralph Davis puts it, "Daniel prayed, and angels went to war."

God wills something to take place, but he also wills to use prayer and spiritual warfare as his means to accomplish it. There is great heavenly strife in this passage. That is not in conflict with God's sovereignty, or the identity of the man in linen.

Now here's my challenge: I'm not asking if you pray *as if* spiritual warfare is real. I'm not asking you to pretend or play *like* these things are real.

I'm asking a bigger question: because it is true that God wills to use our prayers and move heavenly armies, will you pray in light of that truth? I don't ask you to pray as if it's true. I ask you to pray in light of that truth.

If God were to move heavenly armies based on your prayers, would anything happen? Are you praying for him to move heavenly armies and to shake kingdoms and to conquer the hearts of mankind. Or do we pray such small prayers, such light

prayers that even if God answered them, very little would actually be different in our lives or in the world around us?

I'm challenging all of us – and I'm including myself here – to pray like souls are at stake, and like spiritual victories and losses are on the line, because God's word shows us that they are. He has willed to use our prayers as one of the means of accomplishing his grand purposes.

3. The Victory the Son of Man (10:15-21)

Third today we come to the Victory of the son of man.

I do wonder what Daniel makes of what Christ has just told him: this idea that there is conflict and trouble all around that is entirely unseen might even be frightening or troubling. So there's double trouble, right? You've got this man standing before you who is utterly terrifying on his own. And then you've got these unseen spiritual forces that are also absolutely fearsome.

I will never forget the series of dominions that fell in my own life as I became a Christian. I went from seeing the world as an empty and dark place to suddenly realizing that it is a very warm, personal, and wonderful place. I went from seeing myself as merely being a gathering of atoms to seeing myself and everyone around me as fearfully and wonderfully made, and seeing others as immortal beings who are beautiful and made in God's image. That's a big change. Perhaps you've experienced that change yourself.

But I also keenly remember the realization that the world is not just what I can physically see. Some of us may really struggle with this, but I found myself initially very frightened to know that demons are actually real, that Satan is not an imaginary being, and that there is very real darkness out there in the world around us.

I had a season where I actually became very fearful of spiritual beings. I had not fully grasped the victory of Jesus over the forces of evil yet. I had not appreciated what it meant that Jesus disarmed those principalities and powers around us.

Until we grasp the depth of the good news, we may be tempted to feel fearful of the very real spiritual darkness that is out there, because we have neglected the beauty and goodness of the light.

Part of the good news and comfort that the messenger has for Daniel is not that the fighting has ceased or that the trouble is over for God's people. Instead, look at how he wraps up this first part of his comfort before he begins his prophecy that we will look at next week.

He says in verse 20,

“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. 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.”

If I could put it quite simply, “I'm standing before you now to comfort you, but I have more and more conflict ahead. This isn't over.” The picture here of Christ shows us that our God is active in his conflict against his enemies and our enemies.

And we also see here that often the conflict is against entities that are very close to the seats of power. In this case, the man in linen is in conflict with one who is “over Persia.” Here's how Ralph Davis puts it:

“Dark powers encompass the king's palace in Persia. What a dreadful thought ... the government offices of a nation occupied by the forces of anti-God! We don't usually think this way. We have no trouble believing that incompetence and bungling are endemic to governments and political machinery, but we don't as easily think of suave and sinister spirits of evil lurking in the corridors of our congresses or shaping the policies of our parliaments.”

Here's the question: given this glimpse behind the curtain that Daniel is getting here, why shouldn't he despair?

Well look what happens. We probably would despair if we didn't know the man talking to Daniel in this moment and Michael, who is his ally. Not to mention Jesus' words in Matthew 26:53 where Jesus mentions that at any moment he could call twelve legions of angels.

If we did not know Christ... if we did not know of his power and his victory... if we did not know the very commander of the heavenly armies who can be trusted with these things, I do think we would be very frightened. And we would have every reason to be.

Yet what does God's word tell us? "[God] disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in [Christ]" (Colossians 2:15).

Christian, do not fear. Christian, do not tremble. If there is one message that Jesus is insistent upon preaching it is that continuous reminder that we hear all over the Scriptures: "do not fear." Remember the words that Jesus spoke in Revelation 1:17. There John also felt fear and lay flat like a man who had died, and Jesus responded to him. Do you remember what he said? John says, "He laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

Let's pray.