

CHAPTER 10

This chapter and the two next (which conclude this book) make up one entire vision and prophecy, which was communicated to Daniel for the use of the church, not by signs and figures, as before (Daniel 7 and 8), but by express words; and this was about two years after the vision in the foregoing chapter. Daniel prayed daily, but had a vision only now and then. In this chapter we have some things introductory to the prophecy, in the eleventh chapter the particular predictions, and Daniel 12 the conclusion of it. This chapter shows us,

- I.** Daniel's solemn fasting and humiliation, before he had this vision (v. 1-3).
- II.** A glorious appearance of the Son of God to him, and the deep impression it made upon him (v. 4-9).
- III.** The encouragement that was given him to expect such a discovery of future events as should be satisfactory and useful both to others and to himself, and that he should be enabled both to understand the meaning of this discovery, though difficult, and to bear up under the lustre of it, though dazzling and dreadful (v. 10-21).

☞ DANIEL 10:1-9

VISION NEAR THE RIVER HIDDEKEL


This vision is dated in the *third year of Cyrus*, that is, of his reign after the conquest of Babylon, his third year since Daniel became acquainted with him and a subject to him. Here is,

- I.** A general idea of this prophecy (v. 1): *The thing was true*; every word of God is so; it was true that Daniel had such a vision, and that such and such things were said. This he solemnly attests upon the word of a prophet. *Et hoc paratus est verificare — He was prepared to verify it*; and, if it was a word *spoken from heaven*, no doubt it is stedfast and may be depended upon. *But the time appointed was long*, as long as to the end of the reign of Antiochus, which was 300 years, a long time indeed when it is

looked upon as to come. Nay, and because it is usual with the prophets to glance at things spiritual and eternal, there is that in this prophecy which looks in type as far forward as to the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead; and then he might well say, *The time appointed was long*. It was, however, made as plain to him as if it had been a history rather than a prophecy; he *understood the thing*; so distinctly was it delivered to him, and received by him, that he could say he *had understanding of the vision*. It did not so much operate upon his fancy as upon his understanding.

II. An account of Daniel's mortification of himself before he had this vision, not in expectation of it, nor, when he prayed that solemn prayer ch. 9, does it appear that he had any expectation of the vision in answer to it, but purely from a principle of devotion and pious sympathy with the afflicted people of God. He *was mourning full three weeks* (v. 2), for his own sins and the sins of his people, and their sorrows. Some think that the particular occasion of his mourning was slothfulness and indifference of many of the Jews, who, though they had liberty to return to their own land, continued still in the land of their captivity, not knowing how to value the privileges offered them; and perhaps it troubled him the more because those that did so justified themselves by the example of Daniel, though they had not that reason to stay behind which he had. Others think that it was because he heard of the obstruction given to the building of the temple by the enemies of the Jews, who *hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose* (~~304~~ Ezra 4:4, 5), *all the days of Cyrus*, and gained their point from his son Cambyses, or Artaxerxes, who governed while Cyrus was absent in the Scythian war. Note, Good men cannot but mourn to see how slowly the work of God goes on in the world and what opposition it meets with, how weak its friends are and how active its enemies. During the days of Daniel's mourning he *ate no pleasant bread*; he could not live without meat, but he ate little, and very sparingly, and mortified himself in the quality as well as the quantity of what he ate, which may truly be reckoned fasting, and a token of humiliation and sorrow. He did not eat the pleasant bread he used to eat, but that which was course and unpalatable, which he would not be tempted to eat any more of than was just necessary to support nature. As ornaments, so delicacies, are very disagreeable to a day of humiliation. *Daniel ate no flesh, drank no wine, nor anointed himself*, for those three week's time, v. 3. Though he was now a very old man, and might plead that the decay of his nature required what was nourishing, though he was a very great man,

and might plead that, being used to dainty meats, he could not do without them, it would prejudice his health if he were, yet, when it was both to testify and to assist his devotion, he could thus deny himself; let this be noted to the shame of many young people in the common ranks of life who cannot persuade themselves thus to deny themselves.

III. A description of that glorious person whom Daniel saw in vision, which, it is generally agreed, could be no other than Christ himself, the eternal Word. He was by the side of the river Hiddekel (v. 4), probably walking there, not for diversion, but devotion and contemplation, as Isaac walked in the field, to meditate; and, being a person of distinction, he had his servants attending him at some distance. There he *looked up*, and saw *one man Christ Jesus*. It must be he, for he appears in the same resemblance wherein he appeared to St. John in the isle of Patmos,  Revelation 1:13-15. His dress was priestly, for he is the high priest of our profession, *clothed in linen*, as the high priest himself was on the day of atonement, that great day; *his loins were girded* (in St. John's vision his *paps were girded*) *with a golden girdle* of the finest gold, that of Uphaz, for every thing about Christ is the best in its kind. The *girding of the loins* denotes his ready and diligent application to his work, as his Father's servant, in the business of our redemption. His shape was amiable, *his body like the beryl*, a precious stone of a sky-colour. His countenance was awful, and enough to strike a terror on the beholders, for his face was *as the appearance of lightning*, which dazzles the eyes, both brightens and threatens. His *eyes* were bright and sparkling, *as lamps of fire*. His *arms and feet* shone *like polished brass*, v. 6. His *voice* was loud, and strong, and very piercing, *like the voice of a multitude*. The *vox Dei* — *voice of God* can overpower the *vox populi* — *voice of the people*. Thus glorious did Christ appear, and it should engage us,

1. To think highly and honourably of him. *Now consider how great this man is*, and in all things let him have the pre-eminence.
2. To admire his condescension for us and our salvation. Over all this splendour he drew a veil when he took upon him the form of a servant, and *emptied himself*.

IV. The wonderful influence that this appearance had upon Daniel and his attendants, and the terror that it struck upon him and them.

1. His attendants *saw not the vision*; it was not fit that they should be honoured with the sight of it. There is a divine revelation vouchsafed to all, from converse with which none are excluded who do not exclude themselves; but such a vision must be peculiar to Daniel, who was a favourite. Paul's companions were aware of the *light*, but *saw no man*, ~~400~~ Acts 9:7; 22:9. Note, It is the honour of those who are beloved of God that, what is hidden from others, is known to them. Christ *manifests himself to them, but not to the world*, ~~410~~ John 14:22. But, though they saw not the vision, they were seized with an unaccountable trembling; either from the voice they heard, or from some strange concussion or vibration of the air they felt, so it was that a *great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves*, probably among the willows that grew by the river's side. Note, Many have a *spirit of bondage to 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, or it had a real, powerful, and strange effect upon those about him.

2. He himself saw it, and saw it alone, but he was not able to bear the sight of it. It not only dazzled his eyes, but overwhelmed his spirit, so that *there remained no strength in him*, v. 8. He said, as Moses himself, *I exceedingly fear and quake*. His spirits were all so employed, either in an intense speculation of the glory of this vision or in the fortifying of his heart against the terror of it, that his body was left in a manner lifeless and spiritless. He had no vigour in him, and was but one remove from a dead carcase; he looked as pale as death, his colour was gone, his *comeliness* in him was *turned into corruption*, and he *retained no strength*. Note, the greatest and best of men cannot bear the immediate discoveries of the divine glory; no man can see it and live; it is next to death to see a glimpse of it, as Daniel here; but glorified saints see Christ as he is and can bear the sight. But, though Daniel was thus dispirited with the vision of Christ, yet he *heard the voice of his words* and knew what he said. Note, We must take heed lest our reverence of God's glory, by which we should be awakened to hear his voice both in his word and in his providence, should degenerate into such a dread of him as will disable or indispose us to hear it. It should seem that when the vision of Christ terrified Daniel the voice of his words soon pacified and composed him, silenced his fear, and laid him to sleep in a holy security and serenity of mind: *When I heard the*

voice of his words I fell into a slumber, a sweet slumber, on my face, and my face towards the ground. When he saw the vision he threw himself prostrate, into a posture of the most humble adoration, and dropped asleep, not as careless of what he heard and saw, but charmed with it. Note, How dreadful soever Christ may appear to those who are under convictions of sin, and in terror by reason of it, there is enough in his word to quiet their spirits and make them easy, if they will but attend to it and apply it.

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DANIEL ALARMED AND COMFORTED

Much ado here is to bring Daniel to be able to bear what Christ has to say to him. Still we have him in a fright, hardly and very slowly recovering himself; but he is still answered and *supported with good words and comfortable words*. Let us see how Daniel is by degrees brought to himself, and gather up the several passages that are to the same purport.

I. Daniel is in a great consternation and finds it very difficult to get clear of it. The hand that *touched him* set him at first *upon his knees and the palms of his hands*, v. 10. Note, Strength and comfort commonly come by degrees to those that have been long cast down and disquieted; they are first helped up a little, and then more. *After two days he will revive us, and then the third day he will raise us up*. And we must not *despise the day of small things*, but be thankful for the beginnings of mercy. Afterwards he is helped up, but he *stands trembling* (v. 11), for fear lest he fall again. Note, Before God *gives strength and power unto his people* he makes them sensible of their own weakness. *I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble*, ²¹⁰Habakkuk 3:16. But when, afterwards, Daniel recovered so much strength in his limbs that he could stand steadily, yet he tells us (v. 15) that he *set his face towards the ground and became dumb*; he was as a man astonished, who knew not what to say, struck dumb with admiration and fear, and was loth to enter into discourse with one so far *above him*; he *kept silence, yea, even from good*, till he had recollected himself a little. Well, at length he recovered, not only the use of his feet, but the use of his tongue; and, when he *opened his mouth* (v. 16), that which he had to say was to excuse his having been so long silent, for really he durst not speak, he could not speak: “*O my lord*” (so, in great humility,

this prophet calls the angel, though the angels, in great humility, called themselves *fellow-servants to the prophets*, ⁽⁶²¹⁹⁾Revelation 22:9), “*by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me; they break in upon me with violence; the sense of my sinful sorrowful state turns upon me when I see thy purity and brightness.*” Note, Man, who has lost his integrity, has reason to blush, and be ashamed of himself, when he sees or considers the glory of the blessed angels that keep their integrity. “*My sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength* to resist them or bear up a head against them.” And again (v. 17), like one half dead with the fright, he complains, “*As for me, straightway there remained no strength in me* to receive these displays of the divine glory and these discoveries of the divine will; nay, *there is no breath left in me.*” Such a *deliquium* did he suffer that he could not draw one breath after another, but panted and languished, and was in a manner breathless. See how well it is for us that the treasure of divine revelation is put into *earthen vessels*, that God speaks to us *by men like ourselves* and not by angels. Whatever we may wish, in a peevish dislike of the method God takes in dealing with us, it is certain that if we were tried we should all be of Israel’s mind at Matthew Sinai, when they said to Moses, *Speak thou to us, and we will hear, but let not God speak to us lest we die*, ⁽²¹¹⁹⁾Exodus 20:19. If Daniel could not bear it, how could we? Now this he insists upon as an excuse for his irreverent silence, which otherwise would have been blame-worthy: *How can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord?* v. 17. Note, Whenever we enter into communion with God it becomes us to have a due sense of the vast distance and disproportion that there are between us and the holy angels, and of the infinite distance, and no proportion at all, between us and the holy God, and to acknowledge that we cannot *order our speech by reason of darkness*. How shall we that are dust and ashes speak to the Lord of glory?

II. The blessed angel that was employed by Christ to converse with him gave him all the encouragement and comfort that could be. It should seem, it was not he whose glory he saw in vision (v. 5, 6) that here *touched him, and talked with him*; that was Christ, but this seems to have been the angel Gabriel, whom Christ had once before ordered to instruct Daniel, ⁽²¹⁸⁶⁾Daniel 8:16. That glorious appearance (as that of the *God of glory* to Abraham, ⁽⁴⁴⁷²⁾Acts 7:2) was to give authority and to gain attention to what the angel should say. Christ himself comforted John when he in a like case *fell at his feet as dead* (⁽⁶¹¹⁷⁾Revelation 1:17); but here he did it by *the angel*,

whom Daniel saw in a glory much inferior to that of the vision in the verses before; for he was *like the similitude of the sons of men* (v. 16), one like the appearance *of a man*, v. 18. When *he only appeared*, as he had done before (~~2702~~ Daniel 9:21), we do not find that Daniel was put into any disorder by it, as he was by this vision; and therefore he is here employed a third time with Daniel.

1. He lent him his hand to help him, *touched him, and set him upon his hands and knees* (v. 10), else he would still have lain grovelling, *touched his lips* (v. 16), else he would have been still dumb; again he *touched him* (v. 18), and put strength into him, else he would still have been staggering and trembling. Note, The hand of God's power going along with the word of his grace is alone effectual to redress all our grievances, and to rectify whatever is amiss in us. One touch from heaven brings us to our knees, sets us on our feet, opens our lips, and strengthens us; for it is God that works on us, and *works in us, both to will and to do* that which is good.

2. He assured him of the great favour that God had for him: *Thou art a man greatly beloved* (v. 11); and again (v. 19), *O man greatly beloved!* Note, Nothing is more likely, nothing more effectual, to revive the drooping spirits of the saints than to be assured of God's love to them. Those are greatly beloved indeed whom God loves; and it is comfort enough to know it.


3. He silenced his fears, and encouraged his hopes, with good words and comfortable words. He said unto him, *Fear not, Daniel* (v. 12); and again (v. 19), *O man greatly beloved! fear not; peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong.* Never did any tender mother quiet her child, when any thing had grieved or frightened it, with more compassion and affection than the angel here quieted Daniel. Those that are beloved of God have no reason to be afraid of any evil; peace is to them; God himself speaks peace to them; and they ought, upon the warrant of that, to speak peace to themselves; and that peace, that *joy of the Lord*, will be *their strength*. Will God *plead against us with his great power*? will he take advantage against us of our being overcome by his terror? *No, but he will put strength into us*, ~~8216~~ Job 23:6. So he did into Daniel here, when, by reason of the lustre of the vision, *no strength of his own remained in him*; and he acknowledges it (v. 19): *When he had spoken to me I was strengthened.* Note, God by his word puts life, and strength, and spirit into his people; for if he says, *Be strong*, power goes along with the word. And, now that

Daniel has experienced the efficacy of God's strengthening word and grace, he is ready for any thing: "*Now, Let my lord speak, and I can hear it, I can bear it, and am ready to do according to it, for thou hast strengthened me.*" Note, To those that (like Daniel here) have no might God *increases strength*, ^(231B) Isaiah 40:29. And we cannot keep up our communion with God but by strength derived from him; but, when he is pleased to put strength into us, we must make a good use of it, and say, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.* Let God enable us to comply with his will, and them, whatever it is, we will stand complete in it. *Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis — Give what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt.*

4. He assured him that his fastings and prayers had come up for a memorial before God, as the angel told Cornelius (^(440B) Acts 10:4): *Fear not, Daniel*, v. 12. It is natural to fallen man to be afraid of an extraordinary messenger from heaven, as dreading to hear evil tidings thence; but Daniel need not fear, for he has by his three weeks' humiliation and supplication sent *extraordinary* messengers to heaven, which he may expect to return with an olive-branch of peace: "*From the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand the word of God, which is to be the rule of thy prayers, and to chasten thyself before thy God, that thou mightest put an edge upon thy prayers, thy words were heard,*" as, before, *at the beginning of thy supplication*, ^(202B) Daniel 9:23. Note, As the *entrance of God's word is enlightening* to the upright, so the entrance of their prayers is pleasing to God, ^(480B) Psalm 119:130. From the first day that we begin to look towards God in a way of duty he is ready to meet us in a way of mercy. Thus ready is God to hear prayer. *I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest.*

5. He informed him that he was sent to him on purpose to bring him a prediction of the future state of the church, as a token of God's accepting his prayers for the church: "*Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? If thou knewest on what errand I come, thou wouldst not be put into such a consternation by it.*" Note, If we rightly understood the meaning of God's dealings with us, and the methods of his providence and grace concerning us, we should be better reconciled to them. "*I have come for thy words* (v. 12), to bring thee a gracious answer to thy prayers." Thus, when God's praying people call to him, he says, *Here I am* (^(280B) Isaiah 58:9); *what would you have with me?* See the power of prayer, what glorious things it has, in its time, fetched from heaven, what strange discoveries! On what errand did this angel come to Daniel? He tells him (v. 14): *I have come to*

make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days.

Daniel was a curious inquisitive man, that had all his days been searching into secret things, and it would be a great gratification to him to be let into the knowledge of things to come. Daniel had always been concerned for the church; its interests lay much upon his heart, and it would be a particular satisfaction to him to know what its state should be, and he would know the better what to pray for as long as he lived. He was now lamenting the difficulties which his people met with in the present day; but, that he might not be offended in those, the angel must tell him what greater difficulties are yet before them; and, if they be *wearied* now that they only *run with the footmen, how will they contend with horses?* Note, It would abate our resentment of present troubles to consider that we know not but much greater are before us, which we are concerned to provide for. Daniel must be made to know what shall befall his people *in the latter days* of the church, after the cessation of prophecy, and when the time drew nigh for the Messiah to appear, *for yet the vision is for many days*; the principal things that this vision was intended to give the church the foresight of would come to pass in the days of Antiochus, nearly 300 years after this. Now that which the angel is entrusted to communicate to Daniel, and which Daniel is encouraged to expect from him, is not any curious speculations, moral prognostications, nor rational prospects of his own, though he is an angel, but what he has *received from the Lord*. It was the *revelation of Jesus Christ* that the angel gave to St. John to be *delivered to the churches*,  Revelation 1:1. So here (v. 21): *I will show thee what is written in the scriptures of truth*, that is, what is fixed in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The *decree of God* is a thing written, it is a *scripture* which remains and cannot be altered. *What I have written I have written*. As there are scriptures for the revealed will of God, the letters-patent, which are published to the world, so there are scriptures for the secret will of God, the close rolls, which are *sealed among his treasures*, the book of his decrees. Both are *scriptures of truth*; nothing shall be added to nor taken from either of them. The *secret things belong not to us*, only now and then some few paragraphs have been copied out from the book of God's counsels, and delivered to the prophets for the use of the church, as here to Daniel; but they are the *things revealed*, even the *words of this law*, which belong *to us and to our children*; and we are concerned to study what is written in these *scriptures of truth*, for they are things which *belong to our everlasting peace*.

6. He gave him a general account of the adversaries of the church's cause, from whom it might be expected that troubles would arise, and of its patrons, under whose protection it might be assured of safety and victory at last.

(1.) The *kings of the earth* are and will be its adversaries; for they set themselves against the Lord, and against his Anointed, ~~101~~ Psalm 2:2. The angel told Daniel that he was to have come to him with a gracious answer to his prayers, but that the *prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood him one and twenty days*, just the three weeks that Daniel had been fasting and praying. Cambyses king of Persia had been very busy to embarrass the affairs of the Jews, and to do them all the mischief he could, and the angel had been all that time employed to counter-work him; so that he had been constrained to defer his visit to Daniel till now, for angels can be but in one place at a time. Or, as Dr. Lightfoot says, This new king of Persia, by hindering the temple, had hindered those good tidings which otherwise he should have brought him. The kings and kingdoms of the world were indeed sometimes helpful to the church, but more often they were injurious to it. "When *I have gone forth* from the kings of Persia, when their monarchy is brought down for their unkindness to the Jews, then *the prince of Grecia shall come*," v. 20. The Grecian monarchy, though favourable to the Jews at first, as the Persian was, will yet come to be vexatious to them. Such is the state of the church-militant; when it has got clear of one enemy it has another to encounter: and such a hydra's head is that of the old serpent; when one storm has *blown over* it is not long before another rises.

(2.) The *God of heaven* is, and will be, its protector, and, under him, the angels of heaven are its patrons and guardians.

[1.] Here is the angel Gabriel busy in the service of the church, making his part good in defence of it twenty-one days, *against the prince of Persia, and remaining there with the kings of Persia*, as consul, or liege-ambassador, to take care of the affairs of the Jews in that court, and to do them service, v. 13. And, though much was done against them by the kings of Persia (God permitting it), it is probably that much more mischief would have been done them, and they would have been quite ruined (witness Haman's plot) if God had not prevented it by the ministration of angels. Gabriel resolves, when he has despatched this errand to Daniel, that he will return *to fight with the prince of Persia*, will continue to

oppose him, and will at length humble and bring down that proud monarchy (v. 20), though he knows that another as mischievous, even that of Grecia, will rise instead of it.

[2.] Here is Michael our prince, the great protector of the church, and the patron of its just but injured cause: *The first of the chief princes*, v. 13. Some understand it of a created angel, but an archangel of the highest order, ^{<3046>}1 Thessalonians 4:16; ^{<6119>}Jude 1:9. Others think that *Michael the archangel* is no other than Christ himself, the *angel of the covenant*, and the Lord of the angels, he whom Daniel saw in vision, v. 5. He *came to help me* (v. 13); and there is *none but he that holds with me in these things*, v. 21. Christ is the church's prince; angels are not, ^{<3015>}Hebrews 2:5. He presides in the affairs of the church and effectually provides for its good. He is said to *hold with the angels*, for it is he that makes them serviceable to the *heirs of salvation*; and, if he were not on the church's side, its case were bad. But, says David, and so says the church, *The Lord takes my part with those that help me*, ^{<1307>}Psalm 118:7. *The Lord is with those that uphold my soul*, ^{<3504>}Psalm 54:4.