



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 26th November 2017

by Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Daniel 10:1-10

Subject: Chapter 10, Part 31 – Mature Daniel

This last section of Daniel's book was written in Hebrew which emphasizes that this vision is primarily regarding the Jewish people. In the first 7 verses, the following questions are answered for us, who, where, when, and why. Daniel dates this vision in the third year of Cyrus. Daniel tells us of his location where this vision took place – the River Tigris. Daniel gives us the location in a general sense of where he is by pointing to the River Tigris. A river which has its origins in Turkey, in fact the river commences from Lake Hazar which flows right down to Iraq, as it does so, it passes Nineveh down to Kuwait and goes into the Persian Gulf. It measures 1850 kilometres. In Daniel's time, it was free flowing and very powerful, at times the volume of water would flood the banks and destroy little hamlets built close by. It was used for transport and trade and the quickest way to travel, but not without danger. It was one of the mightiest known rivers then. This is Daniel's second vision by water! Do you remember which was the first one or where can we find it? (Answer: Chapter 8:2).

At this stage, Daniel was an old man, probably in his 80s and retired from official office. The date that Daniel gives us at the beginning is very important. The Holy Spirit leaves nothing to chance. The reason for pointing this out is simply to note that some scholars in the past believed that Daniel was a book written in the 2nd Century BC and believed it was the product

of the Maccabean age. They questioned the prophecies, as they believed that the book was so accurate on the Kingdom take overs that it had to have been written by someone who knew their history, they questioned the inerrancy of Scripture and they believed also that Daniel went back to Jerusalem. We could speak here about how archaeology alone has put these thoughts to rest by discoveries in the last decade but let's just keep to scripture for now. Here in these opening verses we can see not only is it the same Daniel which Jesus endorsed as a prophet but also, he stayed in Mesopotamia even after many of his people had return to build the temple in Jerusalem two years after Cyrus had given the decree which we read about in Ezra 1:1, that states that the decree was given in the first year of Cyrus' reign.

Why do you think Daniel did not go back with them? We just don't know. We could surmise that it could have been for various reasons such as his age, but we just don't know.

Verse 2 tell us that Daniel was mourning for three weeks. While not specifically stated what he was mourning, we may presume that Daniel was in mourning of his people as he has been found to do so through out this book, for example chapter 9 verse 2. Also, I'm sure Daniel must have received reports back from Jerusalem as the temple construction was underway that the project was stopping and starting. Things at this point where not going well as expected. No doubt this would have deeply troubled Israel's prayer warrior even though he knew that God was fulfilling his word of bringing the people out of captivity.

We know the time of year as he tells us that the date was the 24th day of the first month. This means that it was the month of Nisan which is the time that the Jews celebrate the Passover on the 14th day of the month. This, as you may already know, is about their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. Yes, it should have been a time of celebration but for Daniel it was instead a time of mourning, praying and fasting.

Paul like Daniel, centuries later expressed the same sentiment of concern for the people of Israel in Romans 11:15.

"For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

The people of Israel, then and now, are inextricable linked to the true and living God, this is very clear in both the Old and New Testaments.

While Daniel was at the river he had a heavenly encounter, and writes about his own response within this experience in a very honest way. How we response to situations, be it natural or supernatural, tells us an awful lot about our character. This goes without saying for Daniel too. So, before we look at his response, it would be wise to look at Daniel as he had matured in age, but did he also mature in the Lord?

Daniel had a life time of experiences of God's wonderful providential care and supernatural intervention. He witnessed God's hand at work in so many and varied situations. He was brought to Babylon as a noble captive by the King and throughout his unique life, he went from Apprentice to Prime Minister and not just once, he held high office for most of his career. That was not just brains and charm but it was God's blessings. He witnessed the power of God at first hand and the Lord's amazing grace in the heart of pagan kings. We are not talking about nice men who were open to the Gospel and whatever this Jewish man thought of, but they were terrible tyrants who had blood dyed hands and hearts literally like the beasts as described in his visions by God Himself. He also had angelic experiences such as in the Lion's Den and when he spoke with Gabriel. Daniel had received three direct revelations from God about the future, each of them telling him of the terrible things that are going to happen to his people.

In life, he was a "winner", he had made it, and not only had he made it but it was to the top of his game. We know that success can change people. We know that it can in fact destroy them. You don't have to win the lotto just change your address to say Blackrock Road, and the timid mouse can become the terrible monster. Without the centrality of Christ in your life and the presence of the Holy Spirit, you and I would be no different, let me rephrase that, we should be different. I know believers that have issues due to their success and I'm sure you know some as well. Daniel's life had many lessons and we have looked at only some. Yet here we find Daniel in chapter 10 one of those few genuine people, still resolute in the "faith" he developed as a student in all places - Babylon. Do you see the sensitivity, spirituality, caring, and loving heart, that he matured into? He did not become detached with age, with disappointment, with the up's and downs of life, and there were many.

In chapter 10, it's another point in Daniel's life when he humbled himself to seek the Lord. He knew that the Lord is Sovereign and has the answers. He knew that he needed to

draw **close to God and** drawing close to God is one of the most important truths you can lay hold of, as a believer. It's not solely about knowledge of the Bible and all the doctrines as important as they are, sure you can acquire all those things by simply applying yourself in study, but not a relationship, not a living and lasting and meaningful relationship with God. It's relationship with God that not only reaches your heart personally and impacts your character to the point that Godly changes occur, but it reaches out in ways that demonstrates to others that you are a new creation in Christ.

There are many people in the Bible who walked with the Lord, and there are two men of whom those very words are used. We read that 'Enoch walked with God' (Genesis 5:24) and a little later that 'Noah walked with God' (Genesis 6:9). What a lovely phrase to describe the Christian life! Could you describe your Christian life honestly like this? Walking, talking, listening, obeying? It reminds us immediately that the Christian life is not a matter of slavishly following rules or rituals, but one of personal experience and relationship. It is a walk with God. Of course, there is a need to submit to God's doctrines, which are the unchangeable truths of scripture, His disciplines and His demands, but even in doing so, we must not lose sight of the fact that the Christian life is essentially a living relationship with God day by day. Remember James 4:8?

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

'Draw near to God'; The Amplified Bible translates this 'Come close to God', and these words are written to Christians. The point to emphasise here is that while every Christian is eternally secure, there is a constant, daily need to 'draw near to God'. It is not something that happens automatically. We are not computerised into maturity. No amount of knowledge or service can guarantee it. Our communion must be cultivated. Take the illustration of marriage. People get married in a moment of time, but if that marriage is going to succeed the marriage bond needs to be cultivated. It needs to be worked at, or the relationship will cool. This is why the Psalmist says

'It is good for me to draw near to God' (Psalm 73:28),

and why the Bible exhorts

'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith' (Hebrews 10:22).

The daily prayer of every Christian should be in the spirit of Mrs C. H. Morris's hymn -

*“Nearer, still nearer, close to Thy heart,
Draw me, my Saviour, so precious Thou art;
Fold me, O fold me close to Thy breast,
Shelter me safe in that haven of rest.”*

Here, is a definite, specific and continual command for us to draw near to God. We are not just to assume that because we belong to an evangelical church, because we hear sound ministry of the Word, because we go through the ritual of a quiet time every day, because we read the Bible, or even go to prayer meetings, that we are automatically making progress in the Christian life. Progress in the Christian life is never automatic. Progress is a matter of cultivated communion, read, mediate, listen and personal application.

Let us now look introspectively. What is our character like? Is it based on biblical principle? Is it based on a Christian worldview? Has it grown? Have we matured? Are we the same as last year spiritually and if you answer yes to that, you really need to ask yourself why? What is stopping you growing? Spiritual fatigue? Not getting the right balance in your personal study? Are you going through spiritual warfare and not too sure what is happening or what to do? Or maybe it's a little bit more human than that, you just couldn't be bothered, too busy, don't feel like you are brainy enough, past hurts? What are you allowing the devil to use to stop you growing and being effective? Don't you realise that the rapture could happen any time? Don't you realise you could be called home at any time? What will be your account to God, not to man, forget about other people, we've all got our own problems, but what will your conversation be like with God face-to-face, will you have regret for not maturing? Don't you realise that you are missing out the blessings of God! Yes, I said blessings, for as we draw close to God, and God close to us, we get to see things in a whole new way and life may not necessarily become smother but it will become richer. Just ask those who are growing and they will encourage you in the way God works!! And if you are going through spiritual warfare, there is hope! Jesus has won the war and will be with you as you wrestle. We'll be looking at this subject next week.

Spending time with the Lord is precious. Daniel had a full agenda supplied by his position in court but he also had his personal priority's and spiritual principles that he lived by, and was blessed. In fact, it was attention to his private life that assisted him in his public life. He never

brought something from the world to help him in his spiritual life it was the other way around. Today there is more of the world in the church than the church in the world. They are copying the wrong template for real success. Spirit fullness as defined in Galatians 5:22-25 is now looked at very differently.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

Many believers think this is spiritual snobbery, imagine! All because those who live by the word want to be imitators of Jesus, as bible believing Christians we are called to be. Some people think those who want more of God in their lives are spiritual snobs and should not be taken seriously! In fact, to seriously practice the Word of God, they say, only separates you from most other “Christians” and the world? Forgive me, but, is that not the purpose!

Daniel's character in chapter 10 shows us his maturity and that he was a caring man. He cared a great deal for his nation to the point that he mourned, prayed and fasted for his people. He wanted God’s perspective and God’s solutions. He wasn’t sitting back in retirement but busy interceding for his people. There is always work to be done in God’s Kingdom, no retirement plan there!

As he was down by the river, we see that in verse 5, the lovely expression “I lifted my eyes and looked”. Cast down is not a good place to be for anyone. Daniel senses the moment and looks up and sees. It reminded me of Psalm 121:1,

“I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come?”

Actually, it’s not just the physical eyes but the heart with its focus on someone Greater.

Psalm 123:1 - ***“Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens.”***

Other verses include Isaiah 40:26, John 11:41, John 17:1 and Acts 7:55.

Focus on God, and not the problems, for what we focus on tends to grow bigger. Daniel focused on God, not his problems and look how God brought him through situation after situation, how encouraging is this for us!

What led Daniel into his 21 days of prayer and fasting was that he wanted to understand, and so he humbled himself before God. That is the way the heavenly world evaluated his attitude. Daniel's life had been spent with proud men whom God had humbled. God did not need to bring Daniel down to humble reality; he had humbled himself. We all detest false humility - a cloak of assumed lack of pride that is not genuine. It is possible for us, however, to humble ourselves in a genuine way that does not involve hypocrisy. Indeed, it is expected of Christians. The apostle Peter writes:

“Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility towards one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties upon him, because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:5-7)

It has to do with our mind-set and our attitude towards others. Instead of regarding ourselves as more important than others, we are to consider others before ourselves.

Daniel had walked his whole life with kings and emperors. It had not gone to his head. In God's eyes - and that is what counts - he was still a humble man and the heavenly world was watching him. The moment Daniel started his three-week fast to wait on God, the other world responded, and a messenger was detailed to take a message to him.

There was a certain man which he described his appearance, and he done so with great detail in verses 5 and 6. If you were asked who this person might be, there are a few conjectures, some say it could be Gabriel again, others say it might be another angel which I believe it was due to verses further down in the chapter when it says that he needed the angel Michael's help and some says that it could even be Jesus as they compare it with Revelation 1 verses 12-17. John had a similar vision and experience and like Daniel, John received his vision while in the Spirit. The experience transcends the bounds of normal human apprehension.

Daniel explains what happened to his companions which reminds of a similar experience Paul had in Acts 9:1-9. The men with Daniel did not see or hear anything but a great fear came upon them so much so that they fled and hid. Daniel expressed what happened to him in the presence of this man from heaven. There is a constant fact established in Scriptures when heavenly beings appear, there is fear and trembling, but when

God's presence is realised, the people fall down in humility and repentance is sought immediately. John's experience of the risen Saviour, for instance, which we read of in Revelation 1:17a,

“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man”

This is very different than we see in many modern settings. John's experience with the glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration more than six decades earlier (cross reference, Matthew 17:6) was similar to that which he experienced on Patmos. He was overwhelmed with terror at the manifestation of Christ's glory and fell at His feet like a dead man. Such fear was standard for those few who experienced such unusual heavenly visions. When an angel appeared to Daniel, he reported that

“no strength was left in me, for my natural colour turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength.... and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground” (Dan. 10:8-9; cross reference Daniel 8:17).

Overwhelmed by the vision of God that he saw in the temple, Isaiah cried out,

“Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).

Ezekiel saw several visions of the Lord's glory and his response was always the same: he fell on his face (Ezekiel 1:28; 3:23; 9:8; 43:3; 44:4). After the Angel of the Lord appeared to them and announced the birth of Samson,

“Manoah [Samson's father] said to his wife. We shall surely die, for we have seen God” (Judges 13:22).

Job had a similar reaction after God spoke to him:

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore, I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6).

After witnessing the terrifying calamities that followed the opening of the sixth seal, unbelievers during the Tribulation will cry out in terror

“to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’ (Revelation 6:16-17).

Daniel’s reaction to the vision before him was such that he described the physical condition which he experienced was so overwhelming that he passed out, not fainted, but went into a deep sleep on the ground (verse 9). The detail is amazing here but he is not left lying there, verse 10 tells us that “a hand reached out” and changed his position.

In stark contrast to the silly, frivolous, false, and boastful claims of many in our own day who claim to have seen God, the reaction of those in Scripture who genuinely experienced God’s presence was inevitably one of fear. Those brought face-to-face with the blazing, holy glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, are terrified, realizing their sinful unworthiness to be in His holy presence. Summarizing the proper response to God’s holiness and majesty, the writer of Hebrews exhorts believers to

“offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28-29).

People similarly today often speak about encountering angels or angels speaking with them to give them messages to guide them, this is very dangerous. When we look at the Scriptures we see the records of how people interact with angelic beings and also, we find out about their true nature. Here, I am talking about heavenly angels not fallen ones.

Daniel’s response is a lot more intense in chapter 10 than when Gabriel came to him in chapter 9, which had really to do with the information the vision was showing him. In verses 10 to 12 we see his reaction and also the initial interaction with the heavenly being—

“Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands. And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

Then he said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.”

The angel's response to Daniel is very similar to Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds to name but a few, don't you think.

Have you ever given much thought to heavenly angels? Well firstly,

- They are created beings by God (even the fallen ones) – Ephesians 1:20-21, Colossians 1:16.
- They saw the world created – Job 38:4-10 (they are not eternal, just earlier)
- They have bodies – 1 Corinthians 15:38-40,44. Luke 20:34,36. Remember in the old testament that they took the hands of people, such as Lot and they ate with Abraham (Genesis)
- We are told that we can entertain them unawares – Hebrews 13:2, Genesis 19, Judges 13. Would this change how you treat strangers?
- They are Guardians – Matthew 18:10 tells us that every child has a guardian angel.
- They are very powerful – 2 Kings 19:35, Isaiah 37:38
- The desire to learn – 1 Peter 1:12

They have a ministry – which involves worshiping, doing God's bidding and ministering to the saints and they are also involved in spiritual warfare.

They have assignments which we powerfully observe not just in the old testament but also in the new testament. For example, they announced the coming and birth of Jesus (Luke 2), they were with Jesus to minister to him after his time in the wilderness being tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:11-11), they were there at the Resurrection (Luke 22:39), at the Ascension (Acts 1:10-11) and they will be there at the return of Jesus (Matthew 13:39, 24:31).

The heavenly being here, in this vision told Daniel, once again that he was greatly loved. How amazing, not once but twice in his life time. I believe the most wonderful thing any human can hear is that he or she is loved by God. It brings stability and hope into the worst of situations.

Daniel was told this nearly 26 centuries ago, but anyone of us can know it today. A heavenly Messenger greater than the one Daniel encountered came to our world, God Himself, incarnate in His Son, Jesus Christ the Lord. He came personally to tell us the "good news" see John 3:16. He came not just to tell us that He love us but to show it. Each and every one, who has or will

respond to Him and trusted in Him for Salvation will enjoy the friendship and love of God eternally. They can hear the voice of God himself saying “O man or woman, greatly loved”.

There are times when those of us who are believers may find the way difficult; we are faced with apparently unanswerable questions and insoluble difficulties - many of them to do with the flow of life, even the spiritual battles we go through. It is at these times that we most need reassurance that there is a world beyond this one; there is a God who is real, and He loves me.

Daniel made it very clear in his record, that the vision given was not a product of his own mind or heart, it was given by way of revelation and that this came from Heaven. In verse one, with obvious hind sight applied he tells us that

“The message was true, but the appointed time was long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision.: (Daniel 10:1)

While Daniel mentions here that the time of things to come was long, this also bring to mind that God, who is sovereign has “appointed times”, not only for individuals lives but history short term and long term and they all will cumulate in the end of time. This is when time itself gives ways to eternity and is no more. Everything God has for us, He is in control of the timing, when he will give and when he will take.

It’s important for us today to take away a few things to not just ponder but to apply.

Firstly – What is our character really like as this will affect how we react to every situation in our lives.

Secondly – Are we maturing? Do we want to mature spiritually? If not, why not, what’s stopping us?

Thirdly – Are we willing to draw near to God with everything in our lives, the big things as well as the small things? Remember he is completely interested in you, maybe the most interested person you have in your life.

Fourthly – Are we aware of the heavenly dimension that has bearing in our lives, the unseen world which is around us, and it’s as real or even more real than the one we are in. It’s not just about God and his angels but also the powers of the evil ones.

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Fifthly – Will you take the time not just to meditate on God’s great love for you but share it with others.

Lastly – God is in control and it is all in his time. This is why Jesus tells us to be anxious for nothing and not to fret, it’s all under His control!

Amen.