

## **“An Invisible War” (part 1)**

Daniel 10:1-21; Ephesians 6:10-12

Turn with me in your Bible this morning to the tenth chapter of Daniel. Maybe you've seen the Buick commercial about the woman who gets an alert on her phone that reminds her of 'dinner with the Drakes' later that evening, which she had forgotten about. Well, it sends her into a frenzy. She asks Alexa to start her Buick, she jumps in, and heads to a grocery store where she picks out four salmon filets. So she rushes home and sets up a fancy dinner table. And about the time she finishes, the doorbell rings and it is the Drakes who are there...to drop off their children. The whole point of the commercial is that life often catches us off guard and unprepared, and somehow Buick can help us with that.

Now, I am not so sure that a new Buick is the best help, but it is true that we are often unprepared for when things go wrong in our daily lives. And when they do, we usually will begin to complain and mutter to ourselves something to the fact that life should not be this way. Why is it that when we serve the Lord, when we live to please Him, life seems to get harder and not easier for us? Daniel 10 is a passage that will help us understand that life is hard for believers, it will explain why it is hard, but it will also remind us that we are not alone in our struggles. If we truly understand this passage, it will keep us from facing life unprepared.

It is part of the fourth and final prophetic vision that is found in the book, spanning from chapter 10 all the way to the end of chapter 12. Daniel is told here at the outset that it is a vision that concerns a great future conflict. And this tenth chapter is vital because it prepares us to see the spiritual dimension behind conflict itself. In this way, Daniel 10 shows us how the conflict we experience in life as believers is often the counterpart of a greater spiritual conflict that is raging in an unseen realm between conflicting kingdoms.

**Sinclair Ferguson** — *“As we shall see, chapter 10 contains vital biblical insights into the nature of reality. It emphasizes that human causes and effects are not the only forces or influences operative in the history of the world.”*

One of the primary reasons that conflict in life catches us off guard is because we have come to expect something else. We easily forget the fact that there is a spiritual battle raging in an unseen realm all around us, and as the people of God, we are caught somewhere in the middle of it all. In Ephesians 6:12, the apostle Paul reminded the Ephesian believers that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Daniel 10 shows us exactly what that means. (read)

All throughout our study of Daniel, we have come across a lot of interesting things—miracles, prophecy that involves future events, and the mediation of angels. The subject of angels and the existence of the supernatural is something that we find mentioned once again. More than once in the book, we have seen Daniel receive the help of angels.

One of the most often recounted stories about angels helping believers involves missionary John G. Paton, who ministered in the New Hebrides islands. One evening, he and his wife were surrounded by hostile natives who were intent on burning down their hut and killing them. Paton said they spent a sleepless night desperately praying for God’s supernatural deliverance. When daylight came, they looked out the window—and mysteriously, the hostile natives had all gone.

Sometime later, the chief of the tribe was converted to faith in Christ. And Paton, remembering what had happened that night, asked the chief why they did not attack them. The chief seemed surprised and said it was because of the men

who were surrounding the hut. Bewildered, Paton said, “There were no men surrounding our hut.” The chief insisted, “Oh, yes, there were. We saw dozens of men in bright garments standing around your hut with weapons drawn ready to protect you. We didn’t dare invade.” John Paton said at that moment he began to understand the delivering power of angels.

Without a supernatural worldview produced in you by the Holy Spirit, the Bible will remain strange and irrelevant to you. The rationalistic approach of a Western modern mind has to be abandoned. The world and culture we live in has a way of processing life and existence that is rooted in unbelief. In many ways, the world is like a man in a dark room trying to describe its layout. Without light, it is a futile attempt. That is not to say he can’t make some general observations based on his other senses. However, without the light, even what he is able to observe is imperfect. And without the intervening grace of God, we’d be totally in the dark. We’d be unable to understand the meaning behind our existence, we’d be unable to discern our problem, and we’d be unable to have any hope for living. God’s Word sheds light on our condition, and it tells us that there is a whole lot more going on around us than what meets the eye.

Before we get into our text, there are a few preliminary considerations that need to be made. Without these, you will be in the dark as far as Daniel 10 is concerned.

### **TRUTH #1 – There is an unseen realm**

Daniel’s eyes are opened up in this passage to see what is typically unseen. The curtain that separates the material world from the spiritual world is momentarily pulled back, and the resulting vision shows us how the things which are seen are influenced by things which are unseen. And this is something that you and I

must understand. You will not understand life if you fail to grasp this truth, going through life solely relying on your five senses, with no true spiritual understanding. Yet everything about the world around us is designed to blind us to this ultimate reality. We get up, get dressed, take the kids to school, go to work, go home. And we repeat this cycle the very next day. Add to this the non-stop barrage of emails, friend requests, vacation planning, and grocery shopping lists. Before long, you find yourself completely immersed in a material world.

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4—“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”**

There is an unseen realm, and there are spiritual entities in that realm who try to keep humanity blinded to the truth. I don't have to work hard to convince you that there is a lot of fascination and preoccupation with angels and demons in our culture—movies and television, science fiction genre and novels, etc. On top of this, there is the quest to find life beyond our solar system. When it comes to the demonic, we tend to gravitate toward two extremes. For instance:

**C.S. Lewis**—*“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”*

We want to avoid both of those extremes. But of the two, I am of the conviction that we are more prone to ignore the unseen realm. In our secular age with all of its technology and sophistication, it has become more challenging to deal with the subject of the supernatural. Many will argue that angels and demons are

subjects from a bygone era of superstition. We look for scientific explanations behind the happenings of our world rather than spiritual explanations.

However, science is based on that which is observable. In the Bible, we are told that there is an unseen realm. The Bible reflects God's knowledge of the universe rather than man's knowledge. That's why Daniel needed wisdom and insight from a source other than himself. So aside from the Bible, there really is nowhere else for us to turn to on this subject. We would know nothing dependable about this unseen realm were it not for the fact that God Himself has told us about it in His Word. Human observation can't even come close apart from divine revelation.

**Charles Ryrie** — *“If one accepts the biblical revelation, then there can be no question about the existence of angels. There are three significant characteristics about that revelation. First, it is extensive. The Old Testament speaks about angels just over 100 times, while the New Testament mentions them about 165 times. Of course, any truth has to be stated only one time in the Bible for us to acknowledge it as truth, but when a subject is mentioned as often as angels are, then it becomes that much more difficult to deny it. Second, angels are mentioned throughout the Bible. The truth about them is not confined to one period of history or one part of the Scriptures or a few writers. They do not belong to some primitive era. Their existence is mentioned in 34 books of the Bible from the earliest to the last. Third, the teaching of our Lord includes a number of references to angels as real beings. So to deny their existence is to cast doubt on His veracity.”*

According to the Word of God, angels and demons do exist and influence the world around us. The physical, visible realm is greatly affected by the spiritual,

invisible realm that the Bible refers to as ‘heavenly places.’ Daniel is told here about a conflict that happened in those heavenly places.

## **TRUTH #2—We have an undetected enemy**

In addition to this truth that there is an unseen realm all around us, a second preliminary consideration for us is that we have an undetected enemy who lurks in the shadows. As an adversary, he works to oppose the kingdom of God and the rule of Jesus Christ on earth.

**Ephesians 6:10-12—“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you might be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”**

If for one second your physical eyes were to be opened to the spiritual forces that do battle against your soul, it would strike terror in your heart. It would forever change the way that you live your life and approach spiritual things. You would take prayer much more seriously than you do now. You would be more sensitive to the truth of Scripture. You would not be so quick to judge your circumstances. In a sense, this is what Paul does in this passage. He opens our spiritual eyes and wants us to be alert to the presence of an unseen enemy. He says that life is so serious that it demands we be ‘armored’ up. The Christian life is not a playground—it is a battleground, brother. And we need weapons to combat this enemy. But the armor he says we need is spiritual in nature because the conflict we are in is spiritual in nature. And the way that we do battle is on our knees in prayer before God.

## The identity of this enemy

The Bible is clear in its assertion that Satan is the enemy of God and His people. When God created the world, He looked at everything he made and saw that it was very good. It was good until the serpent deceived Eve and solicited her to sin against God. Scripture unveils the personality behind the serpent. At some point prior to the third chapter of Genesis, there was a cataclysmic event in heaven whereby Satan and a host of angels fell into sin and rebellion against God. Many of those angels rebelled against God and became evil.

The New Testament refers to this event in two places:

**2 Peter 2:4—“God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.”**

**Jude 6—“And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.”**

Both Peter and Jude refer to this past event where some angels rebelled against God and became hostile opponents to His Word. Their sin seems to have been that of pride.

In the Old Testament, there is a veiled reference to this:

**Isaiah 14:12-15—“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened nations! For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the**

**heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.”**

Isaiah is describing the judgment of God on the king of Babylon, but then he comes to a section where he uses language that seems too strong to refer to a merely human king. It is the double-fulfillment nature of prophecy. The language strongly suggests a rebellion by an angelic being of great power and dignity.

The prophet Ezekiel says something similar:

**Ezekiel 28:11-19—Moreover, the word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord God: You were the signet of perfection full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering...on the day that you were created they were prepared. You are an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever.’”**

This description cannot refer to any human being.

**Erwin Lutzer** — *“Therefore, to make sense of the passage, we must either spiritualize it or assume that Ezekiel was speaking of a being who stands behind the king of Tyre. Since the Scriptures teach that Satan rules the nations, it is reasonable to assume that Ezekiel is speaking about that angelic creature who once deserved the descriptions given in the passage but then arrogantly fell into rebellion. He who was the apex of creation would eventually live in eternal shame and contempt.”*

Satan’s evil character was formed the moment he let his pride cause him to rise up in rebellion against the throne of God. His character was corrupted so completely that God gave him a different name. He lost his brilliance and his righteousness, and so he received a name that reflected his fallen status. He is now the adversary!

The Bible actually has a number of different names for our enemy. Satan is the one that we are most familiar with. He is also referred to as the ‘Devil’ which means accuser or slanderer. The name ‘Satan’ shows up around 55 times in the New Testament, and ‘Devil’ is used some 35 times. He is accuser of God’s people, which is why the saints rejoice when he is thrown out of heaven in Revelation 12. As the accuser, the devil’s character is on display in the first couple of chapters of Job. By accusing Job of serving God for gain, Satan was slandering Job’s character as well as God’s. Keep in mind that everything he does is ultimately directed at God. He wants to do anything he can to injure God’s reputation so that He does not get the glory that is due His great name because he desires glory for himself. Obviously, the devil is certainly no match for God. He can’t touch God, so he sees to subvert God’s plan and attack God’s people.

There are other names and descriptions of Satan found in the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, he is referred to as the ruler of this world. Ephesians 2:2 refers to him as the prince of the power of the air. He is the influence behind this present world system. The fallen world of humanity is under his sinister influence. Through his influence, our first parents sinned against God and thereby plunged humanity into sin and death. It was through his influence that Cain rose up and murdered his brother Abel.

**1 John 3:12—“We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.”**

Through his influence, the world we live in persecutes and hates the truth of God. As a murderer and a liar, he would kill you and me if he had the chance. He is a destroyer who wants to totally undermine God’s redemptive purpose.

In Revelation 12, Satan is described as the great red dragon. John calls him the serpent of old, a reference to his description in the garden of Eden. Both ‘serpent’ and ‘dragon’ implies his cunning and sinister agenda.

#### The activity of this enemy

Though Satan has been defeated, he is still very active as the enemy of God’s people. He is engaged in a contest for the souls of people. He is very much interested in keeping people blinded to their sin and need for God’s grace. His activity is extensive. What is his activity in relation to God? Once reflecting the light from God as the shining one, he is now full of darkness and keeps the light from others.

**Acts 26:18—“To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive**

**forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”**

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4—“...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”**

God is holy, and God is love. He promotes holiness and love, whereas the devil is unholy and promotes hatred of God and the truth. God is life and light, and Satan is a murderer and operates in the realm of death. The devil opposes God's person, and He opposes God's redemptive purposes. In what way does he do this?

- he tries to counterfeit God's system of truth

The devil promotes a system that we can rightly call a lie. Any and every religious idea or humanistic idea that is in opposition of God's truth is part of the enemy's lie.

**Ephesians 2:1-2—“You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.”**

Satan's counterfeit system may be either religious or even irreligious. He may promote a false idea of God, or he may even promote a system that denies the existence of God. The devil is just as much behind secular humanism and atheism as he is the cults and false religions of the world. All of these false ideas find their origin in him. And let me tell you, Satan has no shortage of false ministers, false prophets, and false heroes that he sets up as saviors for man. His emissaries come in all shapes, colors, and sizes.

**2 Corinthians 11:13-15—“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.”**

The devil is behind all false doctrine, false churches, and false believers. He sows tares among God’s wheat.

- he tries to counteract God’s sovereign rule

Everywhere God is to be found at work in the world, the devil is to be found in opposition. See him in Eden. See him in ancient Israel. See him in the wilderness. See him in the early church. See him in every level of human government and society. As a rebel, Satan has opposed the kingdom of God throughout the centuries. Even though he is the adversary, he is subject to Almighty God in every way. Martin Luther said that he is God’s devil and never operates outside of God’s permissive will. The apex of his rebellion will be one day found in his empowering of the future Antichrist who will set himself up as the savior of the world.

**Revelation 13:2-5—“And to [the beast] the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority...and they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?’ And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words.”**

What is his activity in relation to the nations? The Bible says that Satan is active right now in deceiving the nations and leading them astray from the truth of God. One day at the millennial reign of Christ, Revelation 20:3 says that he will be bound so that he will deceive the nations no more.

The devil is the 'god' of this world. He is behind its system and gives power to its wicked rulers. When he came to Jesus in the wilderness and tempted Him, the devil offered him the kingdoms of the world. It was a solicitation to fame and fortune and power.

Satan uses his angels to influence the affairs of nations and this is especially true in their opposition to God's plan as it involves Israel or the church. We see this in Daniel 10 as an angel tells Daniel in verse 13 that 'the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days.' It was Michael, one of the chief princes, who came to help him. In other words, it was a spiritual conflict in the unseen realm between the opposing sides of good and evil. The nations of man are deceived, and the halls of man's government are under the influence of malevolent, unseen hosts who work to destroy humanity. I mean have you ever stopped to consider why there has been so much hatred and animosity directed toward the Jewish nation throughout the centuries? Whether it be through Hitler's nazism or Stalin's atheism or Islam's terrorism, the devil hates God's people and directly influences the nations of men to persecute them. One day, as far as the nations are concerned, Satan is going to unite them against Christ, but he will fail!

Satan is very active when it comes to keeping people away from the truth of the gospel. He does this:

- By preventing acceptance of the truth

His method of attack involves snatching away the gospel before a person believes it. According to what Jesus said, some who hear the gospel are kept from understanding it lest they believe and be saved. The parable of the sower is proof that this happens all of the time.

Not only does he snatch the seed away, but he also blinds the minds of people lest they believe the truth. Satan puts up a barrier to the gospel so that it not penetrate a person's mind with enlightenment concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. This is one of the reasons for the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11).

**1 Corinthians 1:18—“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”**

- By promoting attraction to lies and falsehood

The devil actively indoctrinates men and women with false religion and lies. He will either promote a salvation of works, or he will persuade you that there is no need for salvation at all. Satan also actively seeks to ingrain a false way of living in people. He wants them to succumb to a false lifestyle that is opposed to the Creator's original design. The devil is the one who is behind the philosophy of the age and what the Bible refers to as the 'course' of this world.

**C. Fred Dickason**—*“It may change expression from one generation to the next, but it is still creature-centered and creature-promoting. This philosophy is based on pleasure, possessions, and position. It is opposed to our Father God. Satan is now constantly energizing the sons of disobedience to follow his spirit. It is basically the egocentric ambition of Satan that characterizes the world. Satisfied with these things of man and materialism, unbelievers are kept from desiring a relationship with the living God. Satan has captured attention and influenced moral behavior through the mass media's promotion of illicit sex, pornography, homosexuality, and violence. Film, TV, videos, magazines, and music are his effective tools.”*

Satan deals in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the sinful pride of life. He offers the world, but he provides only death. Everything he does is wrapped up in lies, and the reason is that deception is at the heart of everything he does. Jesus said:

**John 8:44—“He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”**

What about in relation to believers? Satan is active among the people of faith. He wants to thwart us from living fruitful and obedient lives. He wants to defeat us when it comes to life and service in the church. It is not superstitious to understand spiritual warfare. We must be on guard!

**2 Corinthians 2:11 —“So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.”**

What we might quickly dismiss as human opposition may in fact be spiritual in nature. The devil directly aims his attack against the church of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, our striving is not with flesh and blood, but is with the spiritual forces of wickedness in high places.

### **TRUTH #3—Life involves an unwanted conflict**

Because there is an unseen realm in which there exists an undetected enemy, from the day we're born to the moment we die, our lives are filled with unwanted conflict. The kind of spiritual conflict we see in Daniel's life affects us all at some level or another. Very often, the greater the threat you are to the kingdom of darkness, the more heat you will face in life.

Before I was saved, I was totally unaware of this conflict between kingdoms. Salvation involves the light switch being turned on, and for the first time, a person is truly able to see things the way that they are. There is a conflict raging between good and evil, light and darkness, heaven and hell, and we live at the epicenter of that conflict. It explains why such conflict is raging on our planet—in your home, in our church, in our city, in our nation. It is a violent conflict between kingdoms, and our lives are ground zero. Now, the battle may often manifest itself in circumstances, but the real source of our opposition is always spiritual in nature. We know this, but somehow we easily forget it.

**Chip Ingram** — *“We start thinking that the problem is a spouse, a child, a boss, a policy, an illness, or a circumstance. These symptoms are easy to see...But they are often just symptoms, not the source of the problem. Behind many of the things we see on the surface is an archenemy who wants to destroy our lives.”*

The fact of the matter is that we are going to be assailed in this world. As believers, we will have to face the onslaught of the enemy. Recognizing the source of the conflict is half the battle! The battle is against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, and against spiritual wickedness in the unseen realms. And that helps make prayer that much more important, doesn't it? When you realize that the main source of conflict in your life is spiritual, then you will turn to those spiritual resources that you've been given in Christ rather than looking for some material solution to your problem.

**2 Corinthians 10:3-7** — **“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing**

**every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...Do you look at things according to the outward appearance?"**

Do you simply see things as they are on the surface? Do you approach things in your life from strictly a surface level, rather than a spiritual level? Your prayer life is an indicator of how much you truly believe life is a spiritual battle. Your relationship to God's Word and other believers is also an indication. It was said that Mary Queen of Scots feared the prayers of John Knox more than she feared an invading army. Prayer has no power in and of itself—it is the One we call upon in prayer who has all power! We draw upon His divine power and His divine resources to aid us in the battle. Daniel needed the strength that came from the touch of God! The enemy would have you believe that he is invincible, but that too is a lie. The fact of the matter is that the devil is already a defeated foe.

**1 John 3:8—“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”**

**Hebrews 2:14—“...that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”**

Now let me tell you, as those who are in Christ, we are on the winning side and are already victors through Christ. It means that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Our position is secure, yet we need to be aware of the fight. This tenth chapter in Daniel helps pull back the curtain on:

- The nature of SPIRITUAL warfare

- The need for SUPERNATURAL strength

It involves knowing our enlisting Officer, demands we face our everyday obstacles, recognize our evil opponent, and live with an enlightened outlook. It is important that we have a proper perspective on the devil's power if we are to stand firm against his schemes.

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing:  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.*

*And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:  
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:  
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;  
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,  
His kingdom is forever.*

Hallelujah! His kingdom is forever.