

A Behind-the-Scenes Battle (Dan 10)

A Small Group Outline



1. **Praise** *(Purpose: To worship God)*
 - What are you thankful for this week? *(let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
 - Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God
2. **Pray** *(Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)*
 - What challenges did you have this week? *(write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
 - Go into a season of prayer
3. **Review** *(Purpose: To learn accountability)*
 - Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? *(e.g. Who did you share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)*
 - Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.
4. **Give** *(Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)*
 - Our best option in the lockdown is to return tithes and offerings electronically. Ensure you get the bank details from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.
5. **Discover** *(Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)*
 - **Notes for the facilitator**
 - Daniel was nearing 90 now. Seventy years had elapsed since Daniel left Jerusalem as a captive of Nebuchadnezzar
 - On the banks of the Tigris, Daniel sees Jesus in vision. Compare it with the glorified vision of Jesus in Rev. 1:13-16
 - Daniel fasted for 3 weeks. This was not a complete abstinence of food but a limited selection of food. The prophet avoided any rich foods so that his mind could be clear in communing with Heaven.
 - When did people fast in the Bible: During private afflictions - 2 Sam. 12:16-17; during the afflictions of others – Ps. 35:13; afflictions of the church – Mk. 2:20; approaching danger – Es. 4:16; Joel 1:14-15; when tempted – Matt. 4:1-11; times of bereavement - 2 Sam. 1:11-12; 1 Sam. 31:13; for protection - Ezra 8:21; consecration of church leaders - Acts 13:2-3; 14:23; when guidance needed - 2 Chron. 20:2-4; Dan. 10; Ezra 8:21; when leaders were concerned for the state of God's people - Ezra 10:6; Neh. 1:1-4; Dan. 9:3-20. Thus fasting is an important feature of the Christian's individual and corporate experience.
 - The prophet was concerned about issues taking place at Jerusalem, as recounted in the book of Ezra.
 - Cyrus had issued a decree to rebuild the temple (see Ezra 1:2-4, for the official version and 6:3-5, for the published one)
 - At Jerusalem the Samaritans offered to help rebuild God's house (Ezra 4:1-3), an offer which was rejected. If accepted, it would have again given entrance for idolatry to take root in Israel. This was the very reason they had gone into captivity in the first place, and a partnership with the Samaritans would have been fatal.

- Michael is Jesus Christ: Jude 9 – Michael is called an Archangel; 1 Thess. 4:16 – At voice of the Archangel, the dead are resurrected at the Second Coming; Jhn 5:28 – Jesus says that the dead will come to life when they hear His voice. Therefore Jesus has to be Michael. People get confused by the fact that Michael was an angel, and therefore assume He cannot be God, but from the following verses we see that the word ‘angel’ (Greek: *messenger*) is also used in reference to God Himself: Ex. 3:2, 4; Zech. 3:1-2 cf. Ex. 23:20-21; Hosea 12:2-4.
- Who is the Prince of the kingdom of Persia that resisted Michael: This was not king Cyrus, who was not called a prince. The word *prince* is used in a similar way to ‘prince of Greece’ (vs 20) and ‘Michael ‘your prince’ (vs 21). This is evidently an *angel-prince* who was linked to the Persian empire. Because he opposed the angel of God, we can conclude that it is an evil angel. Paul says in Eph. 6:12, that we wrestle not against flesh and blood (i.e. human beings) but against *principalities* [a principality is a state ruled by a prince], powers and spiritual hosts of wickedness. Jesus called Satan a *prince* 3 times (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). So the prince of Persia was spiritual being, a demon that was in charge of those territories.
- In Dan. 10, Daniel moves aside the curtain and gives us insight into the spiritual forces at work behind the scenes. For 3 weeks Gabriel wrestled with a determined and powerful demon in an attempt to thwart his influence, and prevent Cyrus from rescinding his decree. At the end Michael comes to Gabriel’s aid; the demon is routed, and king Cyrus makes the right decision. The king then refuses, by his own choice, to agree to the Samaritan scheme to shut down the temple reconstruction. The victory is finally gained; the forces of the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus, and all the days of his son Cambyses
- Angels were on the side of the returned captives. It was now up to God’s people to carry out the decree of Cyrus, sparing no effort to restore the temple. Sadly however, the opposition of the enemies was strong and determined, and they gradually lost heart. Some Jews even questioned whether after all the time had come to rebuild. The feeling soon became widespread, workmen became discouraged, and returned to their homes to take up ordinary pursuits of life (see Ezra 4:4-5, 24). Notice the timeline:
 - Ezra 3:8 – Foundation of the Temple was laid in the 2nd year after their arrival in Jerusalem (535 BC)
 - Ezra 4:1-4 – Opposition arises to building of Temple
 - Ezra 4:25 – Work suspended until 2nd year of Darius (i.e. 520 BC) – i.e. for 15 years
 - God sends judgements on the returned exiles because His temple is in waste. He raises up Haggai and Zechariah to warn and guide them during this time.
 - The work resumes under the preaching
 - Ezra 6:15 - The temple is rebuilt in 515 BC (20 years after the laying of the foundation)
- “Satan seeks continually to block the way, so that the truth shall be bound about by human devising; and those who have light and knowledge are in the greatest danger unless they constantly consecrate themselves to God, humiliating self, and realizing the peril of the times” (4BC 1173)
- “Heavenly beings are appointed to answer the prayers of those who are working unselfishly for the interests of the cause of God. The very highest angels in the heavenly courts are appointed to work out the prayers which ascend to God for the advancement of the cause of God. Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place. If he should leave, the powers of darkness would gain an advantage....” (4BC 1173)
- Vs 14: The angel came to tell Daniel what would befall the saints throughout the centuries until Christ’s second coming

- Vs 20: The angel is here speaking of further conflict between himself and the “prince of Persia.” That this struggle did continue long after the time of Daniel’s vision is shown by Ezra 4:4–24. “The forces of the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus, and all the days of his son Cambyses, who reigned about seven and a half years” (PK 572).
- *Read Dan 10 as a group. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** *(use only a few). The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - What do you think the purpose of Daniel’s fasting is in this chapter? What is the value of fasting generally *(ask one question at a time)*
 - Knowing that angels are constantly trying to obstruct, harass, challenge and prevent the work of God, how should we go about doing God’s work?
 - What does it mean that angels are fighting against evil forces on our behalf?
 - Comment on what it means to you that Michael came to Gabriel’s assistance?
 - How did the returned exiles miss out on opportunities prepared for them by heaven, when they stopped the work of rebuilding the temple? What does that mean for us today *(ask one question at a time)*
- **Application Questions** *(select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT)*
 - What does the behind-the-scenes battle between good and evil mean to you personally?
 - Do you ever fast? What are the general reasons for your fasts? *(ask one question at a time)*
 - How can you ensure that you are cooperating with holy angels and not working against them?
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group’s secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. “I will make it a habit to daily consecrate myself to God, and invite His angels to direct me and accompany me.”

6. **Share** *(Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith)*

- Do you have anyone you could share today’s lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. **Closing prayer**

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