

The Lord of Glory

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[0 : 00] We're going to read from the Bible, from the book of Daniel, chapter 10, verses 1 to 21. The word of the Lord. In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar.

And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word and had an understanding of the vision. In those days, I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks.

I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all for the full three weeks. On the 24th day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, I lifted up my eyes and looked.

And behold, a man clothed in linen with a belt of fine gold from Uthaz round his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude.

And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision. For the men who were with me did not see the vision. But a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. So I was left alone, and I saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me.

[1 : 18] My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep, with my face to the ground.

And behold, a hand touched me, and set me trembling on my hands and knees. And he said to me, O Daniel, man greatly loved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you.

And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then he said to me, Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and humbled yourself before God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.

The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days.

For the vision is for days yet to come. When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face towards the ground and was mute. And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips.

[2 : 30] Then I opened my mouth and spoke. And I said to him who stood before me, O my Lord, by reason of the vision, pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength. How can my Lord's servant talk with my Lord?

For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me. Again, one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. And he said, O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you.

Be strong and of good courage. And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, Let my Lord speak, for you have strengthened me. Then he said, Do you not know that I have come to you? Do you know why I have come to you?

But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia. And when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come. But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. There is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.

This is God's holy word. We'll take two weeks to finish our series on Daniel from last semester. And then we'll start a new series on the book of James for the coming semester.

[3 : 37] And so we need a refresher review, or maybe you've not been here at all for Daniel. So what happened in the book of Daniel is that the king of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar, went to Jerusalem in 605 BC, and he conquered Jerusalem.

And he sought to destroy the people of God, their religion, their way of life, their culture. He wanted to turn them into polytheists and to Babylonize them, we might say.

He didn't do it primarily by violence, only partially. He wanted to assimilate them and make them into Babylonians, into polytheists. So chapter 1 to 6 is these stories of Daniel and his friends and what it means to be faithful.

When you've been taken into exile, when you've been taken into a place, you live in a city where your faith, belief in the Lord is irrelevant to most people, or thought to be silly, or traditionalistic, or fundamentalist, or even dangerous.

And so the question in the book of Daniel is, how do you live faithfully in a place where most people disregard your faith, your belief in the Lord, in the midst of exile?

[4 : 44] And so we've seen these principles throughout the book of Daniel. Daniel teaches us what to do. He's such an example to live with conviction without compromise in the midst of exile, to live in a place where you are not separate from the city.

You are in the world, but you're not of it at the same time. So to reject the idols of Babylon or the idols of the city of Edinburgh, but at the same time to be for the city.

The nuance of Jeremiah 29, this letter that God wrote to the exiles, He said, pray for Babylon, live in Babylon, seek the peace of the city. It's in our philosophy of ministry, our vision statement, that we're to be in the world, but not of it, for the city, seeking its true peace, its shalom.

And that's what the book of Daniel is all about. The back half of Daniel, 7 to 12, are four visions that Daniel sees. They're apocalyptic visions, that famous word.

And apocalyptic visions are prophecies. They're highly imagistic. They're shocking. And they really are, and a way to think about them is, they are comfort food for the ancient Near Eastern person.

[5 : 54] So they are there for when you are in the midst of exile, under oppression, under a yoke, in a place where nobody believes what you believe in. These shocking visions are actually comfort, comfort food to say, the true God, the God you worship really is the Lord of history.

And you need to trust that while you're there. And so that's the section we're in, the back half, these apocalyptic visions. This is the fourth vision, the final vision. And it's three chapters long, chapter 10 to 12.

So we'll just look at chapter 10 today, and then 11 and 12 next week. And this is really the prologue of the vision, chapter 10. So verse 1 says, the third year, we're in the third year of King Cyrus.

That's 536 BC. And the question in the book of Daniel has been, again, how do you live by faith in the midst of exile? In a place where your faith, most people think of your faith as irrelevant.

That's the overarching question. The question of chapter 10 is a little more specific within that. What is it that prompts this vision? And the question I think we could say is something like this.

[6 : 58] What do I do? What do we do? When we have been faithful, when we have prayed, when we have sought the peace of Babylon, the peace of Edinburgh, and we've not seen ministry fruit, we've not seen ministry success like we longed for, that's really the question that prompts this vision.

And so let's look at that, the problem here, that problem. Faithfulness, yet not seeing ministry success, ministry fruit, and then the three things God gives us answers really to that problem.

So first, the problem. Now in verse 2, if you look down with me, Daniel is mourning. He says, I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. He says, I ate no delicacies.

So he ate for three weeks, 21 days, no good food, no meat, no wine, nor did I anoint myself. The text says, nor did I put lotion on. So for 21 days, dry skin and dry heat, that's what he's saying.

He's fasting and he's mourning, we're told here. Now, what's so striking about this is that when you read between the lines a little bit, he says that the vision came to him on the 24th day of the first month of the year, in verse 3, 4.

[8 : 15] And that month in their calendar is the month of Nisan, or Nisan, we Americans say. Nisan, the first month of the calendar.

And if you know maybe a little bit about the Torah, the book of Leviticus especially, you'll know that in the middle of that first month is the feast of Passover. And so this is the month of Passover.

And it really is a violation of the law to be fasting at Passover. It's like fasting on New Year's Eve, violation of all norms. And yet he is, he's mourning.

Why? The month of Passover, a month of great celebration in the Hebrew calendar, a month where you're celebrating the ministry success, the ministry fruit of redemption from Egypt, from the slavery in Egypt.

And Daniel here is mourning instead. Why? And again, you have to know a bit of the context in history, read between the lines a little bit. But we know that this is the third year of the reign of Cyrus.

[9 : 17] And in the first year of the reign of Cyrus, Cyrus, the king of Persia who conquered Babylon, let the Jews, the Israelites in Babylon, go back to the land of Jerusalem, Israel, to rebuild.

So that 70-year prophecy that Daniel had prayed about in chapter 9 has come about, Cyrus, this king, this pagan king, has let the people go back to restore the temple in Jerusalem.

Yet, remember Daniel is head of state. He gets all the letters from the governors all around the Babylonian Empire, the Persian Empire now. So he has read the notices, and he knows that for the past three years, the project of restoration in Jerusalem has been terrible, awful.

It has not gone well. The temple is not rebuilt. The walls are not rebuilt. And you can read about that in the book of Ezra. Ezra chapter 4 says that really from the first day of this great hope of rebuilding the temple, enemies were opposing it, both inside the Israelite, in the nation of Israel, and foreign enemies as well.

And that even one of the real reasons I think he's mourning is because really the people of God back in Jerusalem just are not doing what they're supposed to do, what God has told them to do.

[10:37] They lack courage. They don't have the faithfulness and the strength that Daniel and his friends had, that Esther has, that Ruth has in the midst of exile. And instead, what we really see is in Ezra, the people of God have Babylonian hearts back in Jerusalem.

And Daniel has heard about it. And so he's here in the month of Passover, the month where you're supposed to celebrate redemption. And he's mourning because there is no restoration. There is no redemption.

And so really you can see here that he's mourning a lack of ministry fruit. He has lived his entire life with faithfulness to see the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem.

And he thought the prophecy of Jeremiah, the 70 years would finally bring it about. And it hasn't. And now a deeper level, he's probably, he's at least 85 years old at this point.

And he's probably thinking, I'm going to die and never see the ministry that I lived for come about. And that's, he's weak. He's confused.

[11:35] He's exhausted. He's exhausted. Did God's promises fail in all this? Now, what about us? I think that we can see where he is, believer in the room.

Probably the most obvious place is when you have prayed for someone, you've longed for someone to come and see the truth about Jesus and to follow him or to return, to come home again to the faith for years, for a long time, and it's not happened.

And maybe even beyond an individual, you've prayed for a movement of the gospel. That's in our philosophy of ministry as well. A movement of the gospel. In a community, in the city, in the nation, you've prayed for revival and it's not come.

And you're saying the same, you're thinking the same things, a state of mourning and grief over that. Secondly, three answers God gives to this problem. A lack of ministry fruit.

In the midst of faithfulness, in the midst of prayer, in the midst of longing for it. Number one, the first is through Daniel's example. So Daniel, part of the reason Daniel's mourning is he's provoked by the people of God not doing what the people of God are supposed to be doing back in Jerusalem.

[12:51] And we have the same experiences where we look in our lives out and we see the people of God, churches, whole denominations, not doing what they're supposed to be doing.

Not doing what God has called us, them to do. And of course, we not only see it in local churches and denominations, but we can look back and say, hey, I see it in my own life as well.

That there are seasons where I look up and realize I'm not doing what God has called me to do in life. And so this could be hypocrisy, passivity, sitting on hands, bearing our ministry treasures, as the New Testament puts it, succumbing to fear, not having ministry boldness and courage, changing core doctrines more substantially, disregarding the truth of the Bible more substantially, not caring for one another pastorally, secret sins that are blocking the successes of ministry, ignoring the ethics of the Bible in huge ways.

And the list could go on and on, right? So what do you do when you see hypocrisy, let's say hypocrisy, and so many other things in the lives of churches, denominations, even in our own lives, we see it in our hearts personally as well.

And a lot of the answers today is we, some of us, some of us, generically, we will maybe deconstruct. We'll say, well, there must be a different version of the faith that I need.

[14:21] That was the fundamentalism. I need something more progressive than this. Or we'll respond with anger and bitterness. Or we might respond with passivity, just continuing to kind of just not care and be okay with that.

How does Daniel, the first answer we get here, what do you do with the lack of ministry success, especially when it's because God's people aren't doing what God has called them to do? The first thing we see is Daniel, he doesn't deconstruct.

He grieves to God with lengthy, extended seasons of prayer. So here Daniel fasts and he prays for three weeks.

Have you ever entered into a season of extended prayer and fasting because of a ministry burden, because of something you long to see God do that hasn't yet happened?

And boy, can we say in 2026, I want to want to fast and pray because of a ministry burden, because of fruit that I haven't yet seen that I long for God to do.

[15:27] And in verse 12, this messenger, we'll come back to the messenger in a moment, comes to Daniel and says, from the first day that you set your heart to understand, to pray through prayer, you humbled yourself.

Your words have been heard. So for three weeks, he thinks I'm not being heard. Nothing's happening. But this messenger comes and says, from the very first moment, you started fasting and praying for this ministry burden you have, this person, this people group, this hope of redemption that's yet unseen.

You have been heard. Your prayers have been heard the entire time. And notice Daniel, how Daniel comes. He's the way the messenger speaks. It's saying Daniel knew he did not understand. He said, Lord, I don't understand why the temple's not being rebuilt.

He didn't understand. So he humbled himself with a season of prayer and fasting. He didn't turn bitter. He didn't turn silent. He wasn't passive. He didn't deconstruct.

Do you pray your griefs to God for seasons because of unresolved hopes, not yet seen redemptions in people's lives that you long for, for revival that hasn't yet come, for ministry that you want to see this year that you don't yet see?

[16:42] That is the ministry. That is the ministry, the prayer, the fasting, the pleading with God for long seasons. That's the ministry. I was working over the holiday on 2026 goals, looking at the calendar, both for the church, praying through some goals I longed to see here at the church and also personally for me.

And I'm sure lots of people of us will have done something like that over the break. And one of the things I noticed this week as I was studying and thinking back through Daniel up to this point is Daniel was a great, he was a man of prayer.

He was a great prayer, prayer-er, we might say. And we, I'm sure with me, many of us in this room, men and women, we could say, boy, I want to be a man or a woman of prayer this year in a way that I wasn't in 2025.

That's the first answer God gives. That's the ministry. Secondly, secondly, what does God say to us here? He says to us through this messenger that we need a deep sense of modesty.

He teaches us modesty. All right, so the second thing is he shows us how little we see. So in verse 13, this messenger speaks and says, the prince of Persia, the prince of the kingdom of Persia has withheld me 21 days, but Michael came to help me.

[18:06] Now here what's happening is God is, the messenger is pulling back the curtain and notice how many days this prince of Persia withheld, contended with the messenger.

21 days. How long did Daniel enter into prayer and fasting? Three weeks, 21 days. You see, what's happening is that the messenger is saying that from the moment you started praying, battling in prayer for ministry fruit, behind the curtain, there was spiritual warfare directly contending with your prayer life.

So who is this prince of Persia? We know that in a moment he calls Michael a prince. He calls Gabriel in this book a prince. These are not earthly princes, sons of kings.

It's a word that's being used to describe angelic beings. And here, the prince of Persia is an evil, what we will later call in the New Testament, a demon, a demonic force, an evil spiritual being that has been withstanding Daniel's prayers before God for 21 days.

You can think of Satan before Job and the book of Job doing the same thing. And so here we have this curtain being pulled back and we learn, if you pull out the book of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 32 teaches us this really clearly that behind these ministry battles and national battles and political battles in the earthly visible realm, there are spiritual battles behind the curtain that correspond, that are in parallel.

[19 : 34] Now, the modern Western mind today, even as believers, our modern Western minds can push back so much against this, that there is this realm behind the curtain, that it's medieval, it's superstitious.

And you may be here today thinking, indeed, it is medieval and superstitious. And let me take 45 seconds to ask you today to doubt your doubts, to doubt your doubt.

And to say just simply this, the modern Western assumption that the spiritual realm does not exist is a tiny outlier in all of human history. You are the 0.1% if you don't believe in the spiritual realm in all of human history.

And that's not proof, but it's important, I think, to contend with and to recognize. Look, if you're a theist at all today, if you believe in God at all today, why would it not also make sense that there are spiritual beings in a realm that we cannot see behind the curtain?

And if so, does it not make so much sense of the world to believe in these great entities, these evil entities that we can, we learn in the Old Testament, get a grip on an entire nation, an entire people group?

[20 : 44] Have we seen in our history entire people groups, nations controlled, cultures controlled by ideologies that seem deeply evil?

And we say, how did this happen? You see, believing in the prince of Persia, the prince of Greece, evil spiritual beings that contend with God's purposes makes so much more sense of life.

Disbelieving in them makes life very hard to understand. It makes things very difficult to understand. And so here, we learn that there is a prince of Persia, an evil spirit that has been contending with Daniel's purposes before God for three weeks.

Now, why is this relevant for the question? What about a lack of ministry fruit, a lack of ministry success? So what? So what for Daniel? So what for us? And here it is. Daniel has been saying, will I die without seeing the redemption, the temple restored in the land of Jerusalem?

Will my ministry hopes be dashed? And this second answer is something like this. And this is for all of us today. There are forces at work in realms you cannot see, battles being fought that you are not equipped to fight.

[21 : 57] Resistance to God's purposes that God himself is sovereignly addressing. He is in control and there is resistance. And he is sovereignly addressing these things. And we can't control that.

We don't have the power. Our shoulders aren't big enough. But God's are. And so he's telling Daniel here, look, you can, what a relief. You are not in control of so many of the battles.

You can't contend with these beings and prayer is part of the battle. So you're not, you don't have to worry about that burden, yet you have agency in the midst of the fight.

Prayer is the battle. Fasting is the battle, he's saying, in the midst of the spiritual realm. Well, we don't understand the river, the great tigress of history like God does.

But he's saying, you have agency in the battle. That's the second answer. And then finally, the most important of all, the most important answer of all as we finish, what does God give us when we are experiencing the grief of a lack of ministry fruit in a city where we have tried to be faithful?

[23:00] A better way to ask that question, who does God give us when we are experiencing a lack of ministry fruit? And the answer comes to us finally in the question, who is this messenger?

Who is this one that appears at the bank of the Tigris River and shows up to Daniel? Now, just for a moment, if you have a Bible, especially look with me at verse five and six and we'll slow down for just a second and try to imagine what Daniel sees.

He says, I lifted up my eyes and I looked and behold a man. He sees a man, a man clothed in linen. That's the clothing of a priest with a belt of gold, a sash of gold.

That's what a priest would wear. And his body was like beryl. Beryl is a beautiful gemstone that can come in lots of different colors. So he's beautiful.

He shines. He has an effulgence, a radiance about him. And his face is like lightning and his eyes are like flaming torches. His arms, burnish bronze. There's a purity to burnish bronze.

[24:05] There's a purity to the appearance of this one, this man. And the sound of his word is like a raging ocean, a sound of a multitude. And we have this moment where Daniel sees a man who appears to be divine.

And Daniel, we see, is so rattled. He falls down on his knees. He's shaking. He's trembling in the midst of being in the presence of this one. Who is this?

Some commentators will say this is an angel who's appearing in this great effulgence, this great radiance. I don't think so because I think that and I know that when you come to the New Testament, the book of Revelation and you open up Revelation 1, John's Revelation, John uses the same language, the very descriptions of Daniel 10 to describe who?

The eschatological Jesus, the Son of God, incarnate. Revelation 1. What does John say of him in Revelation 1? He says, One like a son of man wearing a robe with a golden belt.

Eyes like fire, feet like burnished bronze, voice like the roaring of many waters. It's the same person. This is a vision, a condescension of the pre-incarnate Son of God himself, the one who would become Jesus Christ by taking on flesh in the incarnation, the Christ.

[25:34] It's the personal, what does Daniel need most in the midst of a moment where he is deeply grieving a lack of ministry fruit? He needs the personal presence of the Son of God.

He needs to see the Lord of glory and he needs to be shaken up by the Lord of glory in his life. And you see what happens when you encounter the Lord of glory by faith or by sight.

You know, there are men there in verse 7 with Daniel who don't see the Lord of glory. They don't have the curtain pulled back for them, yet they still tremble. They by faith know he is there.

And you in your life can by faith see the Lord of glory and all his glory. And what happens, let me finish by giving you two things that happen to you when that takes place that really, I think, can help us with this problem of the lack of ministry fruit and success and the grief it brings.

Number one, when you meet the real God, it is like dropping a giant rock into still water and the water quakes, you know, it leaves, it doesn't come without a big effect.

[26:40] And that's what happens when you encounter the glory of the real God. There is a quake that takes place in your life. You can't come out of that unchanged. So the word for glory here means weighty, heavy, substantive.

It's reality. It's not illusory. It's the most real thing is a way of thinking about it. And when his glory drops in like a rock in still water, there's a quake that happens in your soul and your life.

And one way to say it is that everything else that you were worried about, everything you've been worried about gets displaced. You know, when you encounter the real God, the Lord of glory, all the worries in your life get displaced.

Your priorities shift. Your agenda changes. What was peripheral to you becomes central. He changes you entirely in this moment.

And you can see that in the way that Daniel falls down on his knees and he's trembling and he's shaking in this. It says that he is undone. He's undone. He's deeply afraid because when you're in the presence of true glory, what happens?

[27 : 49] You realize how small you are and how insubstantial you are next to his substance and how much of a sinner you are next to his glory, next to his purity, how epistemically modest, how modest, how much you don't know, how much you don't know that you don't know next to his glory.

And so when you see God's glory, and you can, you can, by faith, by faith, when you see it, it reorders your entire life. And that, in the midst of grief and struggle over good desire in our lives, over ministry successes that we haven't seen, we need an experience of the glory of God.

Have you, let me ask you, have you had an experience of being in the presence of God's glory? glory. You know you have if it's caused you to tremble.

But then secondly, at the same time, finally, the Lord of glory who makes Daniel tremble, who makes him mute, he can't even speak. He has to touch his lips because his lips are unclean like Isaiah in Isaiah 6.

The Lord of glory turns to him and speaks in the language of the Lord of love. Verse 11, verse 19, not once but twice he says to Daniel, Daniel's shaking, he's trembling, he's on his hands and knees and he says, he touches him on the shoulder and says, you are greatly loved, oh boy.

[29 : 20] This looks so much like the paradox of the gospel. And in the paradox of the gospel, the Lord of glory is simultaneously the God of the gospel. And in the paradox of the gospel, the heart of the Christian gospel, the closer you get to God's holiness, the more you quiver, shake, tremble, the more you see your sin, your smallness, your insignificance.

And yet, the more you see your sin, the more you see your smallness, the more you see that he is the Lord of love who wants to put his hand on your shoulder and say, son, daughter, you are greatly loved.

What did Daniel need in the midst of his grief? You're carrying burdens today. What burdens do you bring today? Maybe it's a lack of ministry fruit, a thousand other things. You need the personal presence of the son of God.

You need a vision of his glory and to hear you are greatly loved. The Lord of glory, the Lord of love, you see? Boy, this looks so much like the gospel. In the New Testament, Matthew 17, Jesus Christ, not the one who appears like a man but is a man, was a man, became a man.

He goes up the Mount of Transfiguration and before James and John and Peter, he unveils his glory for a moment. He looks like this. He emits light.

[30 : 38] He doesn't receive it. He emits it. They got on their hands and knees. They shook. And then he came back down the mountain and the text tells us that they said, it was only Jesus.

The Lord of glory we saw but yet it's Jesus. See, they saw the Lord of glory unveiled for a moment, veiled in flesh, the Godhead. See?

Hail the incarnate deity and then he came down the mountain and they said, it's Jesus and he said, now it's my time to suffer. The Lord of glory became the Lord of love. What is it that Daniel was really praying for?

Daniel was praying for a redemption he never saw. He was mourning over ministry fruit success that he never saw. What was it?

The rebuilding of the temple? No, more. The true temple, the cross. The Lord of glory become the Lord of love. And it's at the cross where Jesus Christ has the power by his love to put his hand on your shoulder and say, you are greatly loved.

[31:42] Your burdens you're carrying today, you are greatly loved. That is what you need more than anything else in the midst of unresolved redemptions, unmet hopes. What burdens, ministry burdens especially, are you carrying into 2026?

Keep praying fast, grieve for them, keep longing, keep going to God, battling spiritual warfare, Ephesians 6 for them. Seek above all by faith the personal presence of the Lord.

He offers it to you by the Spirit. And look at him, look for every wound, every grief, every sorrow, look at him 10 times. For every sorrow you carry, look at him 10 times more.

See the Lord of glory, see the Lord of love, hear Colossians 2, he has dismissed the spiritual powers and authorities of the heavenly realm. He has dismissed them, he's defeated them. You are greatly loved.

Hear the word of the Lord, you are greatly loved. Let us pray. Father, we need, in the midst of our burdens, spiritual burdens, ministry burdens, a lack of so much of what we've longed for, we need your presence.

[32:54] So we ask now that even as we sing, we would experience by faith a vision of your glory, that we would tremble before you and yet be able to hear the words, be of great courage, fear not, the Lord loves you.

So we want that so much today. We ask for it, Lord, come now by your Spirit and speak to us as we sing. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen.