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Alastair Roberts

The Man at the River Tigris. Paul before Felix.

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Transcript

Daniel, chapter 10. 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 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 twenty-fourth 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 Euphaz around 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 saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me.

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 your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.

The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one 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 toward the ground and was mute. And behold, one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips.

Then I opened my mouth and spoke. 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 know why I have come to you? For 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. Daniel chapter 10 begins the fourth and final vision of the book of Daniel, which runs for three chapters until the end of the book.

The first vision was the vision of the four beasts in chapter 7, the second the vision of the ram and the goat in chapter 8, the third the vision of the seventy weeks of years in chapter 9. This is the longest and the most challenging vision of the book, especially with the long sequence of prophesied events of vaguely defined characters in the following chapter. Due in part to the exceptional detail of the prophecies of chapter 11, many

commentators have regarded this vision as being prophecy delivered after the fact. However, those who adopt a late date for the book of Daniel have to apply all of the prophecies to events before the end of the second century BC.

Either some of the events spoken of at the end of chapter 11 had not yet taken place but were seen on the horizon, or sections like verses 40 to 45 must be related to the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In either case we have prophecies that don't fit what actually happened, leading to problems for those who believed that this was included as canonical literature earlier on. If on the one hand this is prophecy after the fact, describing events in recent history, it seems strange that it would describe events in its own time so inaccurately.

If it is mostly prophecy after the fact, but there is prophecy within it that looks to the near future, then it would clearly be proven not to be prophecy shortly afterwards. Either way we have a problem. It is far more reasonable, I believe, to take this as Christians have historically taken it, as prophecy that looks into the future long distant from its own time, and also far beyond the time of the Maccabees.

The prophecy comes in the third year of Cyrus, likely 536 BC. Things will be much clearer now to Daniel. Babylon has fallen, Cyrus has given his decree, many have returned to Judah, and had even started rebuilding the temple.

However, as Paul Tanner notes, by this point news had probably reached Daniel of rebuilding efforts having stalled, having faced concerted opposition the people had left off the work. The rest of this chapter describes the context of the delivery of the visionary word, which is related in chapters 11 and 12. These chapters describe the conflicts that frame the period that will follow.

Daniel's mourning, described in verses 2 and 3, might have been provoked by dispiriting news from Jerusalem. The re-establishment of the city and its sanctuary had been the subject of the vision of the preceding chapter. The fact that Daniel was mourning during a feast time, during Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, indicates the seriousness of the situation.

Daniel receives the vision by the banks of the river Tigris. He hasn't returned to Jerusalem, he is aged and still in the service of the king. The figure described in verses 5-9 should be distinguished from the figure in verse 10 and following.

As Tanner observes, the vision here resembles that in Revelation chapter 1 verses 12-17. Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white like white wool, like snow.

His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

When I saw him I fell at his feet as though dead. The close similarity between the figure in Daniel chapter 10 and Christ in Revelation chapter 1 should, I believe, lead us to identify the two. Daniel does not have the same response to Gabriel as he had to this figure, strongly weighing against the identification that some have made between Gabriel and the man dressed in linen.

Tanner also recognises similarities between Daniel's response to the vision and Saul of Tarsus' response to his vision on the road to Damascus and Acts, where Saul sees the vision and falls to the ground, whereas those with him do not, although they do see a great light. Daniel's companions here have a response of terror and flee, but they do not see the vision, they experience dread in response to they know not what. The figure that Daniel sees is clothed like a high priest, but is glorious like no human high priest is.

He has a metallic and radiant appearance, recalling the terrifying image of chapter 2 and Nebuchadnezzar's first dream. This is the reality of which the earthly high priest was merely a pale reflection. His linen garments, as James Jordan argues, should be associated with the garments worn by the high priest on the Day of Atonement.

We should here recall the vision of the seventy weeks. This is the great high priestly figure who will fulfil what the prophecy declared would come to pass in chapter 9 verse 24. The description of the figure here would also recall the throne chariot vision of Ezekiel chapter 1. This is the awaited figure, none other than Michael himself, the great prince of the covenant.

He is also the angel of the covenant, or the angel of the Lord, who appeared in the burning bush, who led Israel through the wilderness and into the promised land, and who is also mentioned in such places as Zechariah chapter 3. Daniel is so overcome by the vision that he enters into a sort of death-like state, or deep sleep, much as Adam was placed into a deep sleep when Eve was taken from his side, and Abraham was placed into a deep sleep when he saw the vision of Genesis chapter 15. Daniel is raised up with a touch and a word. The figure who does this is not the glorious man he has just seen, but an interpreting angel, namely Gabriel, whom he has seen in the earlier visions.

In chapter 8 verse 16, Gabriel had been charged to instruct Daniel concerning the vision. In chapter 9 verse 21, Gabriel was sent with a message to Daniel. There we are told that it was the one that he had seen in the vision at the first, which might be a reference to chapter 7 verse 16, when Daniel approaches one of the standing figures who interprets the vision for him.

Gabriel, it would seem, has been the interpreting angel for Daniel throughout. He will appear again in the Annunciation narratives in the story of Jesus' nativity. Gabriel declares that Daniel is greatly loved, much as in chapter 9 verse 23, and Daniel is made to stand up, trembling.

Much as in the preceding chapter, Daniel received this vision in response to his diligent seeking of the Lord. The Lord heard him and responded. Gabriel was resisted by the prince of the kingdom of Persia for 21 days.

The world was under angelic governance, and the prince of the kingdom of Persia here should be understood to be an angelic figure. Israel also has its prince, not a human figure, but a glorious heavenly figure, Michael. Nations were ruled by angelic powers which were connected with the gods of those nations.

Gabriel, as Jordan notes, seems to be responsible not just for a particular kingdom, but also for the region of the empires, struggling with both Persia and later with Greece. He must subdue the evil angelic rulers of those kingdoms, placing them under the Lord's dominion for a time. This struggle was keener during the time of Cyrus' absence, as Cambyses, who was ruling during that period, was not favourable to the Jews in the way that Cyrus was.

The 21 days of the kingdom of Persia's withstanding naturally recalls the three weeks of Daniel's fast at the beginning of the chapter. Daniel will be given a vision that will concern days yet to come. It will speak to his mourning concerning the seeming failure of the Jews to re-establish themselves in Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

Daniel has already been spoken to and touched in order to raise him up. Now his lips are touched in verse 16, but he is still weak and overcome. We should likely see in Daniel's experience here, the touching and raising up of him, some reference to the experience of Israel itself.

Daniel stands for the nation that will also need assistance at critical moments in the years that follow. In the visions of these chapters there are a number of references to empires that are brought low, without receiving any aid. Daniel receives a touch, and the nation of Israel will be touched at various points in its history, and assisted in order that it might not be finally overcome.

Daniel is a man greatly loved, and he is strengthened accordingly. His people will also be strengthened and raised up in the years that follow. Gabriel, the angel charged with subduing these empires to the service of the Lord, now has to wrestle with Persia once again, and once he is finished with Persia, he will have to wrestle with Greece.

His only great support in this struggle is Michael, the Prince of Israel, the angel of the Lord, whom I believe we should see as a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. A question

to consider, where else in scripture do we have references to Michael? Acts chapter 24 verses 1 to 23 But to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly, for we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world, and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him.

By examining him yourself, you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him. The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so. And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied, They proved to you what they now bring up against me.

But this I confess to you, that according to the way which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law and written in the prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. Now after several years, I came to bring alms to my nation, and to present offerings.

While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia, they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, other than this one thing, that I cried out while standing among them, It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.

But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the way, put them off, saying, When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case. Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody, but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs. After the plot to kill Paul in chapter 23, Claudius Lysias the tribune sent Paul to the governor Felix in Caesarea.

In Acts chapter 24, Paul makes his defense before Felix, after the spokesman Tertullus presents the case against him. Paul is walking in the footsteps of Christ here. As we have seen, Paul's trials and hearings in the book of Acts can be mapped onto Jesus' trials and hearings in the book of Luke.

Jesus was tried before the council, before Pilate, before Herod, and then was brought before Pilate again. In Acts, Paul is tried before the council, before Felix the governor, before Herod Agrippa II, and before Festus. One of the effects of Luke's focus upon speeches of defense at the end of the book of Acts is that of presenting the hearer with a more forensic framework for thinking through the issues at stake in the book.

These are issues of justice, issues of truth, as well as being issues that have ramifications for social order and for political allegiance. Beginning the book focusing

upon crowds and ending the book focusing more upon kings and rulers is a way in which Luke communicates the implications of the gospel for every area of social life. Only five days after Paul has come to Caesarea, Ananias, some elders, and a spokesman, or legal advocate, Tertullus, come up from Jerusalem.

The fact that the high priest himself comes up to Caesarea might be an indication of how significant a threat they view Paul as, as Jeff Myers has observed. Notable by their absence, however, are Paul's original accusers, the Jews from the province of Asia. Perhaps they were only in Jerusalem for Pentecost and have since returned.

However, the seeming absence of any witnesses is very telling. It is possible that Luke was able to get access to the notes of this trial, as various commentators have noted. Many of the details have a clear ring of historical veracity.

Tertullus begins with ingratiating praise for Felix. He associates Felix with and praises him for his establishment of peace. This might add force to his case against Paul.

Felix's honour lies in his being a peacemaker and a peacekeeper, and Paul is a man who stirs up riots and provokes the masses by being prepared to desecrate a temple. He is a threat to civil peace and order. He is a political agitator, a leader of a dangerous sect, and someone who is prepared to profane the temple.

It is worth noting that there is no mention of the very specific charge that was made against Paul, that he actually brought the Ephesian Trophimus, the Gentile, into the temple. Rather, there is merely the general claim that he attempted to profane the temple. And while the original claims against Paul were that he spoke against the law, the temple, and the people, here Tertullus tries to lean more into the fact that he is a political and social agitator.

He is someone who is causing unrest. A figure like Paul should not just be the concern of the Jewish authorities, he should be the concern of the Romans who try to keep the peace. This can't be dismissed as merely a religious matter.

Verse 7 is missing in many translations, because a chunk of verses 6-8 are not found in many more reliable manuscripts. And we would have judged him according to our law, but the chief captain Lysias came and with great violence took him out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come before you. Tertullus invites Felix to examine Paul.

He will discover from Paul the confirmation of everything that he has been accused of. In the absence of any other witnesses, they are hoping that Paul will end up giving evidence against himself. When Tertullus has finished, Felix indicates that it is Paul's turn to speak.

Paul, like Tertullus, begins with a reference to Felix as the governor, in a way that is designed to make Felix serve his defense. Tertullus had tried to use Felix's character as

a peacekeeper, as something to push him to act against Paul, and now Paul employs Felix's longer tenure as governor as evidence that he is not a troublemaker within the region. Indeed, it was only 12 days from the time that Paul first went down to Jerusalem to the time he was brought up to Caesarea.

He went for the purpose of worship, and there was no evidence whatsoever that he was a troublemaker. He wasn't disputing with anyone, he wasn't stirring up a crowd, he wasn't found in the synagogues of the city making trouble, nor was he found in the temple doing so. The claims that his adversaries bring against him have no proof to go with them.

However, if they want a confession, he's only too happy to give a confession. His confession is that he worships God according to the way. They might call it a sect, but Paul believes everything written in the Law and the Prophets, and this is the way he is worshipping the God of their fathers.

Even the men who are accusing him seem to have belief in God that there will be a resurrection, and this is the conviction that informs Paul himself. Beyond that fact, Paul takes pains to have a clear conscience towards both God and man. While riots may often start in response to Paul's message, Paul is not someone who goes around trying to cause trouble.

He doesn't instigate riots, he doesn't purposefully try to incite people by profaning temples or speaking directly against deities. He seeks to live at peace with men, and he seeks to live faithfully before God. Although trouble follows Paul around, he can honestly say that he is not the one who really causes it.

While Tutolus' accusations have a more political edge to them, Paul is also concerned here to answer the claim that he speaks against the Law, the people, and the temple. He presents himself as a faithful and observant Jew. He has been absent from Jerusalem for many years, for about five years, and then he comes up to bring alms to the nation.

He's someone doing a good work. He's presenting offerings at the temple, and he's providing relief to the people. When he was found in the temple, he was purified.

He was not profaning it. His accusers don't mention Trophimus here, so he doesn't mention Trophimus. That charge brought against him by the Jews from Asia may have been dropped as there was no evidence to substantiate it, nor witnesses to corroborate it.

We should also note that this is the one place in the Book of Acts where we have confirmation of the fact that Paul was going to Jerusalem to present the offering to the Jerusalem church. While it may be surprising that something that occupies so much of Paul's attention within his epistles is largely passed over in silence in the Book of Acts, it

seems that the other events of this visit overshadowed the gift somewhat. Paul underlines the importance of the absence of the Jews from Asia.

Their absence, as the people who made the accusation that first provoked the riot, is a very strong point against his opponents. He makes clear that the only thing that the people who are actually present have witnessed is his time in the council. Unless they have a meaningful accusation to make against him on account of that, then they really do not have a case.

The major incident in that whole hearing was Paul's statement that he was being tried on account of the resurrection of the dead. Once again, at the end of his response, Paul is underlining the point that he is on trial because of his witness to Christ. And it seems clear that Luke wants his hero to notice that it is really Christ and his message that is on trial here.

Paul is the apostle of Christ and he is being tried as the apostle of Christ. It is the message that is really on trial. This is seen in part as the more specific accusations fall away and the more general accusation that he is a troublemaker, that his message is that of a sect, and other such more general accusations come to the forefront as the main thing that Paul's accusers have against him.

To sum up then, Paul points out that his accusers do not have a strong case against him. The actions that he is being accused of are against his known character. There are no witnesses to the things that he is being accused of.

The claims being made against him are implausible. He had very good reason to be in Jerusalem as the bearer of the gift to the Jerusalem Christians, and it could easily be substantiated that he was with the people who had taken the vow. He was only there for 12 days before he ended up in Caesarea.

The first day he came from Caesarea and arrived in Jerusalem. The second day he met the elders. On the third to the ninth days he was probably being purified with the men who had taken the vow.

On the tenth day after he was taken in the temple he was before the Sanhedrin. On the eleventh day the plot was discovered. And on the twelfth day he was brought to Caesarea.

It doesn't leave him a lot of time to foment rebellion. He makes clear that the real reason he is on trial is because he believes in the resurrection of the dead. This belief in the resurrection, at the very core of Paul's faith, something that is bound up with his witness to Christ, is the reason why they are opposed to him.

They are opposed to him because of Christ, not because of anything that Paul himself has done. Having heard the case from Paul's accusers and Paul's response, Felix does

not cast judgement. Rather he puts them off, saying that he will wait until Lysias the Tribune arrives.

We are informed that the reason for this is that he had rather accurate knowledge of the way. Perhaps he had learned from someone like Cornelius. As the governor in Caesarea it would not be surprising if he had some dealings with the centurion living there.

Likewise his wife Drusilla is a Jew and would probably have knowledge of elite Jewish women, among whom there were a number who were associated with the early Christian movement. Presumably he knows enough to recognise that the Way is not a political movement designed to be a threat to Rome's authority. He probably also recognises that the Jewish authorities are not to be trusted, that this is really a religious dispute and that what is really at stake is the authority and power of the religious leaders.

He is not about to let himself be drawn into such a situation. Paul is returned to the custody of the centurion but he is given more liberties. While prison rations were mostly just designed to keep the person alive, his friends can bring him extra support to make sure he is healthy and provide for other needs, perhaps even making it possible for him to do some writing.

Because the centurion has been given these orders it will also mean that the visitors will not be harassed as they would usually be by the guards, who would often expect bribes or take things from visitors before they would be allowed to see the prisoner. A question to consider. Looking at Tertullus' speech and Paul's speech, how specifically does Paul respond to the accusations brought forward by Tertullus and how does he play off Tertullus' speech in other ways in his response?