

## The Book of Daniel: God's Faithfulness to Unfaithful People

Daniel 11:1-35

October 27, 2019

### 1. Persia – Advocates for Israel (1-2)

- a. Whereas the Babylonian Empire was God's instrument of God's judgment upon Israel, Persia was to be the instrument of God's protection.
  - i. Isaiah 44:28 "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."
- b. God used Cyrus to bring the Babylonian empire to an end as punishment for their treatment of Israel.
  - i. Isaiah 45:1 "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;"
- c. Satan sought to turn the Persian empire against the Jews with the persecution of Daniel, but God sent His angel to protect His servant and turn the heart of Cyrus in favor of the Jewish people (6:21-28).
- d. Daniel was informed that 3 more Persian kings would rise, followed by a fourth far richer and greater than the others, who would use his strength and riches to "stir up the realm of Grecia" (2).
- e. The Four Kings:
  - i. Cambyses (529-522)
  - ii. Pseudo-Smerdis (522-521) – He plotted to kill Smerdis, the son of Cabyses, and took the throne, calling himself Smerdis. Historians now call him Pseudo-Smerdis.
  - iii. Darius I Hystaspes (521-486) – Ezra appealed to Darius to renew Cyrus' decree to rebuild the temple (Ezra 5 & 6). Once again, the devil's plans to destroy the Jews and their temple were thwarted.
  - iv. Xerxes I (486-465) – In the Scriptures he is known as Ahasuerus who attacked Greece and was miserably defeated; he returned home after his defeat to console himself with his harem; in the providence of God, he chose Esther to be his new queen; the devil was stirring up Haman to destroy the Jews, but God overruled and used Esther to influence the king in favor of the Jewish people. He was later assassinated in 465 BC.
- f. Application: A great spiritual battle rages against the people of God. Even when it seems that the evil one is prevailing, God has set bounds on the devil's power, even using pagan men to accomplish His will! This is yet another reason that we be praying "For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

### 2. Greece – Brief but Transformative (3-4)

- a. Alexander toppled the Persian empire in retaliation for Xerxes' brutal attacks.
- b. Alexander's empire was short; no sooner did he stand up to rule and his life was cut short and his empire was divided among his generals.
- c. The spread of the Greek language and Greek culture assisted in the eventual spread of the Gospel and the Greek New Testament through the witness of the early church as the Book of Acts records.
  - i. Galatians 4:4-5 "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made unto the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."
- d. Application: Even though the church age was hidden from Daniel, we now have the great privilege and responsibility to take the great gifts we've been given to spread the gospel to the lost world around us. As Christians in America, we must take advantage of the fact that the trade language of the world is English! This may not always be this way. It is easier to spread the Gospel today than it has ever been. The early church spread the Gospel to the known world in spite of terrible persecution. What are we doing with the greatest freedoms and opportunities this world has ever known?

### 3. Israel – Caught Between Two Rival Nations (5-20)

- a. Seleucus I Nicator of Syria becomes stronger than Ptolemy I Soter of Egypt (5).

- b. Ptolemy II of Egypt tries to get an advantage over the Syrians by giving his daughter Bernice to Antiochus II of Syria. The problem was that Antiochus had to divorce his wife Laodicea first, which he did. When Ptolemy II died, Antiochus remarried Laodicea. To get revenge, Laodicea murdered Antiochus, Bernice and their infant son, fulfilling this prophecy to the letter (6).
  - c. Ptolemy III Euergetes (“Benefactor”), Bernice’s brother, prevailed militarily over Seleucus Callinicus of Syria, entering into “the fortress of the king of the north,” and carried back the idols that the Syrians removed from Egypt years before; he was championed as the “Benefactor” of the Egyptian people; this was the beginning of a seesaw battle between Egypt and Syria that would affect Israel over the next 150 years (7-9).
  - d. The struggle between Seleucus III and Antiochus III the Great against Ptolemy Philopator (10-19)
    - i. Seleucus III renews his father’s wars against Egypt but dies in battle (10a)
    - ii. Antiochus III of Syria, continues his father’s war against Egypt and prevails (10b).
    - iii. Ptolemy Philopator retaliated and destroyed the Syrian army under Antiochus III, but he did not take advantage of his victory and let Antiochus III escape back to Syria (11-12).
    - iv. Antiochus turned his attention to conquests in the East and gained much strength and wealth (13).
    - v. In 201, Antiochus mustered another large army, joining forces with Philip of Macedon, and attacked Egypt where he won a great victory over Ptolemy; Some of the Jews in Palestine joined with Antiochus hoping to break free of Egyptian control; but their revolt was crushed (14-16).
    - vi. Antiochus offered to negotiate with the Egyptians to marry his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy, hoping that she would undermine the Egyptians; unfortunately for Antiochus, Cleopatra chose to stand with her new husband against the Syrians (17).
    - vii. Antiochus decided to attack Greece but was defeated at Thermopylae and Magnesia by the Roman Consul Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus, a man that Antiochus had previously insulted (18).
    - viii. Antiochus died suddenly in 187 and was succeeded by his son, Seleucus Philopator (19).
    - ix. Seleucus oppressed the Jewish people by raising taxes so he could pay tribute to Rome, even sending his treasurer Heliodorus to plunder the Jewish temple, but Seleucus died suddenly shortly after (20).
  - e. Application: God preserved the nation of Israel through 150 years of wars that were often fought at their doorstep, proving that He is faithful to preserve His chosen people (Isaiah 43:1-7).
4. The Rise of Antiochus Epiphanes – The Persecutor of Israel (21-35)
- a. Antiochus Epiphanes (Glorious) came to power through deceit and overthrew his enemies in Egypt, making promises to the Egyptians that he did not plan to keep (21-27).
  - b. On his return to Syria he plundered and defiled the temple, abolished the daily sacrifice, killed the high priest (cf. 22), and killed many Jewish people (28).
  - c. He invaded Egypt 2 years later but the Romans confronted him in their ships from beyond Chittim (Cypress) and demanded that he stop his invasion (29-30).
  - d. In his wrath, he again turns his wrath upon Israel with the help of traitorous children of the covenant, offering a sow on the altar, setting up an image of Zeus, and forbidding the daily sacrifices and the worship of Jehovah (31-32).
  - e. Believing Jews fought back valiantly bringing a revival to the land, but many were slain (33-35).
    - i. This was a time of purging of the Jewish people.
    - ii. They continued to fight back until Antiochus was judged insane and died in Persia in 163.
    - iii. On December 14, 165, the temple was purified and the altar was dedicated. The Jews celebrate this occasion annually as the Feast of Lights (Hanukkah).
  - f. Application: Israel lost their freedom because they forsook their God. God in His mercy chastened and purified His people with intense suffering. We as Christians must take heed! We must not squander the immense blessings that God has given us. Christians in the US are wandering away from God and His blessing.

Conclusion:

1. There is a great spiritual battle going on in this world. Are you engaged in it?
2. We live in a unique time in church history in which we have more freedoms at our disposal than any other time. How are you using your freedoms to advance the Gospel of Christ?

3. No matter how bad things get, God has promised to protect you. Do you need to renew your hope in the Lord?
4. Are you letting the trials in your life purify you, or are they breaking you?