

Daniel Chapter 2: The Final Four + 1 (Part 2)

– The Persian Empire

Daniel 2:39a; 7:5, 17; 8:1-4

Remembering Our Goal in Prophecy

1. Rejoice in the faithfulness of God. He always keeps His promises.
2. Rest in the sovereignty of God. He will accomplish all His holy will.
- 3.

The Second Kingdom – Medo-Persian Empire (550-330 BC)

Symbol	Meaning	Fulfillment / Interpretation
Chest & Arms	Strength and activity	Not as majestic as the first kingdom (2:39), but powerful, resourceful, and active.
Silver	Precious metal that functioned as a standard of wealth & commerce	The Median-Persian kingdom would be majestic, but not as much as Babylon (gold). He would be the most majestic of the kings prophesied.
Bear	Less majestic than a lion, but larger and stronger	Media-Persia did not possess the splendor of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, but its boundaries were increased and it lasted much longer.
One side elevated	One side of the kingdom would be more powerful than the other	The Persians politically dominated the Medes in this Alliance.
Three ribs in its mouth	Devouring prey	Weakening of the Babylonian kingdom, particularly by defeating three powers: Babylon, Lydia, & Egypt.

The Medo-Persian Empire was “inferior” (2:39) to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon in that a) it came after Babylon, b) its rulers never possessed the absolute authority Nebuchadnezzar, and c) it did not possess the splendor and majesty of Babylon.

The Facts of History

The Lop-sided Bear

- Daniel 8:20 is why we believe with certainty that the Bear represents Medo-Persia.
- A coalition between Babylon and Media defeated the city-state of Nineveh in 612 BC.
- As the Babylonian kingdom wound down, a power struggle was taking place in the Median kingdom.
 - Astyages ruled the Median kingdom from the north, just south of the Caspian Sea. His rule became more despotic through the years.

- Cyrus, the southerner from Persis, organized a federation of 10 Persian tribes and led a revolt against Astyages.
- The army of Astyages mutinied on the battlefield, delivering the Medo-Persian kingdom to Cyrus.
- Cyrus did not kill Astyages, but allowed him to remain in the king’s court.
- Thus, one side of the bear (Persian) was more prominent than the other (Median) in this unified kingdom.
- Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC with little effort (according to Babylonian and Persian records).
- The Medo-Persian empire covered more ground geographically than did the Babylonian Empire.

Different Data:

- Two Dariuses
 - Darius the Mede (5:31) was uncle to Cyrus the Persian (the Great)
 - Darius the Mede in Daniel is not the same Darius as the one mentioned in Ezra (4:5, 24; 5:5-7; 6:1, 12-15), Nehemiah (12:22), Haggai (1:1, 15; 2:10), and Zechariah (1:1, 7; 7:1).
- Problem: Who conquered Babylon: Darius or Cyrus?
 - History tells us that Cyrus was the first king of this Medo-Persian Empire.
 - But Daniel 5:28 mentions Darius, not Cyrus.
 - Resolution: Cyrus the general captured the city, not Darius. But the Bible wisely mentions Darius as “receiving” not conquering the kingdom.
 - Cyrus followed Darius the Mede (6:28).
- Though Daniel doesn’t mention the war raging between Babylon and Medo-Persia, Isaiah does (13, 14, 45, 46, 47), and so does Jeremiah (50, 51).

Kings of Persia, 550-330 BC			
Cyrus II, “the Great”	550-529 BC	2 Chron 36:22, 23; Ezra 1; 5:13; Isaiah 44:-45:13	Cyrus released the Jews who wanted to leave from the Babylo-Persian Empire.
Cambyses II	529-522 BC		
Darius I, “the Mede”	522-486 BC	Daniel 5:31; ch 6; 9:1; 11:1	This Darius was tricked into throwing Daniel to the lions.
Xerxes I	486-465 BC		
Artaxerxes I	465-425 BC		
Xerxes II (Ahasuerus II)	425-424 BC		
Darius II, “the Great”	423-404 BC	Ezra 4:5; ch 5-6; Nehemiah 12:22;	

		Haggai 1:1; 2:15; Zechariah 1:1; 7:1	
Artaxerxes II Mnemon (Ahasuerus)	404-359 BC	Ezra 4:6; Esther; Daniel 9:1	This is the king who deposed Vashti and married Esther.
Artaxerxes III	359-338 BC		
Arses	338-336 BC		
Darius III	336-330 BC		

Isaiah's Amazing Prophecy

Isaiah consistently prophesied that Israel would be destroyed if they didn't repent of idolatry. Amazingly, Isaiah made some very distinct prophecies:

1. The Medes would overthrow the Babylonians (13:17-18).
2. Jerusalem and the temple would be rebuilt (44:28).
3. Israel's captives would be set free (45:13).
4. Someone named Cyrus would accomplish both (44:28; 45:1).
5. This Cyrus would not know the God of Israel (45:4-5).
6. This Cyrus would do all of this for God's people without coercion or payment (45:13).

Why is this so amazing?

- Isaiah lived and prophesied around 700 BC. The fulfillment came 150 YEARS LATER!
- Neither the Babylonians nor the Medes/Persians were world powers at the time of his prophecies.
- Cyrus is not a Hebrew name. It's not even an Assyrian or Babylonian name, but a Persian name. The ONLY explanation for Isaiah naming "Cyrus" is God inspired him!
- That God would use a PAGAN king to accomplish His will, especially rebuilding the temple, is unheard of! That God did it should be mind-blowing to us.
- That a pagan king would rebuild a structure as costly as the temple without asking to be repaid is unfathomable.

"What Isaiah prophesied from a distance, Daniel prophesied near at hand and then witnessed with his own eyes."i These things would have been mind-blowing to the Jews! They should be mind-blowing to us!

So What?

- God's plan always comes together. What Isaiah saw through telescope Daniel saw firsthand.
- God's plan will come together. What the prophets saw through telescope, we may see firsthand. Or we still see it through telescope like the prophets. The challenge is the same: trust God when the world seems to be going to hell.

Next Week: The Final Four + 1 (Part 2): The 3rd Kingdom (Greece)

¹ Michael Barrett. *God's Unfailing Purpose: The Message of Daniel* (61).