

An Introduction to the Last Prophecy Given to Daniel

Daniel 11:1-4

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It has been a few months since we were last in the Book of Daniel. Perhaps a brief summary of where we have been would be helpful before proceeding to Daniel 11.

Daniel and his three friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who were about 15 years of age) were taken captive from Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 605 B.C. They were trained in Nebuchadnezzar's school to serve as officials in Babylon.

In **Daniel 1-6** we have primarily a historical narrative (with one exception: the vision in **Daniel 2** of the great image representing Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—a stone representing Christ and His kingdom crushes the last kingdom and fills the earth). The other chapters in **Daniel 1-6** concern various ways God delivers Daniel and his three friends out of the hands of the wicked (e.g. out of a fiery furnace and from a lions' den) and how the Lord humbles the mightiest king on earth at that time, Nebuchadnezzar, by giving to him the mind of a beast to roam around in the woods for 7 years, and then restores him to his throne with this amazing testimony: Daniel 4:34-35. It is not the wicked in high places that rule, but our God and Savior—He has not forgotten us.

Our almighty King continues to reveal His supreme power and sovereignty in **Daniel 7-12**, where there is a decided shift from historical narrative to prophetic revelation concerning future events in ruling and overruling nations and leaders to the good of His people (even when they are taken by God through intense times of persecution). The enemy is not in control, rather the Lord righteously judges the wicked and in ever abounding mercy saves His people.

Daniel 7 is a prophetic vision involving 4 beasts (similar to **Daniel 2**) that represent Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (which leads to the Son of Man once again bringing all kingdoms under His rule). **Daniel 8** focuses on two beasts representing the kingdoms of Persia and Greece—the rise of Alexander the Great and the historical arch-enemy of the Jews, Antiochus Epiphanes, between the years 174-165 B.C (who is subdued by the Lord through the agency of the Maccabees). **Daniel 9** prophesies 70 weeks of years (490 years) that cover the history of the Jews from about 457 B.C. to 33 A.D. (particularly focusing on the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and His death in atoning for the sins of His people).

Daniel 10 is a preface to the last prophetic revelation (in which the angel, Gabriel, prepares Daniel to receive the prophecy found in the final two chapters). **Daniel 11-12** detail a prophecy of historical events (yet future to Daniel) that are so accurate that even skeptics claim this could not have been uttered hundreds of years before these events, but was allegedly written by a pseudo-Daniel after these events had already occurred. These prophetic events take us from Daniel's time in Babylon all the way to the millennium (at which time the fullness of the Gentile nations together with Israel will be brought into the Church of Christ).

No doubt, much more could be said by way of summary, but hopefully that is helpful to you as we begin to consider **Daniel 11-12**. Our main points for this Lord's Day are: (1) The Kings of the Persian Empire (Daniel 11:1-2); (2) The Kings of the Grecian Empire (Daniel 11:3-4).

I. The Kings of the Persian Empire (Daniel 11:1-2).

A. Daniel 11:1

1. The speaker in Daniel 11:1 is not Daniel, but is the same angelic speaker that began to declare God's message to Daniel back in Daniel 10:10-11 and is yet speaking in Daniel 10:21 and continues speaking in Daniel 11:2. There is no break between Daniel 10:21 and Daniel 11:1. This angelic messenger was most likely Gabriel, who had appeared previously to Daniel (Daniel 8:16 and Daniel 9:21).

2. Gabriel relates how he had confirmed and strengthened Darius the Mede, who was the

king appointed by Emperor Cyrus to rule over the city/province of Babylon after Cyrus conquered it from the Babylonians (539 B.C.). This relates to the powerful agency and work of God's angels in influencing/guiding even pagan kings in God's providential care of this world (Daniel 10:12-13). Angels especially are sent to minister to you, God's people (Hebrews 1:14). They are creatures, and prayers are not to be offered to them—yet they are God's mighty ones that God uses to restrain evil in this world and to protect His people (as Gabriel did by his influencing Darius/Cyrus to set God's people free to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem).

B. Daniel 11:2

1. Gabriel now proceeds to reveal the truth which he was sent to convey to Daniel (and to us) concerning future events.
2. Gabriel begins with the kings of Persia who would reign in succession from the present king of all Persia—Cyrus. Three kings would follow Cyrus—Cambyses (530-522 B.C.), Smerdis (522 B.C.), and Darius I (522-486 B.C.). Then there would follow a fourth king—Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.—this is likely the king identified as Ahasuerus that married Esther).
 - a. Xerxes I did in fact accumulate more wealth than all the kings of Persia, and did use that wealth to amass an amazingly great army and navy to attack Greece. His empire included modern-day Iran, Egypt, Turkey, and parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan.
 - b. The Greek historian, Herodotus, notes that never had such a great military campaign been brought together. Reports vary, but ancient estimates place the size of Persia's military force at over one million men brought against Greece. Xerxes suffered a heavy loss of men at the Battle of Thermopylae at the hands of the 300 Spartans and was subsequently defeated at the naval Battle of Salamis (480 B.C.). This was the decisive blow that led to the gradual decline of Persia over the next 150 years in the subsequent reign of kings in Persia. This prophecy of the Persian kings was fully realized just as Gabriel revealed it to Daniel.

II. The Kings of the Grecian Empire (Daniel 11:3-4).

- A. Gabriel reveals that from Greece shall arise “a mighty king”.
 1. This clearly refers to Alexander the Great, who decisively defeated the Persians (333 B.C.) and subsequently took control of the Persian Empire and extended it even beyond Persia's borders.
 2. In our study of Daniel 8, Daniel was given a vision of two beasts fighting for power—a ram with two horns (representing the empire of Medo-Persia) and an he goat with a notable horn (representing the empire of Greece and Alexander the Great). The ram (Medo-Persia) is destroyed by the he goat (Greece) and the great horn (Alexander), and then while yet strong, the horn is broken (Daniel 8:8). Much of what we find in Daniel 11 is a further elaboration of what was revealed in Daniel 8.
- B. Gabriel gives several facts about this “mighty king” (Alexander) which further confirm his identity in history.
 1. **He shall rule with great dominion (Daniel 11:3).**
 - a. Alexander came with his military power from the west (Daniel 8:5) subduing all who stood in his way until he reached the Persian capital of Persepolis (in 330 BC). By the age of thirty, he had the largest empire in history up to that point and was undefeated in battle. By the time of his death, his empire stretched from Greece to India and to Egypt and all the territory between (including the holy land).
 - b. Alexander did so with such speed that it still amazes military experts. The Grecian army of Alexander was swifter than any of the ancient armies in its advance against the enemy. Its power was not in its greater numbers, but in its swifter maneuvers with a smaller army.
 2. **He shall do according to his will (Daniel 11:3).**
 - a. Alexander was not one to be restrained by the will of any man (whether religious or military advisers). He imposed his will on all that served him.
 - b. He was convinced that he was not the son of King Philip II, but rather was the

son of the omnipotent Greek god Zeus.

3. **When he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken (Daniel 11:4).**

- a. At the very height of his powerful conquest of the ancient world and at a young age, he was broken. He died in Babylon in agony (perhaps by poisoning) at the age of 33 (323 BC).
- b. It is said he wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. Alexander was driven by ambition to gain the whole world.

4. **His kingdom was not left to his posterity (Daniel 11:4).**

- a. Alexander had two sons, Alexander and Hercules, but neither reigned in his place, but were murdered by ambitious officers.
- b. The whole posterity of Alexander was rooted out to fulfil this prophecy recorded here more than 200 years before the death of Alexander.

C. Gabriel gives specific details as to what would happen to the great empire of Alexander after his death (Daniel 11:4).

1. **His empire shall be divided into four parts after his death.**

- a. Not into two parts, three parts, five parts, or six parts.
- b. Daniel 7:6; Daniel 8:8.
- c. History records this detailed information as well. After Alexander's unexpected death, his vast empire was in divided into four parts: Macedonia/Greece (Antipater/Cassander), Thrace/Asia Minor (Lysimachus), Syria (Seleucus), and Egypt (Ptolemy).

2. **None of the four reached the dominion of Alexander.**

- a. None of the four were able to conquer the others in order to consolidate the power/dominion reached by Alexander.
- b. The focus in the following verses will next turn to two of the kingdoms of Alexander's great empire: Syria (the Seleucid Kingdom), Egypt (the Ptolemaic Kingdom) and the ongoing battles between these two kingdoms and the persecution of God's people until God delivers His people through the Maccabees.

D. Application

1. Let me ask you, who was richer, who had inherited a greater kingdom? Alexander the Great or the poor beggar, Lazarus (Luke 16)? Alexander wanted to gain the whole world, but could not hold onto it, and lost it all at death—losing his own soul for all eternity in hell. Lazarus gained it all at death and is rejoicing for all eternity in heaven (Matthew 16:26).

2. What in this world do we consider to be more valuable than our immortal soul? Wealth, possessions, the approval of others, health, security, relationships? What do we pursue most vigorously in this world: Jesus and His riches or the world and its riches (Luke 12:16-21)? Clinging more tightly to the things of this world does not mean we will not lose them (like sand in the hand).

3. We are tempted to panic about the tyranny we see in this nation and the threat of persecution. Let us not be overcome with fear, for our God reigns. It is not the purpose of the wicked that shall win the day, but the purpose of God (Psalm 33:10-12; Proverbs 21:1). Jesus is King of kings and the prince of the kings of the earth. All power/authority is His, and all dominion is His, and He uses it for the good of His people.

4. We acknowledge the Lord Jesus to be Lord of the nations, but let us bring closer to home. Do we practically submit to His lordship in our marriage and in our work? What does that mean? It means that unlike Alexander (who did according to his own will), we delight and love to do the will of God as found in His Word. It means, it is His will before it is my will, and I delight to do it. All the world will one day acknowledge that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). But the unbelieving world will not do so out of love or willingly do so. Like the demons that unwillingly came out of people shouting and convulsing those poor souls and confessing the lordship of Jesus, so will the unbelieving world do in the future. But that is not the

response of a true Christian to Christ's lordship. We do so because our hearts have been changed by His amazing grace, because of His free and full forgiveness, and because of His everlasting love. True joy and peace in all circumstances comes from trusting Jesus as Savior and submitting to Him as Lord out of love—not fighting with Him.

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