

Daniel
Chapter 11:1-8
Can't We All Just Get Along?

Daniel 11

1 And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.

Introduction

When I was a boy, I was pretty "rambunctious" (that was what my mother called it), and it seemed a total impossibility for me to remain focused for more than a few minutes at a time. The toughest thing on earth for me was Sunday morning church. Oh I could manage to hang on long enough to hear the choir sing, but by the time they started to take up the offering, my attention span had pretty much left the building. I was convinced that every sermon was an hour long endurance test designed specifically to lead me into the irresistible temptation to squirm in the pew, ultimately drawing the wrath of my father, who pretty much had a zero tolerance policy when it came to misbehaving in church. In short, I got into trouble almost every Sunday. I knew that I was supposed to sit quietly and listen in a state of holy reverence, but quite frankly, I found it much more comfortable lying under the pew than actually sitting in it. This created quite a lot of stress in my young life for it seemed like every Sunday, after giving me "the look" several times, my father's patience would finally grind to a halt and he would whisper in my ear ever so softly, "you are going to get it when you get home". For those of you who had a father like mine, you know exactly what this dreadful and terrible phrase meant. I knew it all too well. I had learned that once my father had gotten to the point of telling me that I was going to "get it", that there was no going back. All the tearful, and somewhat earnest pleas for "one more chance", and, "daddy I promise I'll be good", were but a waste of breath. In short, DAD had spoken, and now all that was left was to endure the long silent ride home in the car as I mentally prepared myself for the "wrath that was to come".

My dad was a man who said what he meant, and meant what he said. Our Father in Heaven is much the same way. When He declares that something will happen then nothing can stop it. At the beginning of **chapter eleven**, the angelic messenger begins unpacking the long winding prophecies foretelling the many hardships for the future generations of God's chosen people by saying, "**I tell you the truth**". It was already settled. God had declared it, and it WOULD come to pass. The angel gives Daniel a detailed description of the sufferings that Israel must endure before she would truly be free. Though the exiles had returned to their homeland, trial upon trial would be sent into their midst. Trials meant to refine them as silver, until the time of their future glory in the messianic kingdom. Much like myself when I was younger, Israel had found difficulty "staying focused" on the Lord. God intended to see to it that a remnant of them would endure many hardships, and one day call upon His Name (**Zech. 13:9**). On that day, Israel would never lose its focus again.

The angel explains to Daniel, that the reason he has enjoyed the favor of King Darius, is because of the angel's support behind the scenes (**vs. 1**). It was no accident that Daniel had endured the political upheaval of Babylon's fall to the Medes and Persians, God had seen to it. The unseen battle that was raging in the heavenly realms insured the safety and effectiveness of the old prophet until his final mission on earth would be accomplished. This mission was to write down in great detail, the trials that would come upon the nation of Israel, to serve as a reminder that God was in firm control of the destinies of men, and that ultimately, the people He had chosen to save, would in fact be saved. Daniel is about to be given a great lesson in history, the "history" of Israel being written in advance by The Sovereign God.

Due to the vast amount of detail given in this chapter, I feel it necessary to depart from my usual outline format and rather explain this passage in a verse by verse context, beginning with **verse 2**.

Verse 2 - The Kings of Persia

2 "Now then, I tell you the truth: Three more kings will arise in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece.

First the angel informs Daniel that three more Kings will arise to power in the Persia. The angel does not say that this will be all of the kings that will rule in the Medo-Persian Empire, but rather that an emphasis is placed upon the fourth king, who will be far richer than the others. History now tells us the names of the kings referred to here by the angelic messenger. The first is Cambyses, son of Cyrus the Great, who reigned from 530-522 B.C. The second was an imposter who came to be called "Pseudo" Smerdis. His real name was Guamata. The story behind his brief rule is very interesting. It seems that Guamata bore a striking resemblance to Cyrus' son Smerdis, and claimed the throne for a brief period of time while Cambyses was away on a military campaign. He endeared himself to the people by giving them a three year tax break. He was soon found out however, and was executed for his trouble after reigning as an imposter for several months.

The third king to arise was Darius I who reigned from 522-486 B.C. He was mostly remembered for his military accomplishments, as well as, establishing a postal service throughout the empire. The fourth king, the one on which the angel gives the most emphasis in this narrative, is none other than King Xerxes (also known as Ahasuerus), who reigned from 486-465 B.C. He was the powerful king who is mentioned in the book of Esther. He was extremely wealthy, and by some historical accounts, had an army of over one million soldiers. It is Xerxes that attempted to conquer Greece in 480 B.C., which became the source of the intense hatred for the Medo-Persian empire by Grecian people. Though other kings would follow after Xerxes, it was he, who kindled the fire amongst the Greeks that would eventually lead to the fateful clash between the armies of Alexander and the Persians, ending in the subsequent demise of the once mighty Medo-Persian empire. This fourth king unknowingly caused the collapse of his empire by underestimating the resolve of those he wished to conquer. A mighty warrior-prince would arise from among his Grecian foes, and exact his revenge.

Verse 3 - The Mighty King Who Will Appear.

3 Then a mighty king will arise, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases.

Before Alexander the Great invaded the Medo-Persian empire, he sent a letter to King Darius saying: *"Your ancestors entered into Macedonia and the other parts of Greece, and did us damage when they had received no affront to cause it. Now I, as General of the Greeks, and provoked by you, and desirous of avenging the injury done us by the Persians, have passed into Asia."*

In other words, Alexander was warning the Medo-Persian empire that their day of reckoning for their past transgressions against his people was at hand. He was as good as his word, and the once mighty empire was crushed beneath the galloping hooves of Alexander's lightning-quick army. Just like that, a "mighty king" appeared and conquered the known world to "**do as he pleased**". Alexander reigned his empire with impunity, but his mighty rule ended just as abruptly as it had began when Alexander died unexpectedly at the young age of thirty-three.

Verse 4 - His Empire Will Be Broken Up and Parceled Out.

4 After he has arisen, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others.

As we have previously studied, upon Alexander's untimely demise, his empire was divided amongst four of his generals. The kingdom was divided into four "parcels", Macedonia, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Syria. Alexander's two sons were quickly murdered upon his death, leaving him no rightful heir to ascend to the throne, so his generals began to engage in a lengthy series of power struggles known as the Wars of the Diadochi (Diadochi in Greek simply means successors). For many years, conflict upon conflict arose between the parcels of the fractured Grecian empire in an attempt by each region to gain dominance over the others. The struggles were bloody, and numerous. The once unified Grecian empire became a place of civil war in which the children of Israel would find themselves centrally located between the bloodiest region of them all, the conflict between the Ptolemies (Egypt) and the Seleucids (Syria). Every single battle that would occur between these two factions would be forced by geography, to march through the land of Israel. The Seleucids, to the north in Syria, and the Ptolemies, to the south in Egypt, would repeatedly sweep the chosen people of God into the midst of violent struggles of which they had no desire to take part. It would be a series of terrible trials for the tiny nation, caught up in a civil war simply by means of location. Horrible atrocities would become a daily reality for all who lived in Palestine.

Verse 5 - The Kings of the South and North

5 "The king of the South will become strong, but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power.

From this point through **verse thirty-five**, the angels message is completely focused upon the many years of conflict that will come to pass between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucidae of Syria. Of course there would be many other conflicts that would occur in the world during this time frame, but only the struggle between Egypt and Syria would have a significant impact upon God's chosen people. It is important to note that the many references to the kings of the north and south are not meant to be interpreted as merely two kings, but rather two lines of kings that would carry the struggle from one generation to the next.

The "King of the South" mentioned in the **5th verse** is a reference to Ptolemy I Soter (323- 285 B.C.). At first, Ptolemy I had authority over Seleuces I, who is referenced here as "one of his princes", but Seleuces later rebelled and gained his own power and was able to take control of the territories of Babylonia and Media. This expansion gave Seleuces the strength necessary to break his alliance with Egypt and to rule his newly acquired domain independently. Though Ptolemy I and Seleuces I never fought against one another, Seleuces' break from Ptolemie's rule would set the stage for over one-hundred years of bloody civil war that would bring much grief upon the nation of Israel.

Verse 6 - The Royal Wedding

6 After some years, they will become allies. The daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she will not retain her power, and he and his power will not last. In those days she will be betrayed, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her.

In an effort to reunify the Syrians and the Egyptians, Ptolemy II Philadelphus offered his daughter Berenice in marriage to Antichus II Theos (261-246 B.C.). The problem was that Antiochus I Theos, whose name means "Antiochus the god" (not a lot of humility among these kings) was already married. The deal was struck between the two kings with the understanding that ol' Antiochus would divorce his first wife Laodice and ban her offspring from ascending the throne of Syria. Antiochus was to then marry Berenice, and the children from this new union were to be endowed with rights to the royal throne. This was done to ensure that a descendant from both the royal lines of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids would sit upon the throne of Syria thus ensuring peace between the two regions. It seemed like a good idea at the time, but no one really took into account the jealousy, and lust for power within the scorned heart of dear old ex-wife Laodice, who was not about to take all this "lying down" as it were.

Just a few years after the marriage, Ptolemy II died. Upon his death, Antiochus put Berenice away and took his "ex" back into the Palace. No one can really know what the old king was really thinking, but it proved to be a terrible decision on his part. For as soon as she moved back in, the good Queen Laodice then conspired to have her rival Berenice murdered along with her children, who fled for their lives to the city of Daphne. Their escape proved to be futile however, for Berenice had them tracked down and they were all subsequently poisoned to death. According to historians, the lovely Laodice did not stop there, she also poisoned her "faithful" husband Antiochus and placed her son Seleuces II Callinicus upon the throne in his stead. This fulfilled every word of prophesy given in **verse 6.**

Verses 7 and 8a - The Revenge of Berenice

7 "One from her family line will arise to take her place. He will attack the forces of the king of the North and enter his fortress; he will fight against them and be victorious. 8a He will also seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt.

Upon hearing the news that his sister's life was in danger, Ptolemy Euergetes of Egypt (named in this verse as one from her [Berenice's] family line) rushed north to come to her rescue. He arrived too late and learned the news of Berenice's murder. Ptolemy was enraged and proceeded to take out his wrath upon the Seleucids. He wreaked havoc in Syria, and took many spoils back to Egypt upon his return. According to historians, Ptolemy brought 40,000 talents of silver, along with much gold. He also returned to Egypt with many of the Egyptian Idols that had been carried off to Persia by Cambyses in his campaign of 525 B.C. This return of the "gods of Egypt" by Ptolemy III, earned him the name "Euergetes" (meaning benefactor) from the Egyptians. This action of revenge and capturing the Egyptian idols completely fulfilled the prophecies of **Daniel 11:7-8.**

Verse 8b - The Calm Before Several More Storms.

8b ...For some years he will leave the king of the North alone.

Verse eight ends by saying that for a time the king of the south would refrain from further attacking the north, once his revenge and blood lust had subsided. History tells us that Ptolemy Euergetes died in 221 B.C. While his counterpart in Syria, Seleucus II Callinicus died four years earlier. The struggles were far from over however, and the war would soon be resurrected when invaders from Syria would once again march into Egypt. The Seleucids and the Ptolemies would pass their propensity for war on to their children (**vs.10**), and the wars would be ever increasing in intensity. This is only a small portion of the prophecies given to Daniel in the third year of Darius the Mede.

It must have been terrifying for the old prophet to foresee just how much bloodshed would surround his beloved people in the future. The world surrounding Palestine was to become a dreadful place indeed, but Daniel had come to learn from his own experience, that the people of God would surely endure. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world!