

Commentary Daniel Lesson 10

Chapter 10 introduces the final prophetic vision in Daniel. It covers much of the history between the Old and New Testaments, and then leaps forward to the Antichrist and the end of the age.

Verse 1 states: "In the third year of Cyrus ... a revelation ... to Daniel ... concerned a great war." Cyrus's third year was 537 BC. The "great war" evidently describes both the heavenly spiritual conflict portrayed in this chapter and future wars on earth centering around the Jewish people.

As Daniel stood on the bank of the Tigris River, he saw an angel. Those around Daniel fled though they could not see the vision, so he was left alone. Overwhelmed, he fell into a deep sleep. After the angel strengthened and reassured Daniel, he explained why he had failed to come sooner: "The prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me" (v. 13). No human prince could possibly restrain an angel, so the "prince of the Persian kingdom" must have been an evil angel. Another angel, Michael, helped this angel so he could come to Daniel. The angel announced that he had come to explain what would happen to Daniel's people "in ... a time yet to come" (v. 14). The angel told Daniel that he would soon leave to fight against the Prince of Persia, and that when he left, the Prince of Greece, another evil angel, would come, apparently to do battle with him as well. Before the angel left he would tell Daniel what was written "in the Book of Truth" (v. 21), apparently a symbolic reference to a divine record in heaven that would now become part of the written Scriptures on earth. The angel noted that he had help from Michael, "your prince" (v. 21), apparently meaning that Michael was the prince of the Jews.

Here evil angels are assigned to Persia and Greece, while Michael and the angel who speaks to Daniel seem to be on assignment to help the Jews. World political leaders like to think that they govern the movements of history. They are usually unaware that invisible spiritual forces may be influencing events more profoundly than presidents or prime ministers. The spiritual forces apparently involve themselves especially when nations are dealing with God's people — both Christians and His covenant people, the Jews. Understanding this should encourage us to pray more diligently, since God uses the prayers of His people to influence both world events and personal lives.

Daniel 11 contains the most detailed prophecies in the Bible. The prophecy begins in verse 2 by referring to the kings of Persia. The fourth king was Xerxes. Also known by his Hebrew name Ahasuerus, this same king appears in the book of Esther and takes Esther as his wife.

Verses 3-4 jump forward over 100 years to Alexander the Great. Part of Alexander's empire went to a line of rulers called the Ptolemies, who were based in Egypt, to Israel's south. Another part went to a line of rulers called the Seleucids, who were based in Syria, to Israel's north. Both wanted control of Israel, which was sandwiched between the two. Verses 5-20 record the unending conflicts between the two powers down to the time of Antiochus.

Check It Out:

Daniel received this vision in 537 B.C. The vision so far has foretold details of strained Egyptian-Syrian relations between about 300 B.C. and 175 B.C. Now we begin to understand why the evil spiritual forces did not want Daniel to prophesy this information. With this record from the "Book of Truth" in their hands, the suffering Jews in Israel would understand what was happening. They could pray and plan and be encouraged through dark times without being deceived by Satan's lies. The Bible we hold in our hands is God's Word of Truth. We, too, can be encouraged through dark times as we read and trust God's message for us: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me" (John 14:1).

The first king of the South, Ptolemy I, had a commander, Seleucus I, who became ruler of Syria. Eventually the two powers became allies. An arranged marriage between the king of Egypt's daughter, Berenice, and Antiochus II was supposed to bring the nations together. It ended when the king of Egypt died and Antiochus's ex-wife murdered both him and Berenice and took control of Syria. This launched the two nations into decades of bitter warfare.

Verses 7-20 now outline the resulting conflicts between the Ptolemies and Seleucids. First, Berenice's brother would successfully strike back at the Syrians. The Syrians would attempt a comeback but would suffer defeat. After that, the Syrians would return with greater resolve and under Antiochus III would finally wrest Israel from Egyptian control. Verse 14 foretells "your own people" will rebel against Egypt. This happened when many Jews turned against their Egyptian rulers, thinking they would be better off under Syria. Antiochus III gave his daughter in marriage to the king of Egypt in 194 B.C., hoping she would help him gain power in Egypt. But she decided to be more loyal to her Egyptian husband than to her Syrian father, so the plan failed. Eventually Antiochus III passed off the scene and after the brief reign of one of his sons, another son, Antiochus Epiphanes whom we have already met in Chapter 8, came to power.

Antiochus Epiphanes was ruthless and manipulative. He planned to unite his unstable empire through imposing Greek religion and culture on all his subjects. They would have had to worship his god, Zeus. Other kings had given them freedom of worship. He did not. Notably at this time a "prince of the covenant" (v. 22) was both swept away and deceived by Antiochus. This probably refers to the murder of the legitimate Jewish high priest, Onias III. Antiochus's invasion of Egypt was victorious, and he returned to Syria loaded with Egyptian wealth. However, as he traveled through Israel he grew frustrated over the Jews' resistance to him, and in fury killed thousands of citizens and plundered the temple before returning to Syria.

In 168 B.C., he invaded Egypt again, but Roman ships intervened and forced him to withdraw. His army invaded Jerusalem again, plundered the city, slaughtered thousands of innocent citizens, and attempted to exterminate the Jewish faith. He planned to unite his empire through imposing Greek religion and culture on all his subjects. This culminated in the "abomination ... desolation" (v. 31) when in December 167 B.C., he offered a pig to the Greek god Zeus in the Jewish temple.

God was not going to permit the extermination of either the Jewish faith or the Jewish people. Thus He raised up resistance to this evil ruler. An aged Jewish priest named Mattathias and his five sons triggered an uprising known as the Maccabean Revolt. The Maccabeans and their followers called the Jewish nation to repentance. But they paid a terrible price; thousands died as martyrs. At first, the Maccabeans and their followers had little help from the general population, but gradually, many who were not spiritually motivated sided with them. The "stumbling" of the believers refers to their suffering and martyrdom, not their sins. Verse 35 points to "the time of the end," when Christ returns, persecution ends, and God's people are victorious.



Some scholars estimate that the first 35 verses of Daniel 11 contain 135 fulfilled prophecies. As each of these detailed prophecies came to pass, believing Jews grew in their faith. They sensed more and more how God controls all facets of life. You may feel just as overwhelmed by the circumstances around you as the Jews felt overwhelmed by the Egyptians and Syrians. When fear wells up, go back to the Word. Listen as the Spirit speaks to you through it.