History = His Story: Part 1

Daniel 11:1-10

**Introduction**

This morning, we are beginning our study of the eleventh chapter of Daniel. These last two chapters of the book will cover events that will take place after the life of Daniel as well as at the end of the age. Most of the information that we will cover today will seem like a history lesson but believe me the insights that we will gain from the information that the angel gives to Daniel will have a lasting impact on our lives today. During the last months while we have been discussing the book of Daniel together there have been two major themes that continue to repeat themselves in the text. The first theme is that God is sovereign over all the kingdoms of man. We have learned that the entirety of human history is under the guidance of God who knows everything that has happened and what will happen in the future. This is why the prophets of the Old Testament were able to predict the events of their future. Not only were they able to predict future evens for the nation of Israel, but they also shared what would be taking place with the other kingdoms in the world as well. This is what we will be looking at today in chapter eleven.

The other theme that has been dominating our study in the book of Daniel has been the fact that even though the times are difficult tolt for those who trust in the Lord, we cannot lose faith because He promises to be with us through those tough times. When Daniel and his friends were taken into exile from Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar the future looked very bleak because the city they loved and treasured had been destroyed. The temple was torn down, and the people were no longer able to serve the Lord in their Promised Land. The prophet Jeremiah told the nation before all of this happened that God would bring them back to the city after they have served their appointed time in exile so that He could restore the city to its former glory. What we have concluded in our study of Daniel’s life is that we also should have faith in God that He will guide and sustain us when we face trials in our own lives. We do not have to face those times alone and we can trust that He is always with us.

Today’s passage is a continuation of the vision that Daniel says he experienced in chapter ten. The angel of the Lord has come to him to explain the events that would be taking place after his life as well as what will happen at the end of time. The events being depicted in this chapter will lay the foundation for what must happen before Jesus Christ returns at the end of time. Before all of this happens there will be a time of great conflict and instability. No matter what must happen, God is assuring us through the vision of Daniel that He is still sovereign over all that happens and that He remains faithful to His people. We will look at verses 1-20 of chapter 11 today which will take us from the time of Daniel’s life up through the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes IV who will invade Jerusalem and desecrate the temple. We will look at today’s passage in four sections, two of which we will discuss today, as well as the first two applications: 1. The power and sovereignty of God is not limited by human power or ambition. All the empires in this world rise and fall according to His will. 2. In this world political power often leads to strife, pride and failure. God does allow for that conflict to take place, but it all takes place within the bounds of His knowledge and purpose. 3. When we place our trust only in earthly systems or rulers, we will be disappointed. Only God offers true and lasting peace and justice. 4. Kingdoms will rise and fall, but the purposes of God will never fail. He reveals the future to Daniel not to cause fear, but to encourage those who trust in Him to keep their faith.

**God Sovereignly Guides History with His Hand (vv. 1-4)**

**1 In the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be of assistance and a protection for him. 2 And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will stir up the entire empire against the realm of Greece. 3 And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. 4 But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, because his sovereignty will be removed and given to others besides them.**

The passage begins with a short description for us of the setting. All of this is revealed to Daniel in the first year of Darius the Mede. As a reminder, this is the king who is established as ruler over Babylon by the Persian Empire after King Belshazzar had defied God by using the items from the temple to worship his own gods. After he had done this the writing on the wall told him of his eventual death and that the kingdom would be taken over by the Persians. The first year of the reign of Darius the Mede was 538 BC, so this is the year that all of this takes place. Daniel then tells us that during this time he served as an assistant and protector of the king. Verse 1 in Hebrew tells us that being an assistant means that Daniel was an encouragement for the king to help him guide and lead the nation. Daniel was well suited for this role because he had been instructed in the ways of the Babylonians and could therefore be a liaison between the king and the people in the kingdom.

The angel continues from what he said in chapter 10 beginning in verse 2. He says that after King Darius there will be three more kings that will arise in Persia. For the sake of time, I would like to share with you the names of these kings and give you some background regarding what happens while they are on the throne. After Darius, these four kings are Cambyses (529-522 BC), Pseudo-Smerdis (522-521 BC), Darius I Hystaspes (521-486 BC) and Xerxes I (486-465 BC).

King Cambyses was the king of Persia after the death of Cyrus the Great (who allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple). We are told in Ezra that he (Cambyses) ordered that the work on the temple be halted after the Samaritans write him a letter complaining about them. Also, Pseudo-Smerdis did not allow the rebuilding to commence, but he ruled for a very short time. It was Darius I Hystaspes who allowed the work on the temple to resume. Xerxes I, who was also known as Ahasuerus, who was the king during the time of Esther, is the fourth king who would be richer than all the other three. He is the one who chose Esther as his wife and then she was able to help protect God’s people after Haman had conspired to get the king to destroy the entire Jewish nation. These kings are very well-known in history, so this prophecy is accurate.

Xerxes was a very powerful and arrogant king who used his military to take up a conquest to invade all the nations around him so that he could rule the world. He would invade Greece later during his rule, but after Alexander the Great came to power would be repelled the Persian invasion being able to defeat them. Alexander is the mighty king who arises and does as he pleases in verse 3. After he rose in power and defeated his neighbors he died and then his kingdom was split amongst four of His generals. In verse 4 the angel explains that his kingdom was split up and given to others that were not his descendants. This happened because Alexander did not name anyone to succeed him and because he died suddenly and at such a young age.

Application #1: The power and sovereignty of God is not limited by human power or ambition. All the empires in this world rise and fall according to His will. What we have seen so far in this passage is that this world is full of kings and rulers who want to have power and have ambitions of grandeur that are unlimited. This speaks to the greed and selfishness that dominates the human heart that in its natural state is rebellious against God. The prophet Isaiah in his writing supports this point when he writes **“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My plan will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;” (46:10).** God knows all things that happen before they take place and uses the kingdoms of man to accomplish His purposes. The Psalmist also records these words showing us the sovereignty of God over all these affairs **“Why are the nations restless and the peoples plotting in vain? 2 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers conspire together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, 3 “Let’s tear their shackles apart and throw their ropes away from us!” 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them” (Psalm 2:1-4).** The Lord laughs at these kingdoms because they have the audacity to think that they can thwart or stop His purposes. Therefore, everything that these kings have done and everything that every kingdom will do does not come as a surprise to God who knows all before it happens. Since He knows what will happen, we can trust in Him to be with us as those things take place. He is a righteous God, so He will do what is right.

**Kingdoms On This Earth Will Have Conflict (vv. 5-10)**

**5 “Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and rule; his domain will be a great realm indeed. 6 And after some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to reach an agreement. But she will not keep her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in and the one who fathered her as well as he who supported her in those times. 7 But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and prevail. 8 And he will also take into captivity to Egypt their gods with their cast metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years. 9 Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land. 10 And his sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, so that he may again wage war up to his fortress.**

As the passage continues, we see that after the fourth king (Xerxes I) there will be a division of Alexander’s Greek Empire into 4 regions. If you look on the screen you will see the names of these four regions. To the west there was Egypt, who came under the rule of Ptolemy I. As we head north of Egypt and the Mediterranean we run into the Macedonia and Greece who were ruled by Cassander. East of there we have Lysimachus who ruled Thrace. The fourth is the region of Syria that was ruled by Seleucus. For the rest of this passage, we are going to be dealing with the regions of Egypt (who will be referred to as the king of the south) and Syria (king of the north), so the other regions for our purposes will no longer be discussed.

In verse 5 the angel says that the king of Egypt will grow strong and that one of his princes will ascend the throne over him. This happens when Ptolemy II will take over the region. Ptolemy was able to take over the region of Egypt very easily and had control over it for a time. His counterpart, Seleucus, had a much tougher time taking control over Syria and therefore he dealt with more fighting and instability in his region. These two regions will fight against each other for supremacy for a while, but then as verse 6 tells us they will choose to form an alliance because they tire of fighting each other. After Ptolemy II and Antiochus II take over their respective regions, they decide to forge an alliance. In order to seal a treaty of friendship they choose to seal this agreement through a marriage. The daughter of Ptolemy, whose name was Berenice, was supposed to marry Antiochus, but before she could do so she was killed because the wife that Antiochus already had did not want to share him with another woman. Not long after her death Antiochus was poisoned, so he was dead too! Isn’t this a crazy situation?!

Since Antiochus II had died, his son succeeded him on the throne and his name was Seleucus II. In verse 7 we read about the king of the south entering the fortress of the king of the north and defeating him. The descendent of her line, who is referring to Berenice, will be Ptolemy III who will invade Syria, kill the wife of King Antiochus whose name was Laodice and then took many spoils out of the kingdom. Then, the Syrian king tried to attack Egypt to get back the spoils he had lost, but was unsuccessful. What we learn as verse 8 ends is that the king of the south will outlast the king of the north because Seleucus II fall from his horse and die.

The children of Seleucus will continue to wage war against Egypt for several years and continue to stir up strife and war between the two regions. What we have seen is that everything that happens between the regions of Egypt and Syria were predicted perfectly by the angel who had been told all of this by God. Once again, we are seeing evidence that everything that happens in this world has been under His authority and takes place because of His will.

As we conclude this second part of the first half of chapter 11, we come to our second scriptural application. In this world political power often leads to strife, pride and failure. God does allow for that conflict to take place, but it all takes place within the bounds of His knowledge and purpose. As we were going through all of this fighting and drama between these two kingdoms, I’m sure that some of you are getting very confused. In his poem Marmion, the poet Walter Scott records these words which I feel are very fitting here. “What a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.” These interlocking kingdoms and all of the deception taking place shows us that God knows all things before they happen, so He is the only One who can predict them accurately. When humans try to come to power, they will do whatever is necessary to cling to that power. In today’s passage we did see strife, pride and failure take place over a period of many decades. It is through all of these activities that the purpose of God will come to fruition.

In Scripture we see examples of how God made His purposes come to fulfillment through conflict, strife, pride and failure. Once such example was when the brothers of Joseph came to Egypt for grain during the 7-year famine that God made known to Egypt through Pharaoh’s dream. After Joseph made himself known to his brothers who had sold him into slavery and told their father that he was dead, he said these words **“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to keep many people alive” (Genesis 50:20).** Joseph acknowledged that even though his brothers meant to do him harm, God took that situation and made it good because several lives were saved through those actions. In like manner, God is taking the war and conflict between these two kingdoms and using the events during these times to bring about His purposes in the world. Even though there is pain, suffering and evil in this world we serve a God who can take that evil and make good come out of it.

**Conclusion**

Today as we conclude this first half of the passage, we have learned that God is sovereign over all of history. Every kingdom that has existed as well as every nation are under His authority. Man cannot interfere with the plans of God because He will see to it that His purposes are fulfilled. Also, we need to remember that when we experience suffering or see that there are evils taking place in this world that does not mean that God is not at work. He works in the details in ways that you and I cannot see. Next week we will continue this trip through history and learn more about the activity of God in the world.