

Lesson 3 – Daniel, Pt. 2

Much of the material in Daniel is dated:

Dan. 1:1 – 3rd year of Jehoiakim (605 BC)

Dan. 1:5, 21 – 4th year of exile to 1st year of Cyrus (602-539 BC)

Dan. 2:1 – 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar (604 BC)

Dan. 7:1 – 1st year of Belshazzar (553 BC)

Dan. 8:1 – 3rd year of Belshazzar (551 BC)

Dan. 9:1-2 – 1st year of Darius the Mede (c. 538 BC)

Dan. 10:1 – 3rd year of Cyrus (536 BC)

Dan. 11:1 – 1st year of Darius the Mede (c. 538 BC)

Daniel prophesied the rise and fall of several empires relevant to Biblical history.

Babylonian (605-539 BC) – conquered by Cyrus the Persian

Median (605-550 BC) – conquered by Cyrus the Persian

Persian (550-330 BC) – conquered by Alexander of Greece

Greek (336-146 BC) – founded by Alexander, divided after his death in 323 BC

- Seleucid (312-63 AD)
- Ptolemaic (305-30 BC)
- Antigonid (306-168 BC)
- Pergamon (282-133 BC)

Roman (27 BC-476 AD) – preceded by the Roman Republic (509-27 BC)

God's kingdom (c. 30 AD) – the church, a spiritual and indestructible kingdom

Lesson 3 – Daniel, Pt. 2

The theme of Daniel is that God is in control of the nations of this world. Daniel lived in the era of great world empires. Rulers wore the title "King of kings." Later, the Romans used the title "Emperor." If a kingdom willingly subjected itself and paid tribute, it was given relative autonomy to practice its religion and culture and be governed by one of its own. If it resisted subjugation or rebelled, it suffered destruction, exile, and rule by a foreign-appointed governor.

For several centuries, Assyria reigned supreme. Assyria was weakened by internal conflicts, rebellions by its subjects, and enemy attacks. Babylon and Media conquered Assyria and their Egyptian allies. Media remained the dominant kingdom in the East, and Babylon began an aggressive campaign in the West. Egypt struggled against Babylon, but Babylon could not be stopped, and it quickly claimed the entire Levant, including Judah, for its empire.

In 559 BC, Cyrus became king of Persia, a subject of Media. In 550 BC, Cyrus overthrew the Median king. The Persian conquest of Media involved some military conflicts, but it was a relatively peaceful transition. Many Medes supported Cyrus, and he appointed Medes to high positions in his new empire. About ten years after the rise of Persia, Cyrus set his sights on Babylon. Babylon had been strong under Nebuchadnezzar, but it had weakened under subsequent kings. Its last rulers, Nabonidus and his son, Belshazzar, were unpopular and ineffective. Cyrus' army captured the city of Babylon without a fight. Judah then came under Persian control. Cyrus was much more benevolent than the cruel Assyrians and Babylonians. As prophesied, he supported the Jews in returning home and rebuilding Jerusalem and its temple. The first wave returned around 536 BC.

Lesson 3 – Daniel, Pt. 2

The Jews faced adversaries in rebuilding. Neighboring peoples had migrated into Judah in the decades following the fall of Jerusalem. Most notably, the Samaritans—Israelites from the old northern kingdom who'd mixed with Gentiles—tried to join the Jews but were rejected. The Samaritans then became hostile, making threats and bribing officials to hinder the work. After Cyrus' death, his son, Cambyses, was persuaded to stop the Jews from rebuilding. The returned exiles had rebuilt the altar and laid the temple foundation, but the work ceased until about 520 BC. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were sent to motivate the people to finish the temple. Persia's new king, Darius, discovered Cyrus' decree and resumed support for the Jews. The temple was completed in 516 BC, 70 years after its destruction.

Rebuilding Jerusalem's city walls was the other major task of the returned exiles. The Jews again faced opposition. The walls of the capital represented security and honor. The shame of Judah's defeat remained as long as the walls were in ruins. However, a subject nation rebuilding the walls of its capital could be viewed as a precursor to rebellion. The Jews' enemies used this to persuade the Persian government to interfere. King Artaxerxes, however, later permitted Nehemiah, his cupbearer, to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls in 444 BC.

Around 480 BC, Xerxes of Persia invaded Greece and destroyed Athens. Despite initial success, Persia was eventually driven out of Greece. About a century and a half later, Alexander the Great ruled Macedonia (Greece) at just twenty years old and vowed to take vengeance on Persia for the damage it had done. He swept eastward, conquering everything in his path with amazing speed and success. He fought Persia from 334 to 330 BC and won, ending the Persian Empire. In 332 BC, the Jews peacefully accepted Greek rule. Alexander died at age 32, and his vast empire was divided among his four generals.

Lesson 3 – Daniel, Pt. 2

The Ptolemies (south) ruled Egypt and the southern Levant, and the Jews enjoyed peace. The Seleucids (north) ruled Syria and Mesopotamia. In 200 BC, the Seleucids defeated the Ptolemies and acquired Judah. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC) persecuted the Jews. He outlawed Jewish religion, desecrated the temple, forced Hellenization (Greek culture) on the people, and killed many. The Jews were divided into traditionalists and conformists. In 167 BC, the Maccabean Revolt began. The Jews recovered and rededicated the temple in 164 BC and gradually gained independence from Greek rule. During the revolt, they also made a treaty with the Roman Republic. In 141 BC, the Hasmonean dynasty ruled the liberated Judah.

During a power struggle in 63 BC, two Hasmonean brothers appealed to the Roman general Pompey to support their rule. The appeal inadvertently led to Pompey's capture of Jerusalem in 63 BC and Judah's subjection to the Roman Republic. In 37 BC, the Romans appointed Herod the Great as king over Judea. In 27 BC, Rome transitioned from the Republic to the Empire. Jesus was born c. 4 BC. Upon Herod's death that same year, his kingdom was divided among his children. In 6 AD, Herod Archelaus was removed as ethnarch of Judah, and Judea came under the direct rule of Roman governors (prefects and procurators).

Jesus began his ministry around 26 AD and was crucified about 30 AD (another view is 29-33 AD). Shortly after, his kingdom was populated by Jewish and, later, Gentile converts.

The Jews rebelled against Rome in 66 AD, but the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. The Pharisees relocated to Jamnia and developed a new religion based on their traditions and parts of the Law of Moses.

Many details of these centuries were foretold by Daniel between 605 and 536 BC.

Lesson 3 – Daniel, Pt. 2

Daniel 7

1. What four empires were represented by the four beasts?
2. Who are the “Ancient of Days” and “one like a son of man”? What was given to the son of man? (9-10, 13-14)
3. List the descriptions of the horn that distinguished it from the others. (24-25)

Daniel 8

4. What did the ram and its uneven horns represent? (3, 20)
5. What did the male goat and its great horn represent? Briefly describe its conquest. (5-8, 21)
6. This vision was given in Belshazzar’s third year, c. 550 BC. By how many years did this prophecy precede the Greek victory over Persia?
7. What did the four horns represent? (8, 22)
8. What would the little horn do to the saints (Jews)? (9-12, 23-25)

Lesson 3 – Daniel, Pt. 2

Daniel 9

9. What did Daniel determine from Jeremiah's writings? Locate one of the texts in Jeremiah which specified the duration? (2)
10. Briefly summarize Daniel's prayer. (3-19)
11. How is Daniel described by the holy messenger? (9:23; 10:11, 19)
12. Whose coming was prophesied in the decree of the seventy weeks, and what would he accomplish? (24-27)
13. What would the prince do to Jerusalem and its temple? (26)

Daniel 10-12

14. What did Xerxes do to incite the Greek conquest? (11:2)
15. Which Greek kingdoms did the kings of the north and south represent?
16. In the midst of difficult times, how are the faithful described? (12:10)
17. Two historical events are described as the "desolating abomination" in Daniel's prophecies. These occurred in 167 BC and 70 AD. What were these events? (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matt. 24:15; 1 Maccabees 1:54)