

“God Prepares the World, Part 2”
(Daniel 11)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. This morning, we’re continuing to look at the Lord’s preparation for the coming of His Son into the world.
 - a. Two weeks ago, we considered that He closed the OT canon.
 - (i) The inspired account of His work up to that point was finished; His work at that time was done; nothing more needed to be recorded.
 - (ii) At the same time, He completed His prophetic account of what would happen next.
 - (a) The Lord never leaves His people completely in the dark as to what He is doing.
 - (b) He always lets them know what’s next on the horizon.
 - b. Currently, we’re studying that time frame covered by prophecy. That’s why we’re reading prophetic literature for our text.
 - (i) This period began with the overthrow of the Persians and the Medes through Alexander the Great – he was the male goat of Daniel’s prophecy that destroyed the ram of Persia.
 - (ii) This was the third world empire of the four that would rule – as Nebuchadnezzar’s dream reminds us – before Messiah’s kingdom would be set up – the first being Babylon and the second Persia.
 - (iii) The fourth, we’ll see next week, Lord willing, was Rome.
2. What have we seen to this point?
 - a. Not surprisingly, the Lord had a purpose for Alexander’s conquest: the establishing of a common language – Greek.
 - b. This helped the cause of the Gospel in several ways:
 - (i) It gave the writers of the NT a very precise language with which to write God’s revelation.
 - (ii) It allowed the Jews born and raised outside of Palestine access to the OT writings. It also exposed many Gentiles in contact with the Jews to the OT Scriptures.
 - (iii) It allowed the apostles to preach the Gospel everywhere in the world without having to learn a new language.
 - (iv) And it also allowed them to write to the churches letters that could be circulated and read everywhere.
 - (v) A common language was a tremendous blessing to the progress of God’s kingdom.

B. Preview.

1. But Alexander’s kingdom also brought challenges to the church.

- a. Alexander and those who succeeded him were pagans, and as many pagans in power, wanted the Jews to worship their gods.
 - b. However, they were no more willing to do this than we would in similar circumstances, which meant they were persecuted.
2. This morning, we're going to consider three of these persecutions, and how the Lord delivered them from them all.
- a. We'll see how the Lord delivered His people from Alexander, when they refused to help him in his warfare against Tyre.
 - b. We'll see how He delivered them from Ptolemy Philopater, when they refused to let him enter into their Temple.
 - c. And we'll see how He delivered them from Antiochus Epiphanes when they refused to worship his gods.
 - d. The application of these points will be simple: God is true to His promise to protect His church – He will protect us in the same way.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, let's consider how the Lord delivered His people from Alexander, when they refused to help him in his warfare against Tyre.
1. During his campaigns against Persia, Alexander sought to take the city of Tyre in Phoenicia, but it turned out to be a little harder than he anticipated.
- a. At first, Alexander offered to spare the city if they would let him worship in the temple they had dedicated to Heracles.
 - b. When the Tyrians refused, Alexander laid siege to the city, which wasn't easy, because it was built on an island with the walls of the city extending to the water: there was no land surrounding it.
 - c. He began by building a causeway to the island with the remains of the old city of Tyre which was on the coast.
 - d. This was to fulfill the Word of the Lord through Ezekiel, spoken long before: "Son of man, because Tyre has said concerning Jerusalem, 'Aha, the gateway of the peoples is broken; it has opened to me. I shall be filled, *now that* she is laid waste,' therefore thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. 'They will destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; and I will scrape her debris from her and make her a bare rock. . . . Also they will make a spoil of your riches and a prey of your merchandise, break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses, and throw your stones and your timbers and your debris into the water. So I will silence the sound of your songs, and the sound of your harps will be heard no more. I will make you a bare rock; you will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more, for I the LORD have spoken,' declares the Lord GOD" (Eze. 26:2-4, 12-14).
2. While he was laying siege to Tyre, he sent to the Jews for help and supplies.
- a. The Jews refused because of an oath they had made with the king of Persia.

- b. Alexander didn't take this too kindly, and being a man of swift action (as represented by the male goat), set out to destroy them.
 - c. But as he approached Jerusalem and met the priests coming out to him in their holy attire, the Lord turned his heart to spare them, just as He did Esau's when he finally met Jacob on his return from Paddan-Aram.
 - d. God is true to His promise to protect His church and advance His kingdom.
- B. Second, let's consider how He delivered His people from Ptolemy Philopater, when they refused to let him enter into their Temple.
1. After Alexander died, his kingdom was divided between his four captains.
 - a. The general who inherited Egypt took the name Ptolemy, and so did his successors.
 - b. The first Ptolemy was Lagus (I). After him was Philadelphus (II), Evergetes (III), and then Philopater (IV). Philopater is the one who interests us now.
 2. Philopater was a cruel tyrant.
 - a. When he went to Jerusalem, during his expedition to Syria, he wanted to enter the temple. When the Jews wouldn't let him, he was enraged.
 - b. He punished the Jews living in Alexandria (the capital city of Egypt) by subjecting them to slavery, branding them with a mark of slavery.
 - (i) The only way they could avoid the branding and slavery was to offer a sacrifice to his gods.
 - (ii) Out of the thousands of Jews who lived in Alexandria, only 300 complied.
 - (iv) When the rest of the Jewish community excommunicated the 300 who compromised, Philopater set out to destroy their whole nation, beginning with the Jews who were in Alexandria.
 - (a) He ordered them to be brought to the Hippodrome – a huge arena outside the city used for public races and other events – and that 500 elephants be let loose at once to trample them to death.
 - (b) On the first day this was to take place, the king overslept because he had become drunk the night before, so the event was postponed to the next day.
 - (c) The second day, the same thing happened.
 - (d) But on the third day, when the king was present, the elephants were let loose. But instead of trampling the Jews, they turned on the spectators and soldiers and trampled them.
 - (e) This, along with some other events, made the king turn away from his plans to kill the Jews.
 - (f) Again, the Lord spared His people.
 - (g) God is true to His promise to protect His church and advance His kingdom.
- C. Finally, let's consider how He delivered His people from Antiochus Epiphanes when they refused to worship his gods. This is perhaps the greatest mercy the Lord showed His people.

1. Antiochus Epiphanes was the successor of another of Alexander's four captains, known for his cruelty to the Jews.
 - a. He came to the throne of Syria about 175 BC.
 - b. His main complaint against the Jews was that they refused to give up their religion and worship his idols.
 - c. His persecution was severe:
 - (i) He killed many Jews in the country and in Jerusalem.
 - (ii) He tried to abolish the Jewish worship all together by profaning their Temple, first by sacrificing a pig on the altar, then by setting up his idols in the Temple.
 - (iii) He wanted not only to destroy the Jewish religion, but also the nation. He worked particularly hard to find and destroy all the copies of the law.
 - (iv) There were many times when it seemed as though he would succeed. One time he sent his vast army against them, intending to kill all the men, but spare the women and children and sell them for slaves. They were so confident they would succeed, that over 1000 merchants came with them, with money to buy the slaves.

2. But the Lord raised up a man by the name of Judas Maccabeus, who, delivered the Jews with a very small army.
 - a. First, He raised up a priest by the name of Mattathias, who rallied a large group of men who were willing to fight and die for their religion and for their country.
 - b. When he died in 166 BC, he was succeeded by his son Judas, the Maccabee (or "the hammer"), who successfully defeated the Syrians, and cleansed and restored the Temple worship.
 - c. This is the event we read of last week in Daniel 8: "Then the male goat magnified *himself* exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous *horns* toward the four winds of heaven. Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful *Land*. It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. It even magnified *itself* to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. And on account of transgression the host will be given over *to the horn* along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform *its will* and prosper. Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, 'How long will the vision *about* the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?' He said to me, 'For 2,300 evenings *and* mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored'" (Dan. 8:8-14).
 - d. We also read about it this morning, "Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. By smooth *words* he will turn to

godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action” (Dan. 11:31-32).

- e. The Lord brought Antiochus to a miserable end through a terrible disease that affected not only his body, but also his mind. “He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him” (Dan. 11:45).
 - f. The Lord doesn’t take it lightly when someone injures His church.
 - g. He is true to His promise to protect His church; He will advance His kingdom.
3. The care the Lord showed to His church in those days is the same He shows to us today.
- a. We are as much a part of God’s plan – of the history of redemption – as they were.
 - b. If we were to go through difficult times, and the church in the future were to read about us, they would see the same faithfulness of God in our situation, as we see in that of God’s church under the Greek empire.
 - c. All this is to say that we can put our trust in the Lord. No matter how hard He allows things to go for the church, He will never allow her – us – to perish.
 - d. May the Lord encourage us with this truth. Amen.