

## **Week 38 Chronological**

### **September 14: Daniel 4-6**

Upon witnessing the rescue of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Nebuchadnezzar makes a confession of faith about God Almighty. He proclaims that the Most High God's miracles are great, His wonders are mighty, and His kingdom is eternal. Despite this confession of how powerful God is, Nebuchadnezzar does not reject the false gods. He has another dream. This time he tells the dream to his interpreters and diviners, but they are stumped. He calls on Daniel. Daniel interprets the dream which bears a warning for Nebuchadnezzar. Unless he repents and follows God completely, he is going to suffer from lycanthropy, a disease that essentially makes him act like a wild animal. By the time a year had passed, Nebuchadnezzar was on the roof of the royal palace, feeling puffed up with pride and full of himself because of how splendid and great Babylon is. God metes out the punishment on Nebuchadnezzar because of his pride. He is driven away from his people, he ate grass like a cow, and his body was drenched with dew. His hair and fingernails grew long and unruly.

Over time, Nebuchadnezzar regains his sanity and praises the Most High God. He is reestablished over his kingdom.

We fast forward about 23 years into King Belshazzar's time. Belshazzar gets drunk at one of his feasts and commands that the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem be brought to him. These vessels were set apart and holy to The LORD. During the feast Belshazzar hosts, he has the noblemen, wives, and concubines drink from these cups that were solely for The LORD. To make matters worse, they sing praises to the false gods. At that time, a hand appears and writes MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. Belshazzar has his men assembled to interpret, but they cannot. Daniel is summoned to tell the king what it means. Mene means that God has numbered his days, Tekel means he has been found deficient. Peres is the singular form of Parsin. It means that the kingdom will be divided between the Medes and the Persians.

That very night, the king is killed and Darius the Mede rises to power. His advisors tell him that he needs to issue a decree that says no one can petition any god or man. They can only petition the king. Daniel learns about the document, but rather than hide himself, he continues with his prayer regiment. When the advisors see it, they bring it to the king. Darius is not happy about hearing this, not because he is upset with Daniel, but because he does not want to have him executed. He has Daniel brought before him and says, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" Daniel is put in the lion's den. The king goes to bed that night, but cannot sleep. The next day he runs to the lion's den and calls to Daniel. Daniel is still alive; the lions have not harmed him. Darius honors God for protecting Daniel.

God can shut the mouth of the lion. Do we trust Him to care for us as we go through our trials and tribulations?

### **September 15: Daniel 7-9**

Daniel chapter seven is one of the most important in the entire Old Testament because of its focus on prophecy. Belshazzar became co regent with Nabonidus in 553 B.C. The events that are described in this chapter precede the events of chapter five. Daniel receives a vision of four beasts. The lion with eagle's wings represents the Babylonian empire. The bear represents the Medo- Persian Empire. The three ribs in its mouth represent its conquests against Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt. "It was raised up on one side" indicates the Persian dominance in this joint empire. The leopard represents the Greek empire. The four wings on the leopard refer to the speed of Alexander's conquests. The four heads represent the four main sections of his empire: Greece and Macedonia, Thrace and Asia Minor, Syria and Babylon, and Egypt and Israel.

The fourth beast represents the Roman empire. This beast is different because it has more power and had longer dominion. The little horn represents a king that starts small in power, but dominates.

The "Ancient of Days" refers to God's eternal nature. The fourth beast is destroyed by fire. The other beasts will remain, but they will not enjoy their earlier dominance. Daniel interprets the vision. The little horn is the antichrist that will take control of the last human empire by subduing three kings. He will blaspheme the Most High God. Anti semitism and religious corruption are two more of his attributes.

Daniel also has a vision of a ram and goat. The ram had two horns, but one was longer than the other. The ram represents the Medo Persian empire. Again, the difference in horn size indicates Persia's dominance in this kingdom. The male goat represents the Greek empire. Daniel tries to make sense of the vision. While he stands in confusion, he hears a human voice say, "Gabriel, explain the vision to this man." Gabriel is the angel that makes announcements. Gabriel is the one that delivers the news to Mary that she will give birth to Jesus. This vision indicates how the world will come to an end. Daniel is so disturbed by the vision that he lays sick for days.

Daniel dons sackcloth and ashes and fasts. He is in a state of mourning as he prays. He confesses his sin and the sin of his people. While he is praying, Gabriel gives the explanation. Seven weeks of years (49 years) will be followed by 62 weeks of years (434 years) indicating a total of 483 years from the decree until the coming of the Messiah. The starting point of this prophecy would have begun on Nisan 1, 444 B.C. followed by 69 weeks of years, culminating on Nisan 10, A.D. 33, the date of Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

### **September 16: Daniel 10-12**

Daniel's vision in chapter 10 occurs in 583 B.C. Daniel might have been mourning for the poor conditions of the returned captives. At this time, there was a remnant that returned to Israel and met opposition from the Syrians when they began to rebuild the temple. Daniel stands at the Tigris and receives a vision. The men who were with him did not see it, but they felt a terror and fled. The angel reveals what will happen to Israel in the last days.

Chapter 11 contains some of the most precise predictions in the entire Bible. The predictions are so accurate, some scholars propose the idea that this chapter was written after these events played out. However, God is omniscient and knows what will happen in the future. Since He chooses

to give Daniel this information, we can accept that these accurate words were written well before the events occurred. The three kings in Persia were Cambyses (530-522 B.C.), Pseudo-Smerdis (522 B.C.), and Darius I Hystaspes (522-486 B.C.). The warrior king is Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.). Alexander, rather than dividing his kingdom among his descendants, divides it up amongst his four generals.

The king of the South in 11:5 is Ptolemy I Soter of Egypt. He is outstripped by one of his commanders that goes to become ruler of Babylonia, Media, and Syria. The king of the South in 11: 6 is Ptolemy II Philadelphus who makes an alliance with Antiochus II Theos, the king of the north. The deal is sealed by giving Berenice, the Ptolemaic princess, over to Antiochus for marriage. However, she will not retain power since Antiochus's former wife, Laodice, murders Antiochus, Berenice, and their child. Berenice's murder is avenged by Ptolemy III Euegetes who storms Antioch and kills Laodice. This causes the sons of Seleucus II - Seleucus III and Antiochus III to wage war as far as the fortress in Raphia, located in southern Israel.

Ptolemy IV Philopator of Egypt then counter attacks the king of the north. Ptolemy has a great victory, but he becomes arrogant and slaughters tens of thousands of Seleucid troops. Despite this large death toll, he is unable to maintain his dominance of the Seleucid kingdom.

Fast forward 15 years and Antiochus III, the king of the North raises a great army and attacks the Ptolemies in Phoenicia and Israel. He received support against the king of the South from Jewish rebels, referred to in the Scripture as "violent ones among your own people."

In Daniel 11: 36, the prophecy shifts from Antiochus IV and focuses on the end of days. During the tribulation, the antichrist will be attacked from the north and south. He will be successful against the attack and invade Israel. His military capital will be established in Israel between the Mediterranean and the city of Jerusalem.

Daniel closes with Gabriel encouraging him to go on his way to the end. Daniel will rest, but he will rise to his destiny, a promise of future resurrection at the end of days.

### **September 17: Ezra 1-3**

Ezra and Nehemiah were treated like one book until the third century A.D. Both books contain material found in the other. The point of Ezra is to connect the returning Israelites with the pre-exile community. Ezra begins with the statement of Cyrus's decree. In the first year of his reign, he issued a proclamation that the Israelites can return home and rebuild the temple. Not all of the Israelites go back, but many do.

The leaders of Judah and Benjamin, along with the priests (Levites) go back to prepare for rebuilding the temple. Their neighbors support them and send them with treasure for rebuilding. Cyrus even brings out the articles of the LORD's temple that Nebuchadnezzar had taken.

Chapter two of Ezra gives a detailed list of the families returning to Jerusalem. Upon arrival, freewill offerings are made to restore the LORD's house. In the seventh month, sacrifice is restored. It is important to note that they did not wait for the temple to be restored before making

sacrifice. These returned exiles are highly motivated to ensure that they follow God's statutes to prevent another exile.

By the second month of the second year, temple reconstruction begins. When the foundation is completed, the priests dress in their robes. They all worship God, singing praises and giving thanks to God for allowing them to return. However, there is also weeping in the praise. Many of the older priests, that had seen the temple when it was in its former glory are weeping. People could not distinguish between the shouts of joy and the shouts of anguish.

### **September 18: Ezra 4-6 and Psalm 137**

Not everyone is happy about the temple being rebuilt. The enemies of Juda and Benjamin approach Zerubbabel and offer to help rebuild the temple. The enemies are not identified, but the fact that they are labeled as enemies demonstrates that their offer is nefarious. This group claim to worship the God of the Israelites. This was probably true; however, they did not worship Him solely. Instead, He was worshiped along with the pagan gods of the other nations. The leaders essentially say that they cannot help since Cyrus has ordered them to rebuild it. The enemies become upset and cause the people of Judah to fear rebuilding the temple. The enemies even go so far as to bribe the officials to prevent the temple from being rebuilt.

They do not stop there. They also try to stop the city from being rebuilt. They send a letter to Artaxerxes of Persia, warning him that the "rebellious" Israelites are rebuilding their temple, the city, and its walls. The group claims that when the city is complete that they will not pay tribute anymore. Artaxerxes reviews Israel's history and sees that they may rebel against him. So he orders the construction to stop.

Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the Jews. They begin rebuilding the temple regardless of the instruction. Tattenai, the governor of the region west of the Euphrates asks who gave them the order to start rebuilding. They will not stop working until they receive instruction from Darius. Tattenai sends a written request to Darius asking for clarification on their permission to build. Darius has the library of Babylon searched and Cyrus's decree is discovered. Upon reading the decree, Darius sends word back to Tattenai to leave the Israelites alone and let them rebuild.

Psalm 137 reflects the lament of the exiles. The psalm cries that God would remember the Israelites and destroy Babylon because of the doom they wrought on the temple.

### **September 19: Haggai 1 and 2**

Haggai challenges the folks in Jerusalem to do some soul searching and see where they have been messing up. He calls them to live lives that will please God. In King Darius's second year, God approaches Haggai with the message that it is time to rebuild the temple. This temple will be a sign that God is with them. However, they are called to examine their ways.

They must go and gather lumber from the hills and build the house. Then God will be pleased with them. Zerubbabel, along with everyone else, hears the words of the LORD and obey Him.

God warns them that one day He will shake the earth and remove the royal thrones of the Gentile kingdom. He promises Zerubbabel that He will be “like My signet ring”. This indicates that Zerubbabel will have the authority to act as God’s legitimate Davidic ruler. God had removed that right from Jehoiakim in Jeremiah 22:24.

### **September 20: Zechariah 1-4**

Zechariah seeks to encourage the returning Israelites to start rebuilding the temple. It is a new day for Jerusalem. We can understand why they would be hesitant to start the project. The first temple was beautiful and ornate. It was where the glory of the LORD rested, but it was still destroyed. I liken it to someone that used to be in really good shape, but fell out of shape, trying to become physically fit again. It’s difficult to start the process.

Zechariah provides the people surreal visions and poetic images that focus on God’s reversal of His judgment against the people. The prophet encourages the people to return to God. Their ancestors had been wicked, but they can turn around and come back to the LORD. God reminds the people that their ancestors are gone, but He remains. His words became reality. Their trust should be in Him.

Zechariah is treated to several visions. The first vision is a man riding on a red horse. The man standing among the myrtles is the Angel of the LORD. The second vision indicates that though God had used the nations to punish Israel, He will now punish them. The roles are being reversed. The surveyor indicates the rebuilding of Jerusalem. In the fourth vision, he sees Joshua, the first high priest after the exile. Joshua is dressed in filthy clothes. The Angel of the LORD commands that the filthy clothes be removed and he be clothed in splendid robes.

### **September 21: Zechariah 5-9**

In the sixth vision, a flying scroll represents the punishment set aside for the land. The woman in the basket also represents judgment. The woman is idolatry and she is shoved in the basket and sent off to Babylon where idolatry belonged. The first and eighth visions act as bookends to the visions. They convey the same message. God is sovereign and has complete control over His creation.

Chapter seven begins with another line of questioning about the wickedness of their ancestors. Their ancestors are charged with going through the motions when it comes to their fasting. They are not fasting for the LORD, they are doing it for themselves. God wants relationship, not ritual. The relationship should drive the ritual, not the other way around.

The book turns from judgment to blessing. It goes from complete dispersion to total restoration. God reiterates what He told the Israelites on the exile. He will be their God and they will be His people. God is restoring His covenant with them.

The enemies of Zion will be judged. Zion has much to rejoice about. Her king is coming riding on a donkey. Kings in those days would normally ride mules. The fact that He is riding a donkey indicates unexpected humility from the king. Jesus made His triumphal entry into

Jerusalem on a donkey. He is fully God and fully human, but He did not use that to overpower the people and be served. Instead, He humbled Himself and gave Himself up to the Father's will so that we could be saved.