

Israel's Fortune Cookie

Daniel 11

(preached Pine Grove 4/30/17; Sunday PM)

Introduction

There are around 3 billion fortune cookies made each year around the world..

The biggest manufacturer of fortune cookies produces 4.5 million fortune cookies a day...

Which are primarily sold to Chinese restaurants in the US.

Most of the cookies are similar in appearance and are made from flour, sugar and vanilla..

No one knows who started the fortune cookie craze, but it wasn't China...

In fact, the cookies are not even a tradition there...

The cookies are made with a hollow space inside that contains the fortune, which is said to forecast a person's future..

Yet, the fortunes are so general that they could apply to anyone...

Such as “soon you will be sitting on top of the world.”

Or “where one door closes another opens.”

Or “change is coming.”

Fortune cookies follow the same pattern of most con men and women psychics...

Be just general enough to keep the people coming back for more...

Well, God is the only one who knows the future...

And the reason for that is that he sees the future with exact precision since He is not confined by time..

Therefore, when he speaks of the future, he can do it with incredible precision..

The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem and HE was

His executioners will pierce his side and they did..

Over and over, God has given us prophecies that came true with exact precision...

Yet, there is no matter startling and exact prediction of future events than what we find in Daniel 11...

In fact, critics of the Bible point to point to Daniel 11:1-35 as proof of the Bible being a work of man..

They claim that no one could write about the future with such accuracy before it occurred...

So, Daniel must have just been a historian who recorded history after the fact rather than a man given a vision of the future by God...

That is how unbelievable this vision of the future is..

If it truly is a prediction of the future events, it is very clear that God is real and the Bible is completely true...

So, the critics of the Bible attack Daniel 11 and even some people who call themselves Christians doubt the fact that Daniel saw this before it happened...

Due to accuracy of his words...

Now, let's set the stage for this chapter in order to see the value of it...

Daniel is an older man; most likely in his late 80s...

He has lived away from his homeland of Israel for 70 years of his life...

And though he has longed to go home, Daniel has waited on the Lord to make a way for him to go home...

Well, that way came as the Babylonian Empire fell to the Persian empire..

And the leader of the Persian empire was a man named Darius the Mede...

And though Darius was not a fan of Daniel at first and had him thrown in a lion's den, Darius became a fan of Daniel and his God when Daniel survived all night with the lions...

So, Darius issues a decree that all the Jews are free to go home in his first year as king of the Persian empire...

That was music to Daniel's ear but it ended up breaking his heart because the reality is that very few Jews left the Persian empire to head back to Israel...

We saw this last week as Daniel was mourning to begin Daniel 10...

He was fasting and going without basic hygiene needs to express his grief before God...

Daniel was confused with the Jews lack of interest in returning to their homeland...

So he is praying to God to see what will become of Israel.

Will they ever make it back to their homeland?

Will they rebuild the temple and go back to their way of life before they were conquered?

Daniel wants to know..

And so he fasts and prays and shows God his desire to see what is going to happen to his people..

Well, God sends an answer to this prayer...

And the answer is both good news and bad news...

The good news is this...

Israel is not done as a nation...

But the bad news is this...

Life would be tough for Israel for a very long time..

And the source of that trouble would be the governments that would rise up over the Jews to make life difficult...

And this would be the pattern for Jewish life all the way to the very end of time...

God has preserved His people because He is going to keep his promise to them...

But he has not spared them from trouble....

Ever since they were captured by the Babylonians and taken into captivity, their lives as the people of God have been lives of trouble...

Yes, they were able to go back to their homeland, but even that was not without trouble...

And that was going to be the case for the entire future of the nation of Israel....

And what God was going to give Daniel in chapter 11 was complete run down of this trouble that was coming...

Now, for our purposes in 2017, the first 35 verses of chapter 11 are a history of trouble that Israel would have from the time of Darius the Mede until about 150 BC...

Then the angel that is giving Daniel this view of the future simply fast forwards to the very end of time in verse 36-45 to give us a preview of the trouble they will have all the way up until their salvation as a nation at the very end of their final 7 years as a nation...

Now, the good and juicy stuff is found in the final verses...

The stuff that appeals to our study of the end time doesn't really get going until verse 36, but we must deal with the history of Israel's persecution first...

And the main things to see in these opening 35 verses are this...

#1 - God is a God of exact truth...

What we will see in our quick overview of Israel's history of persecution is this..

God spoke to Daniel through the angel with precision...

#2 - God previewed the final and worst form of Jewish persecution that will come through the Antichrist and his world government in what happened to Israel in the past...

#3 - God hands out judgment to nations through evil government leaders...

What you are going to see is this...

The consequences of a nation's sin often come through corrupt government and kings...

And this was certainly the case for Israel...

So those evil leaders are what will give us our outline for Daniel 11...

We will begin with a man named Ahasuerus in verses 1-2...

I. Ahasuerus (1-2)

Verse 1-2....

“In the first year of Darius the Mede, [a]I arose to be [b]an encouragement and a protection for him. 2 And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise [c]in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, [d]he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of [e]Greece.

As we get to Daniel 11, an angel is speaking to Daniel...

The same angel that we met last week...

The angel who wanted to come to Daniel sooner but instead he got delayed by the evil demon who was influencing the Persian kingdom...

However, he makes it and he sets Daniel on his feet and tells him that he has to get back to the demonic fight

quickly, but before he leaves, he has some insight to share on Israel's future...

And the angel is still talking in verse 1 of chapter 11 and lets Daniel know that he was also at work in Darius' rule over the Persian kingdom to make sure that Darius issued an order to send the Jews back to their land...

And then he moves from that bit of information to tell Daniel that 3 more kings are going to arise after Darius over the Persian kingdom, but the 4th one is going to be the key one because he is going to pick a fight with the Greeks...

Now world history tells us that this ruler was named Xerxes, but he also went by the name Ahasuerus...

And he was the one who picked a fight with the Greeks in world history, and this fight led to what we read in verses 3-4...

Which leads to our second outline point...

II. Alexander the Great (3-4)

Verse 3...

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 [f]points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides [g]them.

We have met history's fastest conqueror before when we talked about the kingdoms that would rule over Israel...

And Alexander the Great was the leopard of world history because of the speed with which he overtook the world...

He would race into kingdoms leading the way himself and he was not leave any survivors...

And by the age of 30, Alexander has the world under his thumb..

And that would certainly include the Jewish people as well...

And then we leave Alexander in verse 4 and we get waist deep in what happened after he died a premature death...

You see, the kingdom should have gone to his own offspring, but his wife and son were both dead...

And the powerful kingdom fell into the hands of his 4 top generals...

We have looked at this before, but you need to understand that the breakup of Alexanders kingdom meant big trouble for Israel...

You see, Darius and Ahasuerus and even Alexander were not that hostile to Israel...

Now Israel wasn't free during their reigns but they were exactly oppressed either, but all that began to change when Alexander's kingdom split into four parts...

Here's a map of what that split looked like...

And the key division to see is the border between the Selucids and the Ptolemies...

The Seluicids are the area in light green and the Ptolemies are the section in dark green...

And their borders came together right in the middle of the land of Israel...

Which made life hard on Israel because these two kingdoms were constantly clashing with one another ...

Which is what the next set of verses talk about...

Let's read verses 5-9.....

5 “Then the king of the South will grow strong, [h]along with one of his princes [i]who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed. 6 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 carry out [j]a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her [k]position of power, nor will he remain with his [l]power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in and the one who sired her as well as he who supported her in those times. 7 But one of the [m]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 display great strength. 8 Also their gods with their [n]metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will [o]refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years. 9 Then [p]the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land.

Long story short, Israel will be the battlefield for this feud between the Selucids to the north and Ptolemies to the south....

Now, this back and forth struggle for control of Alexander's empire will go on for some time after his death and Israel will pay the price for this turf war...

Eventually however, the north will get the upper hand for a while under our third king which we begin to see in verse 10...

He is named...

III. Antiochus the Great (10-19)

Let's read verses 10-19...

10 "His sons will [q]mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may [r]again wage war up to his very fortress. 11 The king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight [s]with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into [t]the hand of the former. 12 When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail. 13 For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and [u]after an interval of some years he will [v]press on with a great army and much equipment.

14 "Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will [w]fall down. 15 Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even [x]their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand. 16 But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the [y]Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand. 17 He will set his face to come with the power of

his whole kingdom, [z]bringing with him [aa]a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be [ab]on his side. 18 Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn. 19 So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more.

Long story short, Antiochus the great will begin to win the war versus the kings of the south and he will begin to spend more time in Israel...

Yet, that will only cause him to want more of the world...

Unfortunately, Antiochus the Great will find defeat...

But that leads to king #4 who will rise up after him and be the worst oppressor of Israel since Pharaoh...

His name was...

IV. Antiochus Epiphanes (20-35)

If his name sounds familiar, it should...

WE talked about him in Daniel 8 as the preview of what the Antichrist will be like..

Antiochus was worse than all before him because he sought to eradicate the Jewish people...

Let's read about him beginning in verse 20...

20 "Then in his place one will arise who will send an [ac]oppressor through the [ad]Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle. 21 In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. 22 The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. 23 After an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people. 24 [ae]In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the [af]realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his [ag]ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but only for a time. 25 He will stir up his strength and [ah]courage against the king of the South

with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him. 26 Those who eat his choice food will [ai]destroy him, and his army will [aj]overflow, but many will fall down slain. 27 As for both kings, their hearts will be intent on evil, and they will speak lies to each other at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still to come at the appointed time. 28 Then he will return to his land with much [ak]plunder; but his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take action and then return to his own land.

Couple things to note about Antiochus Ephiaphanes here...

First, he won't have the right to rule, but he will seize the right to rule through flattery and intrigue and deception..

Then verses 29-35..

29 "At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but [al]this last time it will not turn out the way it did before. 30 For ships of [am]Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the

abomination [an]of desolation. 32 By smooth words he will [ao]turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. 33 [ap]Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days. 34 Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. 35 Some of [aq]those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them [ar]pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.

We see it here again..

Antiochus was a man of charm and smooth words, but he was a man on a mission to persecute Israel...

Not only was he trampling through the land, he was stopping the sacrifices in the temple...

And history tells us that he even slaughtered a pig on the altar of the Jewish temple and forced the priests to eat it...

He was an active persecutor of Jews...

Now, this is not good news for Daniel...

Though he is probably encouraged to hear that his people have survived and made it out of captivity...

He is saddened to hear that their domination by the kings and kingdoms of the world will continue...

Though Darius had been kind to them as a people, those following Darius would represent a gradual decline in the view of the kings toward Israel...

Until Antiochus Epiphanes arrives and actively attacks them and their way of life...

After him will come the Roman empire and their oppression under Caesar...

Which eventually lead to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD under the Romans and the scattering of the Jews all over the globe ever since...

This is going to be a way of life for Israel until the very end of time....

It will be a broken record of persecution and suffering...

And maybe that is why the angel cuts the story short and simply skips to the final oppressor of the Jews beginning in verse 35 with the phrase the end time...

So, the angel simply gives this list of oppressive kings...

Ahasuerus, Alexander the Great, Antiochus the Great, and Antiochus Epiphanes, and then he fast forwards to the king and kingdom that will oppress Israel in the final verses of this prophecy....

So, let's end with one more name that will persecute Israel in their history and that name is simply....

V. The Antichrist (36-45)

Since there is much to learn about him, we will slow down a bit in these verses...

Verse 36...

36 “Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak [as]monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.

The overriding characteristic of the Antichrist will be his arrogance...

As humble as the real Christ was, the Antichrist will be equally as arrogant...

HE will do what he wants with no regard for anyone else..

He will magnify his power and intelligence while blaspheming God out of the other side of his big mouth...

And God will allow him to prosper in his arrogance because the world will be easily deceived...

Then verse 37...

37 He will show no regard for the [at]gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all. 38 But [au]instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures. 39 He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to [av]those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.

I personally believe that Antichrist will be a Gentile of European descent, but whatever religion his parents were, he will not practice it...

Whether that is Christianity or Judaism or Islam...

IT appears that he will be an irreligious man...

It also appears that he may be a homosexual as well with the reference to no desire for women...

For years, Bible scholars tried to make that mean something else since the idea of a homosexual rising to world power seemed so outrageous, but not anymore...

We also see that the Antichrist will be consumed by money...

To the point that he will gain control of the economics of the world..

And everyone who needs anything from food to clothing to housing will have to go through the Antichrist economy to get it...

Which is why we find the mark of the beast that is talked about in the book of Revelation...

Now, we move from his character to his military campaign...

Verses 40-45...

40 "At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through. 41 He will also enter the [aw]Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. 42 Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. 43 But he will [ax]gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his [ay]heels. 44 But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and [az]annihilate

many. 45 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.

As the Antichrist rises to world power, the nations of the world will begin to turn against him...

Just like the generals of Alexander's empire eventually turned on one another, the nations too the world will turn on the Antichrist...

And these same regions of the former Greek empire...

The Egyptians to the south and the Syrians to the north will converge on the Antichrist, and the battle field for this assault will once again be the land of Israel...

This time, however, the Lord will snatch Israel to safety in the wilderness while the Antichrist is under assault...

Eventually, he will find his end too in Israel as the nations of the world gather to fight against God...

And Jesus destroys all the kings of the earth including the Antichrist with the words of his mouth...

Conclusion

So what is the take away from Daniel 11?

First and foremost, the big idea that Daniel needed to hear and we need to remember is that God has never and will never abandon Israel...

So many people believe that Israel is no longer part of God's plan for the world..

So many believe that the church has replaced Israel in the plans of God...

Yet, nothing could be further from the truth...

God chose Israel...

God has kept Israel...

And God will deliver Israel...

God's keeping of a people is not their doing...

It is His doing..

If not, we would all be danger of losing our salvation, but since that is impossible...

IT is also impossible for Israel to no longer matter in the plans of God...

Listen to Jeremiah 31:35-36....

35

*Thus says the Lord,
Who gives the sun for light by day
And the [p]fixed order of the moon and the stars for
light by night,
Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar;
The Lord of hosts is His name:*

36

*“If [q]this fixed order departs
From before Me,” declares the Lord,
“Then the offspring of Israel also will cease
From being a nation before Me [r]forever.”*

37 Thus says the Lord,

*“If the heavens above can be measured
And the foundations of the earth searched out below,
Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel
For all that they have done,” declares the Lord.*

Get this...

It would be easier to stop the sun from rising in the morning than to stop Israel from being a nation before the Lord...

It would be easier to measure the size of the solar system and identify every part of the bottom of the ocean and center of the earth than to convince God to cast off his love for Israel...

Daniel got bad news about Israel's persecution, but he got the best news too...

Israel has a future to the very end of time...

This leads to the second thing for us to see here...

If God is willing and able to protect and guard a nation that has done everything to cast off his love and faithfulness to Him, he can surely keep and guard our souls...

If God will keep Israel to the end, he will most assuredly keep me and you to the end who have trusted in His Son...

WE don't have a God who can't keep things together, we have a God who holds all things together...

The promise that Israel has a future is a promise that we will have a future as well...

Let us pray...

