

Why Do the Jewish People Continue to Suffer?

by Denis Lyle

Denis Lyle explores the historical and prophetic reasons behind the continued suffering of the Jewish people, emphasizing God's purpose and the influence of evil forces.

Scripture: Ezekiel 20:33

Topics: "Satanic Opposition", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the ongoing suffering of the Jewish people, attributing it to both the power of Satan, who hates the Jewish race for bringing the Savior into the world, and the refining purpose of God to prepare Israel for the Messiah. The sermon delves into the detailed prophecy in Daniel 11, highlighting the accuracy of the predictions that have been fulfilled throughout history, showcasing God's omniscience and control over future events. The passage emphasizes the agony of the Jewish nation, the authority of the Lord over history, and the importance of living life for God rather than earthly treasures.

Transcript

Daniel 11:1-35 WHY DO THE JEWISH PEOPLE CONTINUE TO SUFFER The story is told of Napoleon that one of his generals asked him what he believed to be the greatest miracle of all time. Without hesitation Napoleon answered, "THE JEW". There's no question that Israel is one of the greatest phenomena that history has witnessed. What God has done to that nation: for that nation and through that nation is remarkable. The Jew is remarkable. Is it not remarkable that: As a race he was old when Rome was young That he has outlived every nation and empire that has persecuted him That in every field of endeavour to which he has turned his hand he has known astonishing success That he has defied the laws of history and preserved his racial identity though scattered in a hundred countries for hundreds upon hundreds of years His long sufferings through the ages in many, many lands It seems that throughout history someone has always been inciting violence against the Jews.

One of the great films of our times, "Fiddler on the roof", shows the dilemma of the Jews in a little village in Russia about a 100 years ago! What happened there has happened a thousand times in a thousand places to many hundreds of thousands of Jews Have you ever wondered why Why is there this feeling of Anti-Semitism Why do some people hate the Jewish race Why do the Jewish people continue to suffer Well, from one angle, its because of the Power of Satan. My, the devil hates the Jewish race because this race brought the Saviour into this world. (Rev 12:1) So anyone who persecutes the Jews is doing so at the instigation of the devil.

However from another angle the Jewish people continue to suffer because of the Purpose of God. My, God is not finished with refining Israel and that is why the Jewish people continue to suffer! Look at (11:35) in other words the suffering of the Jews under Antiochus Epiphanes had a refining purpose and this refining or purging purpose is predicted to continue "to the time of the end". (11:35) Through this suffering rebelliousness will be purged away and the nation will be prepared to receive her Messiah. (Ezek 20:33: Rom 11:26) Now what has this go to do with (Dan Ch 11) Just this!

The first 35 verses of (Ch 11) describes the fate of Israel in the first 69 weeks of her prophetic history and (11:36-45) tell us of Israels sufferings under Antichrist in her 70th week. Now its important for us to understand that this chapter has come under the critic's hammer A Professor at a liberal theological seminary was teaching from the book of Daniel. His class consisted of young men and women. At the beginning of his lecture he said, "Now I want you to understand that Daniel was written during the Maccabean period in the second century BC, not by the historic Daniel who lived in the sixth century BC.

The facts were written as all history is, after the events took place". One young man raised his hand and asked, "How can that be, sir, when Christ said in Matt 24:16 that it was written by Daniel" The professor paused for a moment, looked at the student in the eyes and said, "Young man I know more about the book of Daniel than Jesus did". My, this is only a sample of the attacks of the critic's on the integrity of the book of Daniel. Now nowhere has that attack been more fierce than here in (Ch 11) Why Because in the first 35 verses of this chapter there are at least 135 prophecies which have been literally fulfilled and can be confirmed by a study of the history of the period.

Of course the modernists hit this chapter because they deny the supernatural. God predicting ahead of time what was going to be. So they say this chapter was written after the events had already come to pass. Of course the question ultimately comes to down to the issue of whether God the Divine Author of Scripture can predict future events. John Walvoord says, "The issue is a clear cut question as to whether God is Omniscient about the future. If He is revelation may be just as detailed as God elects to make it and detailed prophecy becomes no more difficult or incredible than broad predictions".

Now as I have said this prediction of the future in detail in (Ch 11) is tied to the prophecy of the 70 weeks in (Ch 9) In (11:1-35) there is brought before us the fate of Israel in the first 69 weeks of her prophetic history and in (11:36-45) there is brought before us Israels sufferings under Antichrist in her 70th week. Now I have divided our study into two sections: (1) A PROPHECY OF UNRIVALLED ACCURACY Now anyone can be a prophet after the fact! I predict that Tony Blair will become Prime Minister.

I predict that the allies will defeat Iraq in Desert Storm. I predict that the Berlin Wall will come down. I predict... these things are easy to predict because they are events that have already taken place, but the events that are prophesied in this chapter had not taken place in Daniel's time! Of course now the minute details of this prophecy have been fulfilled in history with an accuracy that has attracted the literary critics! My, this is why the critics attack this chapter.

They say Daniel must have written these events after they took place! But My, we believe in a God who can prophecy. Indeed, is this not what the Bible claims Namely to reveal with certainty the future. In books such as Daniel and Revelation, we have a divine disclosure of persons and events that lay many years in the future from the date of the prophecy. I say we have here a Prophecy of Unrivalled Accuracy. My, did you know that in the first thirty five verses of this chapter there are 135 prophecies which have been literally fulfilled and can be confirmed by a study of the history of the period (1) Now look at: (a) The

SETTING of the Prophecy: Or vision.

Now keep in mind that the last three chapters of this book form a unit. The eleventh chapter begins with the word "Also", while (Ch 12) begins with the word "And". So (Ch 10) introduces the vision or prophecy, (Ch 11) gives the prophecy and (Ch 12) adds an epilogue. Now the setting of this vision is in the 3rd year of Cyrus! Look at (10:1) Daniel who had remained in exile was by this time an old man of ninety years of age. Although some 50,000 Jews had returned to the city of Jerusalem, Daniel was disappointed that there were not more.

He was discouraged by what he saw and he turned to God in prayer. He wanted to know why things had not turned out the way that he had expected. After praying and fasting for three weeks Daniel received the prophecy contained in (Ch 11-12) Here he was told that the suffering and chastening of Israel would continue until the nation was completely restored. (12:1) (a) (b) THE SOURCE OF THE PROPHECY: Look at (11:2) Now who is the speaker here The heavenly messenger! Possibly Gabriel! (8:16 9:21) You see, the liberals tell us that this book was written in 165 BC giving us a sketch of history after the events themselves had taken place, but we believe in a God who can prophecy, who knows the end from the beginning.

What is it to our God to predict events that were hundreds of years ahead My, this vision or prophecy is divine revelation of events that will most certainly take place. So that is (a) (b) (c) THE SUBJECT OF THE PROPHECY: What is the main subject of this prophecy Well, look at (10:1) Another translation puts it like this, "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar and the message was true and one of great conflict". (NASB) Even a cursory of the prophecy in (Ch 11) will establish that it is one of intrigue, violence, war and bloodshed.

But we can narrow the focus down even further than that. Look at (10:14) This is not warfare in general but warfare that is in some way related to Israel. Daniel is being instructed as to the conflicts through which Israel must pass before the fulfilment of Gods promises to his people. Now lets keep this before us as we go through (Ch 11) For although the prophecy of (Ch 11) deals with the rise and fall of Gentile world powers, its primarily concerned with the suffering and fate of Israel.

Now when does this prophecy begin (d) THE SCOPE OF THE PROPHECY: For the prophecy or vision starts in the time of Daniel and sweeps over centuries to the time of the end. Now look at (11:2) Here is a reference to events which from Daniel's standpoint were very near. But compare this with (12:1) Now here is a reference to an event that most certainly has not taken place and which lies in the future from our standpoint. My, the scope of this vision is tremendous, from the time of Daniel to the establishment of the millennial kingdom. (Dan 12:2) So we have seen (a) (b) (c) (d) but look for a moment at (e) THE STRUCTURE OF THE VISION: Now we have already seen from our standpoint that part of this vision is PAST. (11:2) Part of this vision is FUTURE.

The question is: where does the break come between what is past and what is future Well, most premillennial scholars see the division between (11:35-36) In other words from (11:2-35) Daniel deals with what to us is past history. From (11:36) onwards he reveals events that are yet future, for there is no historical data to explain the events recorded in (11:36-45) Now let me give you a quote from William Kelly who says, "There is no place in the chapter where the interruption of history so well fits as after verse 35".

Earnest Tatham remarks, "With the thirty-sixth verse, the spirit of prophecy, takes a mighty bound forward, abruptly changing from that is historic to that which is prophetic". So from our standpoint (11:2-35)

contains something which is Historical, (11:36-45) contains something which is Prophetic. (2) A CHRONOLOGY OF UNRIGHTEOUS KINGS You see, this prophecy of amazing accuracy has to do with a chronicle of ungodly kings and their relationship to Israel. Now please remember that for Daniel this was all Prophetic, for Daniel was looking forward to these events.

For us this is all Historic, for we are looking backward to these events, for they have already taken place in history. My, did you know that this passage gives us the most detailed account of history in all the Bible It covers events from about 539 BC to 164 BC Now this period can be divided into 4 parts. The first part introduces us to: (a) AHASUERUS THE GENERAL: Look at (11:2) The angel is telling Daniel that three Persian kings would precede a 4th who would be stronger and richer than the others.

He would attack Greece. Now historically that's exactly what happened. From the time of Daniel there were four Persian Kings the last of whom mounted a massive assault on Greece. The first king was named Cambyses (530-522 BC) and then came Psuedo-Smerdis (522 BC) then Darius 1 Hystaspes (522 -486 BC) lastly there was Xeres 1, called Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. (1:1-2) Now this man had fabulous wealth and commanded one of the largest military forces ever assembled in the ancient world.

With his huge army and navy he attacked Greece but was soundly defeated by the Greeks on both land and sea. The Greeks never forgot that attack, and 150 years later took revenge on the Persians through Alexander the Great. So the first period has to do with Ahasuerus the General. Next we are introduced to: (b) ALEXANDER THE GREEK: 1. In (11:3) we have the King DESCRIBED: " A mighty king". (11:3) This was Alexander the Great of Greece. He was one of the most remarkable men who ever lived.

He seized the entire Persian Empire, and he then conquered from Greece to India and then he wept that there were no other kingdoms to conquer. Now Israel was part of the Persian Empire at the time of Alexander's conquest so in occupying the Empire Alexander took possession of Israel. 2. In (11:4) we have the Empire DIVIDED: You see, Alexander didn't have any heirs. He had an illegitimate son and a legitimate son, the latter of whom was born after Alexander's death. His brother was mentally retarded.

Shortly after Alexander died, all three of these people were murdered. Now the generals who fought over Alexander's kingdom eventually divided it four ways: Macedonia: Asia Minor: Egypt and Syria. One of these generals ruled Egypt which if we know our geography is south of Israel, another ruled Syria, which is North of Israel. These two and their successors made life miserable for the Jews who were caught in a vise between them. 3. In (11:5-20) we have the War DECLARED: For these two dynasties, the King of the South and the King of the North were often at war, and since Israel was located between them, their wars were often fought in Israel or on its borders.

Syria to the North of Israel was ruled by Seleucus, and Egypt to the South of Israel was ruled by Ptolomy and the Jewish people would suffer greatly because they were between the anvil and the hammer. Now initially the kings of the south were more powerful, than the kings of the north, but as time went on the northern dynasty increased in power. In those days they had an interesting way of handling disagreements. If you were the king of the South and you weren't getting along with the king of the North, you'd take your daughter and offer her to the opposition.

They used to marry their daughters off like a peace treaty. And women think they have it tough today! So the King of Syria, who called himself Antiochus the God decided to make a treaty with the king of the South and marry the daughter of the king of Egypt. One small detail: he was already married. No problem he divorced his wife and married the daughter of the Egyptian king anyway. Now the wife of Antiochus

didn't like that one bit, so she murdered his new wife and all of her attendants.

Guess what the king did Foolish fellow, he took his wife back. As soon as they were remarried, she poisoned him. Now this is exactly what the angel told Daniel would happen in (11:5-6) but that's not all! You see, the brother of the murdered Egyptian Princess "a branch of her roots", (11:7) started another war with the king of the North and won. Egypt and Syria were again at each other's throats and the battle was fought on Israel's soil. Poor Israel, was always caught in the middle, and it didn't seem possible that peace would ever come.

Now in (11:10-20) we are told of another strong king who attempted to control and unite Syria and Egypt. He was called: (c) ANTIOCHUS THE GREAT: 1. In 11:9-10 we have the REVENGE from the North: For Antiochus the Great attacked Egypt with 75,000 soldiers and stomped right through Israel to get there. 2. In 11:11-12 we have the RESPONSE from the South: For in response to Antiochus's invasion Ptolemy raised a tremendous army, and the multitude from the north was given into his hand. (11:12) In the long run however, he only made Antiochus angry for: 3.

In 11:13-20 we have the RETURN of the North: Look at (11:14) For Antiochus the Great was not to be outdone. Now do you see where the conquering king goes "He shall stand in the glorious land which by his hand shall be consumed". (11:16) The poor Jews were being trampled again and they weren't even involved in the conflict. Now it was at this time that another diplomatic marriage was arranged between Syria and Egypt. (11:17) Antiochus decided to give the king of Egypt his daughter.

His daughter Cleopatra was a very desirable woman. The king had hoped to put a spy in the palace, somebody on his side. But his daughter fell in love with the Egyptian king and forgot all about Daddy. Daddy was mad. When the plan with his daughter failed he went on a rampage. Do you see what the prophecy said (11:18) Antiochus, headed toward the coastlands which was Greece, but the Roman armies that were in the ascension stood in his way, and he was routed. For the second time his plan was thwarted.

History tells us that he went back to his own cities and tried to plunder the temple of Jupiter in his own land. His own people were so angry at him that they murdered him. (11:19) He was replaced by his own son Seleucus, a tax-collector, whose short reign was ended in 176 BC when he was assassinated by his Prime Minister! Now let's pause for a moment. This prophecy in (Ch 11) is replete with seemingly unimportant details. Perhaps you're asking, "Why are these details found in the Word of God" I mean why did the Holy Spirit take the trouble to record all these details between these two warring nations One reason is to show us that God is control of history.

God determines the boundaries of nations. God knows history from beginning to end because history is quite literally "His Story". But I believe that this detailed prophetic record is not only given to us to show us that God is in control of history, but these three kings that we have just considered are described to provide a background for Antiochus Epiphanes and he is given ample attention in this record. Why Because he foreshadows the Antichrist of the end times. So have a look at the fourth king mentioned here: (d) ANTIOCHUS THE GODLESS: Look at (11:21) Now this was Antiochus Epiphanes the OT Antichrist, "the little horn", of (Ch 8) "a vile person", whose treatment of the Jewish people and religion in the intertestamental period foreshadows similar happenings in the Tribulation period at the hands of the Antichrist!

Now have a look this man. Notice: 1. HIS ACCESSION: Look at (11:21) The younger son of Antiochus the Great he obtained the throne by deceit and flattery in 175 BC. Forming leagues and breaking them he extended his power throughout Syria, Palestine, Edom, Ammon and Moab, using bribery to gain the support of his people. Notice (1) and then look at: 2. HIS AGGRESSION: * The FIRST Attack is recorded in (11:25) In 170 BC Antiochus defeated Ptolemy on the border of Egypt. Antiochus was victorious in part because Ptolemy's counsellors plotted against him. (11:25-26) In working out truce arrangements both kings also practised treachery.

Look at (11:27) Is all this not so characteristic of the peace conferences between men and nations both in the past and present On his way back to Syria Antiochus put down a small insurrection in Jerusalem and took the opportunity to plunder the Temple. (11:28) * * The FURTHER Attacks are recorded in (11:29-35) (a) Antiochus attacked Egypt: (11:29-30) Now do you recall those old films between the cowboys and the Indians When they were fighting against each other and suddenly a distant trumpeter is heard and the Cavalry come charging over the hill.

Do you remember that Well, that's the picture that's painted in (11:30) "The ships of Kittim", refers to the arrival of a Roman fleet that effectively deterred Antiochus in his attack on Egypt. Angry and disappointed, Antiochus turned his army north. In route he vented his anger against those of "the holy covenant", (11:30) the faithful Jewish people. There he was supported by those Jews who had forsaken the holy covenant. Antiochus attacked Egypt: (b) Antiochus attacked Israel: (11:31-35) We see here: 1.

The DESOLATION of Israel: In Jerusalem Antiochus placed guards around the Temple to prevent worship. On a particular Sabbath he ordered that women and children be slaughtered. He required idolatrous worship and held Greek athletic contests in which the athletes competed while naked in full view of the Temple. Greek culture was imposed. A statue of the Greek god Zeus was erected in the Temple. The supreme insult took place on 15th December 168 BC when he sacrificed a pig (a ceremonially unclean animal) on the Jewish temple altar.

He then made the priests to eat pork from the sacrifice. All this was termed by the Jews as the "abomination of desolation", (Matt 24:15) Now although Antiochus's actions were supported by apostate Jews, Daniel was told that "the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits". (11:32) Those who resisted Antiochus were subjected to his persecutions. Their suffering was by "the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil". 1. But there was: 2. The DEFENCE of Israel: For in response to those persecutions there arose a group of Jewish people called the Hasidim.

They were upholders of the law and their leader was Judas Maccabees who led a revolt from 168-165 BC. During those awful days some resisted heroically, others were slaughtered viciously. God allowed His people to be persecuted "to test them, and to purge, and to make them white". (11:35) He wanted His people purified from sin as metal is refined from impurities. Nothing drives people to God like suffering. My, a person's thoughts tend to go straight up when he is faced with imminent destruction.

Wasn't this an amazing revelation Daniel received from God It concerned the future suffering of the Jewish people "even to the time of the end". (11:35) They would suffer through the Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. And they would continue to suffer up to the time of revived Roman empire and its ruler the Antichrist. Now this has not been an easy passage. What can we learn from it Well, here is a passage: * THAT EXPLAINS THE AGONY OF THE NATION: Why do the Jewish people continue to suffer Because God is not finished with refining Israel.

God is faithful to Israel in spite of her refusal to turn to Him. Our Lord said of Israel "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life". (Jn 5:40 Matt 23:37 Rom 10:21) Though the Lord has every right to forget them... to write them off... He does not and He will continue the purging process until "the time of the end... a time appointed." And all during the time of Israel's chastening Michael has watched over them, and the time will come when he will fight for them (12:1) and Israel will be redeemed and be delivered. (Zech 12:10) * * THAT EXTOLS THE ACCURACY OF THE WORD Think of this... 135 specific prophecies in the first 35 verses of this chapter have been fulfilled with amazing accuracy.

My, is there not every reason to believe that the remaining prophecies will have the same precise literal fulfilment in the future Dr. E. Schuyler English once told of a man on Long Island who was able to satisfy a lifelong ambition by purchasing a very fine barometer. When he unpacked the instrument he was dismayed to find that the needle appeared to be stuck pointing to the section marked "hurricane". After shaking the barometer vigorously the man wrote a scorching letter to the store from which he had purchased the instrument and on his way to his office on New York the next morning he posted the letter.

That evening he returned to Long Island to find not only the barometer missing but his house also. The barometer's needle had been right... there was a hurricane! My, what a book we hold in our hands Here we have the Unerring Precision of the Scriptures of Truth * THAT EXPRESSES THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORD: He is in control of history, isn't He God is sovereign. God is in control. God is over all! Do you believe that My, when I read about all of these wars and all of the conflicts, and the marching north and the marching south I conclude, "there is more to life than getting power, and there is more to life than accumulating things".

This may surprise you, but all of these men are dead. When they died, their conquests and defeats came to an end. All of their military conquests. All of their accumulation of things! All of the gold they had accumulated. Gone! Over with! My, the words of the Saviour can be written over this passage "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal. But lay for yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matt 6:19-20) My, we spent our short period on this earth accumulating, getting, securing, getting power, getting things, getting cars, getting baggage.

But one day we are going to face the Lord Jesus at the judgement seat and it won't matter how far the ladder you rose. The only thing then that will matter is this, "Did I live my life in this brief span of time for the Lord"

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/denis-lyle/why-do-the-jewish-people-continue-to-suffer/>

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