

## **Daniel in the Den of Liars**

**By Elder David Pyles**

Many years ago, the prophet Daniel was cast into a den of lions but was delivered by the power of God (Dn 6). Now the poor prophet has been cast into a den of liars. Of all books in the Bible, Daniel likely endures more attacks by unbelievers than any other besides Genesis. The reason is that validation of Daniel would be an unbeliever's worst nightmare. If this book is true, then there must be such a thing as divine inspiration, implying there must be such a thing as God, who must almost surely be the God of the Bible. Also, if Daniel is true, then Jesus Christ must be exactly who Christians claim He is. With so much at stake, the unbeliever has no recourse but to desperately attempt to discredit Daniel.

The book of Daniel contains prophecies pertaining to the entire history of the world. He even had a prophecy calling for the precise time the Messiah would come and be killed (9:24-27), and this was exactly fulfilled almost 490 years later with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Daniel also had many other prophecies that we can verify as having been fulfilled. Indeed, in his 11<sup>th</sup> chapter alone, some have counted over 100 prophecies that later proved to be true. The bulk of these prophecies pertained to the Greek era that followed the death of Alexander the Great.

Unbelievers commonly attempt to discredit Daniel by claiming that he lived much later than Bible scholars say, so that his purported prophecies were actually written after the fact. Bible scholars say Daniel was written over 500 years before Christ, but the skeptics say it was written no earlier than 165 BC. One problem confronting them is that Jews have a long tradition that Alexander the Great actually read Daniel's prophecies concerning him. This is recorded in the writings of Flavius Josephus, a famous Jewish historian who lived in the Roman era. Josephus was not a Christian and had no incentive to endorse Jesus Christ, though this is what he unwittingly did.

Alexander was born in 356 BC and inherited the throne of Macedonia (i.e. northern Greece) in 336 BC after the assassination of his father Phillip. Most of the remaining 13 years of his life would be spent in an extraordinary military campaign in which he would conquer an empire extending from Greece to India and southward to Egypt. His military genius is legendary. His relatively small army was unstoppable, and did upon several occasions defeat armies of vastly greater size. This was especially true of his battles against the Persians, who were then a great empire with a great military. Under Alexander, the Greeks displaced the Persians as the greatest power in that part of the world, if not in all the world. All this was prophesied by Daniel in his vision of the two-horned ram and the one-horned goat (ch 8).

Alexander's eastward advance ended in India in 326 BC, and though he intended to go even further, his weary soldiers were not supportive, so the army turned and journeyed back to the west. Alexander became ill while in Babylon and died there in 323 BC at 33 years of age. Reasons for his illness have been the subject of much speculation, and some even think he was poisoned. There was dissent in his army, caused partly by Alexander's growing acceptance of other races and cultures, especially of the Persians.

In his Antiquities of the Jews (Ch 8, Secs 3-5), Flavius Josephus claimed that when Alexander was on his southern expedition in which he would ultimately take Egypt, he besieged Tyre on the Mediterranean Sea coast north of Israel. This siege, along with an earlier siege by Babylon, had been prophesied with remarkable detail in Ezekiel 26-28. While besieging the city, Alexander demanded that Jerusalem supply his army. The high priest, whose name was Jaddua, refused Alexander, claiming that it would be in violation of a treaty they had with Darius, the Persian king. This infuriated Alexander and led all to assume that Jerusalem would soon be attacked also. The city, being terrified at the prospects of such, fervently prayed for deliverance. Thereafter, the high priest had a dream wherein he was instructed by God not to resist Alexander when he came, but to leave open the gates and to adorn the city so as to greet him, and to have the inhabitants of the city meet him in a procession, being dressed in white, and with the priests being at the head of the procession in their priestly garb.

When Alexander arrived to the outskirts of the city and saw the procession approaching him, he went out to meet them, but without military escort. This led some of his companions to speculate that he was out of his right mind, but Alexander later explained that he himself had experienced a dream some time earlier wherein he was approached by such a procession, even dressed as the Jews then were, and that it was revealed to him in the dream that he would conquer the Persians by the power of their God. After this encounter with the procession, Alexander went into Jerusalem, wanting to offer sacrifice to God, whereupon the priests did the service in his behalf in accordance to protocol.

Josephus then related how that Alexander was shown the book of Daniel, and its prophecy that the Greeks would defeat the Persians (ch 8). This so impressed Alexander that he asked what favors he could show the Jews, upon which they requested that they could continue to serve their God in accordance to His Law, and they requested that the same rights be extended to the Jews who were yet at Babylon. Alexander granted their request, and also promised that if any of them would choose to serve in his army, he would grant the same privileges, upon which several Jews chose to join.

Now if Alexander actually read from the book of Daniel, as Josephus claimed, then Daniel must have lived before nearly all of the prophecies at issue. Unbelieving historians will of course claim that the Josephus account is fabulous, but anyone could have predicted this. Their position is monotonously predictable: Before any of the evidence is considered, all that contradicts the Bible is fact and all that corroborates it is fiction.

Ezekiel mentioned Daniel in three places (14:14, 14:20, 28:3), but Ezekiel clearly predated all of Daniel's prophecies. Indeed, the two men were near contemporaries. So the unbelievers must either make the incredible claim that Ezekiel is misdated also, or else they must say that the book of Daniel is a forgery. If they claim the latter, then they will run into real problems with the Dead Sea scrolls. Eight different manuscripts of Daniel were found among them, some being complete. The oldest of these dated to around 125 BC. Now this was early enough that the Jews would have

known them to be forgeries, if this is in fact what they are, but when we see the Jews in possession of at least eight copies, this is clear indication that they highly honored them as factual.

Furthermore, putting Daniel at 165 BC will still leave skeptics with the problem of explaining how Daniel got so lucky as to predict the crucifixion of Christ in AD 30 and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (9:26). Then, after they have dismissed Daniel, they will have to manufacture another set of lies about Zechariah, because the prophecies of his ninth chapter are clearly about Alexander and the Greeks, and are quite consistent with what Josephus said.

All may rest assured that God will deliver Daniel from the den of liars even as he was delivered from the den of lions.