

MAKING SENSE OF SUFFERING

Daniel 11:1-35



SYNOPSIS

This past Sunday, we take a look at the vision explained to Daniel of what is to come. This vision details the powerful kings and kingdoms that would come, specifically the Seleucid Empire (King of the North) and the Ptolemaic Empire (King of the South). Israel is caught in the middle of these two warring empires with their struggle for power - and they seem to go through senseless suffering, simply because they are in the war path of these two kingdoms. The passage focuses in particular on Antiochus IV who massacres Israel twice. His anger and humiliation cause him to senselessly kill many Jews as he returns back home to Syria. Through this, Daniel learns that though 'exile' from Babylon is over, there was still great suffering and persecution to come.

The suffering of the Jewish people during the reign of the Grecian Empire also gives us greater context for their psyche coming into the Gospels and the setting for the Jewish people under the occupation of Rome. It also points us to the reality of lament and the questions that we are left asking in regards to the continual onslaught of suffering.

Three themes that are repeated throughout the book of Daniel that also comes to light in this passage are: 1) The Pride of fallen humanity and the devastating cycle of sin, 2) The Kingdom of God that is eternal and unbreakable, and 3) The Spiritual Battle that rages on.



3 THEMES TO REMEMBER

1

FALLEN HUMANITY

We are reminded that human kingdoms have an expiration date. The thirst for power and the evil plots continue in this destructive pattern throughout history. If anything, we see these beastly empires repeating itself up to this very day. We see the pain and suffering that comes from these human kingdoms - the callousness towards others, the amount of suffering and casualties that stem from human pride and a thirst for power.

2

AN EVERLASTING KINGDOM

In the midst of transitioning powers and kingdoms that rise and fall lies a kingdom that will not be shaken. The Kingdom of God is promised to be one that will not be broken and is one that will be ruled with perfect righteousness, perfect justice, perfect peace. Though trouble persists and wicked persists, the hope for the people of God is found in the Kingdom of God that is coming. The end is written - Jesus has risen and conquered sin and death. One day, He will make all things new and we will be with Him in His perfect Kingdom.

3

SPIRITUAL BATTLE THAT RAGES ON

There is a spiritual battle that rages on. As we see the turbulence and turmoil of geopolitics and the clashing between kingdoms - we also understand the battle that is primarily a spiritual one that is happening in the heavenlies. As we equip ourselves with the armor of God, we can wage war against the enemy through prayer and petition.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

Icebreaker: Have you ever been caught in the middle of a dispute? What did you do and how did you feel about it?

2

As Daniel 11 describes the frailty of the earthly kingdoms, how might that convict us of the efforts we have placed in building our kingdoms and where our hearts need to be?

3

In what ways are we 'little emperors' trying to wield power to rule our own empires (lives) in the way that we want? What is the Holy Spirit saying in regards to that?

4

As we are reminded of God's kingdom (everlasting, righteous, perfect etc.) how might that help us as we think about suffering and/or walk with those who are going through suffering moving forward?

5

What are some practical ways we can grow in prayer and intercession? How can we encourage one another to be a church that prays?



BIG IDEA

Daniel 11 challenges us with the idea of senseless suffering that is the reality for so many people (even today). Yet in the midst of this senseless suffering that may continue where evil persists, we hold onto the truth that the Kingdom of God has come and is coming in its fullness. While we wait for the fullness of this Kingdom - we have been equipped with the Armor of God to wage war against the spiritual dark forces and to persevere, knowing that the end has been written.