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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1923 ~ Daniel's Vision of Strange Animals.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

After Daniel's miraculous rescue of being unharmed from the lion's den, the remaining chapters of the Bible book of Daniel are devoted to visions that Daniel had, and what God's angels revealed to him about their meanings for the future of the world.

The first vision is listed in Chapter 7 and was given to Daniel while Belshazzar was still king over the Babylonian Empire. Early on in Daniel's work for King Nebuchadnezzar he was asked to interpret the king's dream of a tall statue made of different types of metals that showed future world kingdoms. In Daniel's vision God showed these same future kingdoms as a series of vicious beasts.

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This 1st vision covers an outline of world rulership for the non-Jewish nations, but not the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon, nor the rebuilding of Jerusalem or God's Temple. Neither is there any reference to the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The 1st beast Daniel saw coming up out of the sea was the Babylonian empire; the 2nd was the Medo-Persian empire, while the three ribs in its mouth represented the three major conquests of Lydia (in 546 BC), Babylon (in 539 BC) and Egypt (in 525 BC); the 3rd beast was the Greek empire; and the 4th was the Roman Empire. The four heads of the 3rd animal represented Alexander the Great's four generals, who divided the Greek empire into four parts after Alexander's death.

As in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, Daniel's vision extended from his own time to the end of the world. The 'little horn' mentioned may refer to a cruel Roman emperor like Nero, who had many Christians killed for no other reason other than they were Christians. Yet a number of kings could have filled this role, or the prophecy may still be for a time to come when an arrogant king will try to destroy God's people, such as the Antichrist. In the Bible book of Revelation, Chapter 13, it speaks of a beast who spoke great blasphemies against God and that he was given forty-two months of authority in the world: "It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue and nation."

At the climax of his dream, Daniel saw a '5th kingdom' which would replace the other four. He saw God seated on a flaming throne, with a lava-like river of fire flowing from before Him. This represented the fire of God's judgment flowing out over the world's nations. This 5th kingdom is God's own kingdom and through it, He will bring the rule of all earthly kings to an end. God will appoint Christ to rule over the nations, for He alone is the only one worthy of such an honour. The citizens of Christ's kingdom will be God's own holy people. In his vision, Daniel watched while the first three kingdoms were stripped of their authority and the 4th beast with its boastful 'little horn' was destroyed by God Himself.

Daniel was troubled by what he'd seen. The Jewish exiles were hoping that God would soon restore them to peace and prosperity as a nation. But Daniel's vision indicated that there were times of persecution to come. For this reason, Daniel kept the knowledge of this vision from the Jewish exiles until after the fall of Babylon, which took place about 15 years later.

In Chapter 8, Daniel had another vision during Belshazzar's reign. In this vision, Daniel found himself in the city of Susa, which later became the capital of the Persian Empire. There beside a man-made canal, Daniel saw a ram with two long horns, but one horn was newer and longer than the other. These horns were an accurate description of the Medes and Persians Empire. The ram was butting to the west, the north and the south, but nothing could stop it. So it grew arrogant.

Then a goat with one big horn between its eyes came rushing out from the west. It attacked the ram, broke off its two horns and destroyed the ram. As Daniel was living in the 6th Century BC, he had these prophecies given to him for the future. God's angel, Gabriel, told Daniel to keep the vision secret for the present, for it would be a long time before it all came true. We know from history that the ram was the Persian Empire and that it was defeated by the goat, who was Alexander the Great of the Greek Empire.

When Alexander died in 323 BC, his four dominant generals fought for control over his empire and in the end, divided it up. From the part of the empire based in Syria, to the north of Judea, arose a little horn or else known as 'Antiochus IV Epiphanes' in 175 BC. He was a very powerful man and murdered his brother and imprisoned the rightful heir to the throne in Rome so that he could gain the throne for himself. But the Jewish people refused to accept Antiochus's policy of only using the Greek language and culture. Eventually, he tried to use force to replace the Jewish religion in Judea with the heathen religion and customs of the Greeks. He killed many of God's faithful people, including the high priest, who represented God Himself to the people. In 167 BC, he dedicated the Temple of God in Jerusalem to the Greek god, Zeus, and sacrificed a pig on the altar, which desecrated the temple and caused the Jews' daily sacrifices to cease.

Sometimes we ask ourselves why God allowed this tyrant to rule over His people. The shameful history behind the Temple priests at that time involved three brothers. The high priest was a pious man. But his 2nd brother paid a bribe to Antiochus to be made high priest instead. Yet the 3rd brother paid an even bigger bribe to Antiochus to be made the high priest. The 1st high priest rebuked the 3rd one, who in turn murdered him and continued to sell off the golden utensils from the Temple of God to pay for his bribe. Naturally, God wasn't very pleased with this state of affairs!

In his vision in the city of Susa, Daniel heard one angel ask another how long it would be that the sacrifices would be stopped and the Temple cleansed. The answer he heard was 2,300 evenings and mornings. This was the length of time between the removal of God's altar from the Temple by Antiochus and its restoration about 3 years later. This amazingly specific prophecy was written some 350 years before the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Great prophetic fulfilment like this demonstrates that God not only *knows* the future, He also *guides* the future.

An old rural priest and his sons, known as the Maccabees, led a revolt against Antiochus after he issued his decrees forbidding Jewish religious practice. One son, Judah, became the hero of the Jewish wars of independence that lasted from 168-164 BC. The Maccabees were successful and re-established Temple worship. When they went to light the Temple's Menorah, or the 7-branched candle holder, they found that only a single bottle of olive oil had escaped contamination by the Greeks. Miraculously, they lit the Menorah and only 1-day's supply of oil lasted for 8 days, until new oil could be prepared under the conditions of ritual purity. To the present time, Jewish people celebrate an 8-day feast to mark that rededication of God's Temple just before Christmas each year.

The angel Gabriel told Daniel that the vision of Susa referred to the end times. Daniel was to keep the vision confidential and this may be why Daniel wrote the last five chapters of his book in Hebrew and not in Aramaic, as most people would not have understood the Hebrew language. However, history does repeat itself. Brutally cruel Antiochus Epiphanes is considered to be the Old Testament Antichrist, for in 2nd Thessalonians, Chapter 2, the final Antichrist who will be equally cruel, will even sit in the Temple of God and claim that he himself is God. We can see, as the Jewish people of those times did, that Satan was behind Antiochus' behaviour.

There are still some parts of Daniel's visions that are yet to come true, as those about the end of the world. What we should learn from Daniel is this: if his prophecies of past history have come true, we can expect that his God-given prophecies of 'future history' to come true also. It's difficult to know the order in which many prophesied events will happen, but despite this, we need to make ourselves ready for the end times.

When we read of all the people killed in the battles of one nation conquering another, it brings a longing for peace in our world. But this can't happen until the Prince of Peace, who is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, becomes our world ruler and reigns from Jerusalem. In both Isaiah, Chapter 2, and Micah, Chapter 4, the prediction that terror and war will end, will then happen, as they say: "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."

On a personal level, no one needs to wait for that future time of Christ's reign to come. We can each have God's peace in our hearts now, even when war and rumours of war rage around us.

We can have complete peace with God through the sacrifice of His perfect, sinless Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross, which is how Jesus paid for our sins on our behalf. We can receive God's forgiveness and complete cleansing of sin within our spirit when we believe these facts to be true. When we ask for God to redeem and make right our guilty past, He will make us into new spiritual creations. No one who sincerely asks of God is ever refused. As the world's High Priest, the Lord Jesus through God's Holy Spirit, maintains a state of friendship with all who continue to come to God through Jesus. And Jesus lives forever to intercede with God on our behalf.

For Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." He had also told His followers that "in this world you will have many troubles. But take heart! I have overcome the world." So peace is not the absence of trouble; it is the presence of God. It's only when "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" that we can experience the true peace of mind that comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit, who shows Himself in our daily lives.

There's a great temptation to let people take our peace away from us. This happens whenever we become angry, hostile, bitter, spiteful, manipulative or vengeful towards other people. When we have inner peace, we know that all our circumstances are just temporary and that God is sovereign over all. God can bring a variety of good things, including peace and repentance, from the afflictions that we experience. Even the discipline of the Lord will yield a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in His way.

Peace comes from exercising faith in the character of God and His Word, the Bible. We can have peace in the middle of challenges when we remember that “all things work together for the good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.” Inner peace that results from a relationship with God, allows us to keep things in proper perspective. We can accept difficult situations on earth by remembering that our citizenship is already in heaven.

A peaceful mind and heart are experienced as a result of recognising that an all-wise and loving Heavenly Father has a purpose for us in our trials. When times of difficulty come, persistent prayer will usher in God’s perfect peace and we’ll keep our minds fixed on Him. In Philippians, Chapter 4, verses 6-7, we are taught: “Don’t worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds, as you live in Christ Jesus.” Seek God’s peace today!

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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