

A long symbolic survey of future history

- Given to provide assurance that God's purposes are on course

This long symbolic survey of future history is very unusual in the Bible. It prepared the people of the sixth century BC and beyond for long delay. It would be hundreds of years before God's purposes through Israel would be fully worked out. Israel needed help to endure this long waiting. They needed to develop a patience that would last for centuries. This survey of history also lets Israel know that God knows the future and that he is in control of the events ahead. There would be times in Israel's future when it would seem that God had long forgotten his purpose, but the predictions of Daniel would encourage them. Seeing his mysterious prophecies coming to pass stage-by-stage would let the believers know that the purpose of God was on course.

The kings of Persia

- Ten kings

The passage is complicated and somewhat overwhelming for people who do not think much about history, but if we take it piece by piece we shall follow it. First (as we have seen) the vision speaks of the **kings of Persia**. There were ten kings of Persia from the first until the time when a Greek conqueror (Alexander the Great) took over the empire.

- Interrupted by Smerdis

Cyrus	39–530 BC
Cambyses	530–522 BC

After Cambyses there was a man who stole the throne for a few months. He used the name 'Smerdis', the name of Cambyses' brother, and is sometimes called Pseudo-Smerdis. He was king for less than a year, in 522 BC. Then the line of Cyrus was resumed; the next kings were:

Darius I	522–486 BC
Xerxes (Ahasuerus)	486–465/4 BC
Artaxerxes	464–423 BC
Darius II	423–404 BC
Artaxerxes II	404–359 BC
Artaxerxes III	359/8–338/7 BC
Arses	338/7–336/5 BC
Darius III	336/5–331 BC

- Xerxes – the most significant king of Persia

The angelic messenger tells Daniel about the first three kings: 'three further kings will arise in Persia'. The three further kings turn out to be either Cyrus, Cambyses and Darius I, or Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis and Darius I (if Cyrus is not included as the first). What is certain is that the fourth one is the important one: Xerxes. It happened as the vision said. Cyrus died. Three more kings came along. Then there came Xerxes. Wealthy rulers and an atmosphere of military aggression need not shake the people of God; the purpose of God is on course.

The Greek empire

- Alexander – "the mighty king" most significant king of Greece

Next the vision speaks of the Greek empire. After a few lines about the most significant king of Persia, the prophecy moves to the most significant king of Greece. Passing over six lesser Persian kings it comes to Alexander the Great (as he turned out to be). ³*Then a mighty king shall arise, and he shall rule over a great realm, and shall do according to his will.* The 'mighty king' is not named in Daniel but history knows him as Alexander the Great.

• Died young with no natural successor

• Empire broke into pieces

• Two kingdoms important for the history of Israel

The Kingdoms of Egypt and Syria

• The Ptolemies in Egypt

• The Seleucids in Syria

⁴But at the height of his power, his empire will be broken up and will be given over to the four winds of heaven. It will not belong to his family and it will not be as great a realm as it was when he ruled, for his kingdom will be uprooted and will be given to others besides them.' Alexander died when he was thirty-three years old, in 323 BC. There was no natural successor to Alexander. He had a wife named Roxana and an infant son, but both of them were murdered and the rule did not pass to anyone in his family. His generals began to fight among themselves and the empire broke into pieces.

After Alexander's death the empire broke into distinct kingdoms. Two of them are important for the history of Israel and we do well to have a list of them before us.

Ptolemies in Egypt

Ptolemy I Soter
(323-283 BC)
Ptolemy II Philadelphus
(283-246 BC)

Ptolemy III Euergetes
(246-221 BC)
Ptolemy IV Philopater
(221-204 BC)
Ptolemy V Epiphanes
(204-181 BC)
Ptolemy VI Philometor
(181-145 BC)

Seleucids in Syria

Seleucus I Nicator
(323-280 BC)
Antiochus I Soter
(280-261 BC)
Antiochus II Theos
(261-246 BC)
Seleucus II Callinicus
(246-226 BC)
Seleucus III Soter
(226-223 BC)
Antiochus III – the Great
(223-187 BC)
Seleucus IV Philopater
(187-175 BC)
Antiochus IV Epiphanes
(175-164 BC)



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