

# The Persistence of Satan

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Everything that we see or smell or feel obviously is physical. We don't deal with the spirit world every second of the day as we do with the physical world, and in that there is a problem because we don't think about the spiritual world as much as we do the physical world that we find ourselves immersed in everyday. The problem is that because we don't often think of the spiritual world and we're so immersed in this physical life that we, as God's people, are not daily impressed by the fact that there are spiritual forces actively seeking to destroy each and every one of us. We just don't appreciate that on a daily basis. Recently we talked about how Satan wants to devour us, in 1 Peter 5:8. We've also talked about, in the parable of the sheep fold in John 10, how Satan wants to steal and then kill and then destroy. We've also talked about the fact that Satan was a murderer from the beginning as we find in John 8:44. The bottom line is that Satan and his demons want to destroy anyone who is attempting to do God's will; destroy completely.

Now what we'd like to do in the sermon today is look at an approximately 130 year chunk of history in the Old Testament. Now in general, just to set the stage, the time frame is nearly a thousand years after the time of Moses and it's about 500 years after Solomon built the first temple. We're going to take this story in chronological order therefore it requires us to jump from book to book to book. So we're going to have to do that between several books to keep it in chronological order.

What we're going to do in the sermon is to see how Satan over and over again sought to destroy God's people. It's a fascinating story and yet at the same time it's a scary story because Satan did not give up in his efforts to destroy God's people. We're going to first find that he tried to get God's people to compromise and as a result of the compromise, therefore reject God. When that didn't work then he attempted to kill them outright and when that didn't work he attempted to influence the kings to have them killed and when that didn't work he influenced society around them to have them killed. He just would not give up. All of these efforts by Satan, 130 years worth of unrelenting efforts by Satan to kill God's people; even though God intervened time after time after time, he would not give up.

So the goal by the end of the sermon is we want to have a small six word command by Jesus Christ that He gave us, carry a greater sense of urgency to all of us in our spiritual life and in our relationship with God. So the title of the sermon and as we go through it keep this in mind; the title of the sermon is, The Persistence of Satan. We need to understand that very deeply as we get closer to the end of the age.

Now before we actually start, let's look at some background. We're going to begin in the year 605 B.C. Let's turn to Jeremiah 25 in order to set the background. The time is

605 B.C. We'll begin in verse 1 and jump through a few verses in that chapter. God spoke to Jeremiah as we find in verse 1.

**Jeremiah 25: 1.** *The word that came to Jeremiah ...*

Notice the subject.

*1b) ... concerning all the people of Judah...*

Notice the time.

*1c) ... in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that [was] the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; (KJV)*

Now the first year of Nebuchadnezzar is well established: 605 B.C. Israel has already been destroyed and had been taken captive over a hundred years earlier.

Notice verse 8 now.

**Jeremiah 25:8.** *Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts; Because you (referring to Judah) have not heard my words,  
9) Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, says the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon ... (KJV)*

Notice what he says.

*9b) ... my servant, ...*

He's going to use Nebuchadnezzar to do His will.

*9c) ... and will bring them against this land (Judah), and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them ...*

Jumping to verse 11.

*11) And this whole land shall be a desolation, [and] an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.  
12) And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, [that] I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, says the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans (Babylonians), and will make it perpetual desolations. (KJV)*

Now let's go to chapter 29 of Jeremiah and we'll read verses 10 and 11, and add to what we just read in chapter 25. We see here Nebuchadnezzar is going to come down and destroy the land and they're going to be held captive for seventy years.

**Jeremiah 29:10.** *For thus says the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place (meaning the land of Judah). (KJV)*

Verse 11, this was read and emphasized in the last sermon, Nothing for Our Harm. God says:

*11) For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. (KJV)*

So here in these two chapters we see that the Babylonians would shortly enter and destroy the land of Judah, that Babylon would rule over Judah for seventy years and after that the Jews would be allowed to return to their land, and sure enough this happened later that very same year. Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah. He deported the best and the brightest of the Jews back to Babylon. We're going to see that. Then a few years later he came back into the land of Judah; he plundered the temple, he burned it and burned Jerusalem to the ground.

As we saw, Satan was a murderer from the beginning and as we start this 130 year journey, we're going to see that he attempts to destroy, to murder the Jews and the leaders of the Jews in an effort to destroy God's plan. Why would he go to that effort? What is it about Satan that he would take the energy and the time to do this? There are two reasons.

1. Satan hates God's chosen people. That applies to us today. We need to remember that because we are applying this whole historical lesson to us today. He hates God's chosen people. Now the Jews were already captive. They were in Babylon, but that wasn't enough for Satan. Satan wanted them dead, not just captive but dead. So he hates God's chosen people.
2. He also knew that the line of the Messiah was going to come through the Jews. We read that in the first chapter of Matthew. If he could destroy the Jews, in his perverted mind he would think that the Messiah wouldn't come and then he could replace the Messiah. So he had two reasons to destroy the Jews.

Let's begin this 130-year journey. We start in 605 B.C. and now what we're going to read as we turn to Daniel, chapter 1, this is just a few months after Jeremiah wrote chapters 25 and 29 that we just read; this is a few months later.

**Daniel 1:1.** *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. (KJV)*  
*2) And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god (Nebuchadnezzar's god); and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.*

3) *And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring (notice what is happening here) certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed and of the princes;*

4) *Children in whom [was] no blemish, but well favored and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as [had] ability in them to stand in the king's palace (they had the wisdom and maturity to do that), and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue (language) of the Chaldeans. (KJV)*

So we see here Ashpenaz was to pick the best and the brightest of the Jews.

5) *And the king appointed them a daily portion of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. (KJV)*

There was a plan here, a training plan.

6) *Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:*

7) *Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel [the name] of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego. (KJV)*

Now why were the names changed? Who came up with that idea? We know who came up with that idea and the reason Satan did that is he wanted those four young men to lose their identity. He wanted them to be absorbed in the Babylonian culture and religion and, therefore, lead the rest of the Jews astray. Notice this; Daniel in Hebrew means "my judge is God", but in the Babylonian language, Belteshazzar means "protect his life." Of course, as we're going to see, Daniel was very important to Nebuchadnezzar and he wanted his life protected.

Hananiah in Hebrew means, "Yahweh has shown grace" and in the Babylonian Shadrach means, "command of Aku." Aku was the moon god. So Hananiah's Babylonian name meant that Hananiah was under the command of the moon god.

Mishael in Hebrew is "who is what God is." In other words, his parents named him such that he would become like God, have the mind of God. We should have the mind of Christ. Meshach means, "who is what Aku is", again trying to change his culture, his very name.

Azariah in Hebrew means "Yahweh has helped" and his name was Abednego. Abednego means "servant of Nebo." Now Nebuchadnezzar was named after Abednego also; "Neb" both of them, servant of Nebo.

There was an effort to change their names and have them assimilated into the Babylonian culture. Now look at verse 8.

**Daniel 1:8.** *But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. (KJV)*

Now why would he do that? Well the food was probably unclean and the drink might have been also (some of the ingredients in it), and/or the food and drink was polluted because it was used in temple sacrifices and Daniel was not going to compromise with God's law. Let's look at verse 11.

*11) Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,*

*12) Prove your servants, I beseech you, ten days; and let them give us pulse (vegetables) to eat and water to drink.*

*13) Then let our countenances (appearances) be looked upon before you, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as you see, deal with your servants.*

*14) So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.*

*15) And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portions of the king's food.*

*16) Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse (vegetables).*

*18) Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.*

*19) And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. (KJV)*

Notice in verse 20:

*20) And in all matters of wisdom [and] understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians [and] astrologers that [were] in all his realm. (KJV)*

They were ten times better in wisdom, knowledge and understanding. So what happened, you see, is God specifically set these four apart and Satan tried to get them to defile themselves with the food. He also had their names changed so that they would become assimilated into the Babylonian society. That did not work.

So did Satan just go away and give up? Well, eighteen years later he tried again. This time he tried to murder them because they wouldn't compromise. Let's go to Daniel, chapter 3 now. If one strategy doesn't work, he will try another. We covered this last time. Nebuchadnezzar made this image of gold. It was ninety feet high and about nine feet in breadth and he set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

**Daniel 3:1.** *Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height [was] three score cubits, [and] the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. (KJV)*

Now the Septuagint translation is a translation of Hebrew to Greek of the Old Testament. The translation was done about 300 B.C. Now the Septuagint in verse 1 says the following in the very first part of the verse: “In this eighteenth year, Nebuchadnezzar made this statue of gold.” If that number is true, the timeframe would now be about 587 B.C. Now let’s jump to verse 8.

8) *Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.*

The reason they accused the Jews was, at the end of chapter 2, they were put in charge. They were put over the native Babylonians and the Babylonians did not like that, to have these foreigners put over them.

9) *They spoke and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar (they were jealous), Oh king, live forever.*

10) *You, Oh king, have made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image:*

11) *And whoso falls not down and worships, [that] he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.*

12) *There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (by name; they came after them); these men, Oh king, have not regarded you: they serve not your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up. (KJV)*

And, of course, Nebuchadnezzar went into a frenzy.

13) *Then Nebuchadnezzar in [his] rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king.*

14) *Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said unto them, [Is it] true, Oh Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?*

15) *Now if you be ready that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the image which I have made; [well] (everything is fine; all is good): but if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who [is] that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? (KJV)*

You see, Satan at this point is giving them a choice and he’s trying to get them to compromise, to cave in and worship this image. Notice what they do in verse 16. I’ll read it out of the NIV.

**Daniel 3:16.** *Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, “Oh Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.” (NIV)*

That’s pretty bold.

17) *“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, Oh king,”*  
18) *“But even if he does not, we want you to know, Oh king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” (NIV)*

They would not compromise. We know the rest of the story. An angel was sent and the angel saves them. But again look at Satan’s effort to murder them and the plotting and the effort to make this happen.

Now from this point Satan failed. Let’s fast forward forty-eight years down the road. The year is now 539 B.C. We want to stop here because we’re going to come back to Daniel, but to set the stage we need to go back in time to the 700’s B.C. to see a prophecy. So keep your place in Daniel and let’s go to Isaiah 44 and see this prophecy. This is in the 700s; this is 150 years prior to the general time that we’re in the sermon.

**Isaiah 44:24.** *Thus says the Lord, your redeemer,*

Notice what God says He does.

24b) *... and he that formed you from the womb, I [am] the Lord that makes all; that stretches forth the heavens alone; that spreads abroad the earth by myself;*  
26) *That confirms the word of his servant, and performs the counsel of his messengers; that says to Jerusalem, You shall be inhabited; ... (KJV)*

Now this is before Jerusalem ever fell. So He’s saying that Jerusalem is going to fall and He’s saying this at least 100 years before it ever fell and He says, “You’re going to be inhabited again.”

26b) *... and to the cities of Judah, You shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: (KJV)*  
27) *That says to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up your rivers: (KJV)*

Now verse 28, we’ll get to the subject.

28) *That says of Cyrus, [He is] my shepherd, ...*

Just like He said about Nebuchadnezzar, My servant.

28b) *... and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, You shall be built; and to the temple, Your foundation shall be laid. (KJV)*

So what He is saying is that this temple is going to be destroyed and yet it's going to be rebuilt; and this was all done 150 years before the fact. This was written before Cyrus was ever born. Notice it ties an individual named Cyrus to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple and this is exactly what God did.

Now let's go back to 539 B.C. and look at Daniel, chapter 5. We're going to read verses 30 and 31. We're doing our best to keep this in chronological order, and please understand that these dates can vary by a few years either way. Someday we'll find out the exact dates, but this is the best we know at this moment in time.

**Daniel 5:30.** (This is what God did...) *In that night was Belshazzar (That's Nebuchadnezzar's grandson) the king of the Chaldeans (The Babylonians) slain. (KJV)*  
31) *And Darius the Median took the kingdom,*

Now we're going to see in just a second, he was probably given the kingdom.

31b) *... [being] about three score and two (62) years old.*

Now the historian, Herodotus, speaks of this very night and we have independent corroboration in the secular world of this event. He says, "Cyrus, the king of Persia, entered Babylon in 539 B.C. He defeated Belshazzar and he gave the rule of Babylon over to Darius, the Mede." We read that in Daniel 9:1. We don't need to turn there.

Now Dr. Hoeh said years ago that he felt Darius the Mede was Cyrus's uncle. Maybe it is, maybe it isn't. The Complete Bible Handbook by Bowker says Darius was a court name for Cyrus, so we don't know. But as we go forward, we're going to run into another Darius, Darius the First who is different than Darius the Mede who might be an actual individual or who might be another name of Cyrus. Someday we'll find out.

Now with a new king in place, Satan goes after Daniel, because the previous king protected Daniel. Satan sees an opening and goes after Daniel. Let's go to chapter 6 beginning in verse 1.

**Daniel 6:1.** *It pleased Darius (this is Darius the Mede or it could be Cyrus. We don't know) to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, ...*

He is organizing.

1b) *... which should be over the whole kingdom;*  
2) *And over these three (over these 120 princes) presidents; of whom Daniel [was] first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. (KJV)*



Meaning he shouldn't be bothered or disturbed or burdened in any way, because these three presidents (Daniel being first) were going to rule the land.

*3) Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit [was] in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.*

Of course, Satan didn't want that to happen. So notice what happens in verse 4.

*4) Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he [was] faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. (KJV)*

What an example. We need to live that example today too. But what they did because they couldn't find fault, they hatched a plot and they appealed to the ego of Darius, saying that anybody who prays to another god or another man except you for the next thirty days; if they don't pray to you for the next thirty days and they pray to somebody else, god or man, they will be thrown to the lions. Now who do you think was behind this? Who put the first thought in these people's minds about this plot? Obviously it was Satan. Notice verse 10.

*10) Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed (this decree), he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. (KJV)*

He didn't back down. He didn't go hide in a closet. He worshipped God out in the open.

*11) Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. (KJV)*

This was a setup. They were spying on him.

Now if our numbers and dates are correct, Daniel at this moment, is roughly about eighty years old and Satan knew that by this time in his life he wasn't about to compromise. He couldn't get Daniel to compromise so the only solution was to murder him.

*16) Then the king commanded and they brought Daniel and cast [him] into the den of lions. [Now] the king spoke and said to Daniel, Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you. (KJV)*

We will see in a minute why the king didn't countermand his command even though he loved Daniel.

*17) And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, ...*

They had a big ring and the seal could have been wax or actually mortar of some kind and he put the seal, the impression in the wax or the mortar so everyone knew it was from the king; then on top of that was the signet of his lords.

*17b) ... and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.*

Now we know the rest of the story. Daniel was saved because God sent an angel and shut the mouths of the lions.

*21) Then said Daniel unto the king, Oh king, live forever.*

*22) My God has sent his angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocence was found in me; and also before you, Oh king, have I done no hurt.*

He said, "I am innocent of any wrong doing. I have done you no hurt."

*23) Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no manner of hurt was found upon him because he believed in his God. (KJV)*

What an example. What faith.

Now looking back over what we've covered so far, Satan spent sixty-six years, from 605 B.C. to 539 B.C. trying to destroy the most righteous of the Jews, the leaders of the Jews, to get Judah astray and to countermand what God's will was. It didn't work because of divine protection. Now God fulfilled His promise that we read in Jeremiah 29 earlier.

Now let's go to Ezra, chapter 1. We're taking it again in chronological order. We're going to read the first three verses of Ezra, chapter 1. It's Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Job. Now Cyrus is the king of Persia; he's defeated the Babylonians, 539 B.C.

***Ezra 1:1.** Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia (539 B.C.) that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, ...*

We won't turn there, but that's found in Jeremiah 29:10. Jeremiah said this was going to happen.

*1b) ... the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, ...*

He had prophesied to do that 150 years earlier.

*1c) ... that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and [put it] also in writing, saying, (KJV)*

This is going to be important later.

*2) Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which [is] in Judah. (KJV)*

God got this message to Cyrus. We don't know if it was in a vision or a dream or he heard words or somebody actually came and told him. We don't know.

*3) Who [is there] among you of all his people? ...*

The implication: are going to go do this.

*3b) ... his God be with him, ...*

Those who want to volunteer and go back to Judah.

*3c) ... and let him go up to Jerusalem, which [is] in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (He is God) which [is] in Jerusalem. (KJV)*

God says, "This is what I'm going to do." One hundred fifty years later this is what happened. Cyrus says he rules the land. He is absolute ruler. He wants to send the Jews back to Judah to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

So does Satan take this lying down? Does Satan just walk away? Notice what he does. He goes after the kings this time, not the leaders of the Jews but the kings. Daniel, chapter 10. We're just going to read the first part of the first verse and then to verse 12.

***Daniel 10:1. In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia ...***

This is now 536 B.C. This is about two years after he issued the decree for the Jews to go back to Jerusalem.

*1b) ... a thing was revealed unto Daniel, ... (KJV)*

We find that that "thing" was revealed by Gabriel in chapter 9. We don't have time to go into that.

*1c) ... whose name was called Belteshazzar (in Babylonian);*

Now notice verse 12. I'll read it from the New King James. This is just fascinating.

12) *Then he (Gabriel) said to me (Daniel, who is writing the book), "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; ... (NKJV)*

We need to take that to heart today. When we go to God, when we pray to God our words are heard. Notice Gabriel says:

12b) *... and I have come (to you, Daniel) because of your words.*

Now notice verse 13 is very important.

13) *"But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; ...*

Now who is this prince? Meaning the prince of the kingdom of Persia kept me from coming to you for twenty-one days.

13b) *... and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, ...*

This tells us. We know Michael was a spirit being, so this prince of Persia had to be a spirit being.

13c) *... came to help me, for I had been left alone there with (Who? Not the princes of Persia), the kings of Persia. (NKJV)*

Now Gabriel is a spirit being talking, and another spirit being held him up from seeing Daniel. This being prevented him from seeing Daniel for twenty-one days. Now who would have the power to do that? It's obviously Satan. Satan is most likely the prince of Persia. We know the kings of Persia are Cyrus and Darius and so it appears that Gabriel needed help in protecting Cyrus and Darius from Satan, and Michael took Gabriel's place so Gabriel could go see Daniel. So when Gabriel was absent talking to Daniel, Michael could prevent those princes from influencing Cyrus and Darius. Now notice verse 20, again out of the New King James.

20) *Then he (referring to Gabriel) said, "Do you know why I have come to you? (He is asking Daniel) And now I (Gabriel) must return to fight with the prince of Persia;*

Now he's not going to fight with somebody physical; he's fighting with a spirit being.

20b) *... and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come."*

Who is the prince of Greece?

21) *"But I will tell you what is noted in the scripture of truth. ...*

Notice what Gabriel says:

21b) ... *No one upholds me ...*

The New International says, "No one supports me." The New American Standard says, "No one stands firm with me."

21c) ... *against these...*

That's got to be referring to the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece, these two princes. He says, "No one stands firm with me, no one upholds me or supports me ..."

21d) ... *except Michael your prince.*

Now we know that Michael is a prince; we know that Michael is an archangel and he has the same rank as the prince of Persia. So it's obvious that Gabriel needed Michael's help in shielding and protecting these two kings from Satan's onslaught. Now why would an angel of God protect Cyrus and Darius at all? Why would they want them protected from Satan? Well we know it is now three years from the king's decree allowing the Jews to return and Satan is obviously trying to change the king's mind. He's trying to twist the king in their thinking, to go after the Jews and not allow them to come to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. He wants to destroy the Jews. He wants to destroy the line of the Jews so the Messiah would not be born.

Now look at chapter 11 verse 1.

**Daniel 11:1.** *"Also I (this is again Gabriel speaking) in the first year of Darius the Mede, [even] I stood to confirm and to strengthen him. (KJV)*

Gabriel is saying, "I am there; I stood firm to make him strong so that the order for the Jews to go to Jerusalem could be withstood and not changed." Now notice this is exactly the same year that Cyrus issued the decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and build the temple. This is also probably the same year that Daniel was accused of disloyalty and cast into the lion's den, this first year. Yet the timeframe of what we've just been reading is the third year of Darius the king and Cyrus the king. So we see from the first year to the third year Gabriel says he stood up to defend Cyrus. So we see that God sent Gabriel and Michael to intervene for three years in Satan's attempt to twist the kings of Persia to get them to destroy or persecute or to alter God's plan. Satan just refuses to give up. He doesn't give up.

Now we know this failed. Gabriel and Michael withstood Satan. The kings allowed the Jews to go down to Jerusalem, but notice what happens next. Satan doesn't give up and he tries to influence the kings of Persia. Let's go to Ezra, chapter 4 and we'll begin in verse 1. Satan takes a different tactic; same goal, different strategy.

**Ezra 4:1.** *Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity were building the temple of the Lord God of Israel, (NKJV)*

Notice what happened...

2) ... they came to Zerubbabel and the heads (chief) of the fathers' houses ...

Meaning of the Jews.

2b) ... and said to them, "Let us build with you,

Let's join forces. Let us build with you.

2c) ... for we seek your God as you [do]; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here."

3) But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' [houses] of Israel said to them, "You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us." (NKJV)

They knew this was a setup. They knew they were not their friends and that they were going to sabotage this effort.

4) Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building.

5) And hired counselors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia... (KJV)

Cyrus ruled from 539 to 530 B.C., nine years.

5b) ... even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

This is different than Darius the Mede that we read about earlier, the king of Persia.

So these enemies now provoked by Satan, they wrote a letter to the king trying to get the building of the temple stopped, the building of the walls stopped, the building of Jerusalem stopped and ultimately to have the Jews destroyed. Verse 13: this is a copy of the letter that they sent to him even to Artaxerxes the king. Now the word "Artaxerxes" if you look in Strong's, it says it's a title rather than a name. Artaxerxes could apply to one of several kings in those days. So they wrote a letter to the king and this is what they said:

11) *This [is] the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, [even] unto Artaxerxes the king; Your servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time.*

12) *Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from you to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls [thereof], and joined the foundations.*

13) *Be it known now unto the king, that if this city be built, and the walls set up [again], [then] will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom ... (KJV)*

And as the New King James says, "The king's treasury will be diminished if you allow this to occur." So they wrote the letter to hit the king right in the pocket book to threaten his finances. So in verse 21, the king gives an answer to these accusations.

21) *Give you now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not built until [another] commandment shall be given from me.*

24) *Then ceased the work of the house of God which [is] at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. (KJV)*

Satan temporarily succeeded in getting the work stopped. What happened then is the Jews wrote back to the king and what they said is, "Hey, we have an ancient scroll from Cyrus and he gave a command to go build. So you let a search be made and see if you can find this scroll in your archives." This is important because the Persians had a precedent of an unchangeable law. In other words when a Persian king wrote a law and put it in writing, it could not be changed. That's why with Daniel he hoped God would save Daniel because once the decree was made, it could not be altered. If you want to research that, you can see it in Daniel, chapter 6. We won't turn there, but verses 8, 12 and 15 cement this point. Once it's written, it's there forever. So let's go to Ezra, chapter 6 now, after they made a search and see what happened. Let's see what happened at the Jews request to do this research.

***Ezra 6:1.*** *Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the scrolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.*

2) *And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that [is] in the province of the Medes, a scroll, and therein [was] a record thus written:*

This is what was written.

3) *In the first year of Cyrus the king [the same] Cyrus the king made a decree [concerning] the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be built, the place where they offered sacrifices, strongly laid;*

Now Cyrus preceded Darius the First. Cyrus wrote it first. He was the first king of the Medes and the Persians, so his law could not be countermanded, so now this changed the whole equation. So in verse 7 Darius writes back to Judah's enemies and he says...

7) *Let the work of this house of God alone; ...*

Don't stop it. Don't hinder it.

*7b) ... Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his (God's) place.*

*12) And the God that has caused His name to dwell there destroy all kings and people that shall put their name to alter or destroy this house of God which [is] at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed. (KJV)*

God stayed the hand of Satan one more time. So what did Satan do? Did he quit and walk away with his tail between his legs? Next what Satan tried to do is provoke the Canaanites surrounding that area to attempt to kill all the Jews. Let's go to Nehemiah, chapter 4 and I'll read this from the New King James. Satan was provoking the surrounding peoples now to kill the Jews who came back, the Benjamites who also came back.

***Nehemiah 4:7.*** *Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tabiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed (in those walls) that they became very angry.*

*8) ... and all of them conspired together to come [and] attack Jerusalem and create confusion, (NKJV)*

We know God is not the author of confusion. Who is the author of confusion? Well, you know who was behind this. Look at verse 9.

*9) Nevertheless (Nehemiah was saying) we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.*

*15) And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us,*

It leaked out that they wanted to attack.

*15b) ... and [that] God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.*

*16) So it was, from that time on, [that] half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and [wore] armor; and the leaders [were] behind all the house of Judah.*

*17) Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon.*

*18) Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. (NKJV)*

Now this was likely about 520 B.C. We see that God once again intervened and now this is 82 years after Satan first tried to go against Daniel. Look at time after time after time he was not going to give up.



Now let's fast forward another 37 years after this and let's turn to the book of Esther. I gave a sermon on this whole account a few years ago, so we'll just hit the highlights. But let's look at it from the standpoint that Satan is behind it, he is provoking people to kill the Jews and wipe them out because he hates them and he wants the line of Jesus Christ that ultimately resulted in Jesus Christ destroyed.

***Esther 1:1.*** Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this [is] Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, [over] a hundred and twenty-seven provinces.)

2) [That] in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which [was] in Shushan the palace,

3) In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, [being] before him:

4) When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty many days, [even] an hundred and eighty days. (KJV)

He had a party, a celebration for 180 days to exalt himself. Now the Expositors Bible Commentary says Ahasuerus was a variation of the name of Xerxes. Xerxes is the grandson of Cyrus the Great, the one that we read about in the beginning, the son of Darius the First. He began his reign in 486 B.C. This is the third year of his reign so this is about 483 B.C. So this is 37 years after the events in Nehemiah and by this time the temple has been rebuilt and the walls have been rebuilt. So Satan did not succeed, but notice what he does now.

Ahasuerus makes a six-month feast.

10) On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

11) to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she [was] fair to look on.

Some commentaries say the goal was to parade her in front of these 127 drunken men with just the crown on, nothing else.

12) But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command by [his] chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him. (KJV)

We know that she was banished and then a search was made for another queen. Through all 127 provinces a beauty contest was undertaken and a queen was selected. We know that Esther was a Jew and was selected as queen. Remember that her uncle Mordecai told her not to reveal the fact that she was a Jew. You see, God had a plan here. Let's go to Esther 3:1.

***Esther 3:1.*** After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite (Now that's important), and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that [were] with him. (KJV)

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary said that he was promoted to the title of "Prime Confidential Minister" and that literally his chair was put above the 127 chairs of the heads of those 127 provinces. Now, who do you think inspired this promotion? The term "Agagite" refers to the royal house of Amalek, and you remember in the days of Samuel and Saul, Samuel told Saul and God told Samuel to destroy the Amalekites, to destroy King Agag because of what they did at Rephidim to Israel. You remember that Saul didn't kill Agag and he saved the best of the stuff and Saul refused to kill Agag, but you remember that Samuel hacked Agag to death. You can read about that in 1 Samuel 15.

So now what Satan does is set up Haman, a descendant of King Agag to take revenge on the Jews. They had a reason to take revenge because Israel killed one of the Amalekite kings, Agag. Now notice verse 6. I'll read it out of the New King James.

*5) When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath.*

*6) But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. ... (NKJV)*

Meaning there were a lot of Jews and he didn't want to get them angry at him just by going after the individual Mordecai, so instead (again inspired by Satan) ...

*6b) ... Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who [were] throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus – the people of Mordecai. (NKJV)*

This includes the Jews who were at Jerusalem, and includes the Jews that had gone to Judah. Now who put that thought into Haman's head? Obviously Satan did. This is another chance to wipe out God's chosen people, another chance to prevent the appearance, in his mind, of the Messiah.

*8) Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws [are] different from all [other] people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it [is] not fitting for the king to let them remain.*

*9) "If it pleases the king, let [a decree] be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king's treasuries." (NKJV)*

He's saying, "Look this campaign won't cost you a dime. I'll take care of it." So guess what the king did; verse 10:

10) *So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. (NKJV)*

Once he had that ring, that was a symbol of the power of the king and he could do anything he wanted to do. But what Ahasuerus didn't know is that the king's new wife was Jewish. He didn't know that. We know the rest of the story. God, through Esther, saves the nation of Judah. Look at chapter 4:14. Notice what Mordecai said.

***Esther 4:14.*** *“For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for [such] a time as this?” (NKJV)*

Well of course she came to the kingdom for such a time as this. You see, God is sovereign and God took care of Satan's plot and plan. He is far smarter, He is far more powerful. God was moving the chess pieces on the board around Haman as He has done with all the previous instances of their efforts to try to destroy God's people. We know that Haman was hung on the very gallows that he built to hang Mordecai. So Satan once again was thwarted.

So let's summarize what we've seen so far. We began in Daniel 1, 605 B.C. Satan tried to get Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and Daniel to compromise by eating unclean food, to reject God, to eat food dedicated to idols. He got their names changed to facilitate their being incorporated into the Babylonian society.

Then sixteen years later he tried to kill Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace.

Then forty-eight years later he tried to kill Daniel by having him eaten alive by lions. So Satan spent sixty-six years, from 605 to 539 trying to destroy the most righteous men in the land of Judah.

Then when that failed, he goes after the kings of Persia, and remember Gabriel and Michael had to spend at least three years protecting Cyrus and Darius from the influence of Satan. Think about this, when these two angelic beings were fighting Satan behind the scenes, the Jews, Cyrus and Darius didn't have a clue. They didn't know what was going on behind the scenes. They didn't even know this was going on.

We won't turn there, but in Luke, chapter 22, remember Christ said to Simon Peter, He said, *“Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, to sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.”* You see, Christ was saying, “Hey, there's this battle. Satan wants to just rip you apart. He just wants to take care of you and turn you against Me, but I've intervened. I've taken care of it.” Peter and the apostles didn't have a clue that this was going on behind the scenes, just like the Jews didn't have a clue. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had some clue maybe because of the writings and Gabriel talking to Daniel, but the vast majority of the people didn't have a

notion of what was going on, the spiritual forces arrayed against them. They didn't have a clue.

Then after that, after trying to influence the kings of Persia, and Gabriel and Michael got involved, Satan stirs up the Canaanites. They wrote a letter that finally stopped the rebuilding of the temple. Yes, they did. Then they provoked the Canaanites to attack the Jews. They forced them to build with a sword in one hand and a pick and shovel in the other hand.

Then thirty-seven years later, Satan didn't give up. He influenced all the kings of Persia and he influenced Ahasuerus to promote a relative of the Amalekite King Agag and provoked him to try to get rid of the whole nation of the Jews, calling for the killing of everyone in the kingdom.

So roughly 130, 131 or 132 years, depending on the numbers, from roughly 605 B.C. to 474 B.C., Satan's singular focus was to destroy God's people either through compromise or death. Now it's interesting at this very same timeframe, guess what Satan was doing in the rest of the world? He was deceiving the rest of the world, because at this same timeframe, Buda lived and taught in India influencing millions in that subcontinent.

At the same time, Confucius lived and taught in China, getting people thoroughly involved in satanic religions in this gigantic populated area of the world.

So Satan was busy, not just with God's people but getting the whole world astray. And it happened all during this very timeframe.

Now let's get to the lesson that we need to learn. Why did God choose to record this period of time in such detail? This is 130 years. We haven't scratched the surface on the details. It would take you hours and days to read all the accounts. But why did God inspire this to be recorded? What does God want us to learn from these historical events? What does he want us to learn?

We won't turn there, but in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 11 we read that all of these things, specifically referring to the Exodus and time of Moses, happened to them for examples, but it says also they are written for our admonition. Everything in the Old Testament, everything in the New Testament is written for our admonition and for our learning, for our understanding, for our correction.

The message is, in viewing what we've seen up to this point, Satan is incredibly persistent. He does not give up in his effort to destroy God's people. Now if Satan spent 130 years influencing kings and nations in an attempt to force Judah to compromise, how much more does he want to kill us, the firstfruits? How much more does he want to provoke us to compromise; the firstfruits of God's Kingdom? Notice how patient he was in waiting for just the right time to hatch a plot and a plan. He would

wait years; he would wait decades in some instances. That's why we have to be on guard.

Let's go to Matthew, chapter 4 and read the first two verses. This is the account where Christ was taken up by the spirit in the wilderness, and there was a specific purpose why Christ did this.

**Matthew 4:1.** *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted (tested) of the devil.*

2) *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry.*

That's when Satan went after Him. We have to ask the question: why would Christ fast? What was His purpose? First, He knew how powerful Satan was and knew through fasting He had to be as close as possible to the Father because of what Satan was going to throw up against Him. Remember, the Apostle John says in chapter 3 that all things were made by Christ. That means (this is the ironic part) Christ created Satan. He knew how powerful Satan was because He created him. Remember Luke says in chapter 10 that Christ said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven," this being that He Himself created. Therefore, He knew how powerful Satan was. That was the reason He had to fast, to be close to the Father.

The second reason He fasted is to set an example for us today, because on our own, we have no hope. We have no hope of overcoming Satan and his influence on our own. Christ wanted to be close to the Father through fasting. He needed the Father's help.

We won't turn there for time, but the book of Jude records Michael the Archangel fighting with Satan over the bones of Moses. Remember that? Satan undoubtedly wanted to use Moses's bones as an icon or an idol and to get Judah and Israel off track at some point down the road by showing these bones and they would begin to worship the bones and not God. We're told in there that they were fighting over the bones of Moses and neither one could win, except Michael invoked the power of Jesus Christ and won the battle. So there is a message for us, because if Michael couldn't overcome Satan on his own, we have no chance of overcoming Satan on our own at all.

But you see the good news is we are not on our own, because we have (what?) we have Christ living in us. That's why Christ said what he said in Matthew, chapter 6; last scripture. Let's turn there and we will read verses 9 and 10 and jump to verse 13. This is the outline of the prayer and we get to these six little words.

**Matthew 6:9.** *In this manner therefore pray: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.*

10) *Your kingdom come, Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven. (KJV)*

Now notice the first part of verse 13.

13) *And lead us not into temptation (or trial), but **deliver us from the evil one**:*

Six words: **deliver us from the evil one**. So if Satan went to such great lengths to destroy physical Israel, how hard is he going to try to destroy spiritual Israel? How much harder will he try to destroy spiritual Israel, the very firstfruits of God's family, the very first ones into God's family? He is going to go all out to destroy the firstfruits of God. We've seen in all of this narrative, this 130 year narrative, that Satan will not give up. He is absolutely unrelenting in his effort to destroy God's people.

I hope all of us, (and I'm speaking to myself primarily), I hope we all can see that we need an incredible sense of urgency to stand this and then getting close to God and realizing who our enemy is and realizing that behind the scenes in our lives, who knows what battles are going on? Who knows the fierceness of the battles protecting God's people? We can be thankful for that, but we need this sense of urgency to remember these six little words, and we need a sense of urgency to remember that Satan is after us. He wants to devour us. He wants to steal us, to kill us and destroy us because he was a murderer from the beginning. So let's all daily pray to God, "deliver us from the evil one."