

The Book of Daniel

Chapter Eleven



Chapter 10 was the preface for the detail that follows in Chapter 11. While reading through this chapter can be both confusing and exhausting, we see displayed the amazing foreknowledge of God. In fact, it is said that this chapter of Daniel is the single most detailed foretelling of events in the Bible.

Before we begin, what is the context of this prophecy (Daniel 10:14) and how will it affect what we are told?

11:1 – Standing by the King

“Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him..”

This verse best fits as the conclusion of the messenger’s preface from Chapter 10. In Daniel 10:21, he states, “But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.” The messenger speaking to Daniel worked with and through Darius to accomplish something? What was it? Look at Daniel 6:1-3, 14, 18-28.

Why would the messenger share this with Daniel?

11:2 – The Future of Medo-Persia

“And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.”

The truth spoken of by the messenger was an excerpt from the “scripture of truth” spoken of in Daniel 10:21. Here he mentions three new kings that will arise in Persia. He is not providing us with a complete lineage of Medo-Persian kings through the end of their dominance, but up through an important point in their history. Cyrus, the king of the entire Medo-Persian empire ruled from 550 to 530 BC. The four kings that followed Cyrus, ruler of the Medo-Persian Empire were:

- Cambyses II, son of Cyrus the Great, (529–522 BC)
- Smerdis (Bardiya), alleged son of Cyrus the Great, (522 BC)
- Darius I, the Great, brother-in-law of Smerdis and grandson of Arsames, (521–486 BC)
- Xerxes I (Ahasuerus), son of Darius I, (485–465 BC)

The historian Justin says. "He had so great an abundance of riches in his kingdom, that although rivers were dried up by his numerous armies, yet his wealth remained unexhausted." His military strength was such, that Herodotus, a historian who lived in that time, informs us that his army amounted to 5,283,220 men. Besides these, the Carthaginians furnished him with an army of 300,000 men, and a fleet of 200 ships. He led an army against the Greeks of 800,000 men, and 1,207 ships, with three banks of rowers each. As he marched along, he obliged all the people of the countries through which he passed to join him.

At first, Xerxes was victorious. He beat the Greeks in the Battle of Thermopylae, although with many casualties. He later conquered Athens. However, the Greeks won the Battle of Salamis with their backs

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against the wall and Xerxes never recovered from this loss. The result of his quest was that Greece was “stirred up” against the Persians, an action which would later lead to the conquer of the Persian domain by the great leader of the Greek Empire, Alexander.

11:3-4 – The Rise of Greece

“And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.”

The mighty king spoken of here is Alexander the Great, the king of Greece responsible for their great military victories and the expansion of their empire. In 323 BC, Alexander died of a high fever. His last words were, “I foresee a great funeral contest over me”. With these words, Alexander foretold the next forty years of his Empire’s history. He meant that his generals would wage a great war amongst themselves to determine who would rule over his empire.

His eldest son, Hercules, was murdered. Young Alexander, born after his death, was murdered in 310 BC. As the Lord prophesied, Alexander’s posterity (his descendants) did not gain his dominion.



Figure 1: Division of the Greek Empire

Ultimately, the conflict was settled after the Battle of Ipsus in Phrygia in 301 BC. Alexander's empire was divided at first into four major portions: Cassander ruled in Macedon, Lysimachus in Thrace, Seleucus in Mesopotamia and Iran, and Ptolemy in the Levant and Egypt.¹ Thus, we see the prophecy of God fulfilled. As we can see from the figure above, the kingdom was divided toward the four winds: Lysimachus to the North, Cassander to the West, Seleucus to the East, and Ptolemy to the South.

Seleucus quickly gained power and eventually took over much, if not all of Lysimachus' portion of the empire and even portions of Cassander's. Thus, the Seleucus and his descendents became “the king of the North”, referred to in the remainder of chapter 11. Ptolemy and his descendents retained their power in Egypt and are recognized as the “king of the South”.

The remainder of this chapter (at least through verse 35) discusses the conflict between the King of the North and the King of the South. Looking at the figure above, why would this become our focus?

The following page contains a diagram of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties (succession of kings) that are addressed in the remainder of this chapter.

¹ Information taken from www.wikipedia.org

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| Verses | Year (BC) | Reign | Egyptian King | | Syrian King | Reign |
|-------------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|--|---------------------------|------------|
| 5 | 325 | 323-285 BC | Ptolemy I Lagi Soter | | | |
| | 320 | | | | | |
| | 315 | | | | | |
| | 310 | | | | Seleucus I Nicator | 311-280 BC |
| | 305 | | | | | |
| | 300 | | | | | |
| | 295 | | | | | |
| | 290 | | | | | |
| | 285 | 285-246 BC | Ptolemy II Philadelphus | | Antiochus I Soter | 280-261 BC |
| | 280 | | | | | |
| | 275 | | | | | |
| | 270 | | | | | |
| | 265 | | | | | |
| 6 | 260 | | | | Antiochus II Theos | 261-246 BC |
| | 255 | | | | | |
| | 250 | | | | | |
| | 245 | 246-221 BC | Ptolemy III Euergetes I | | Seleucus II Callinicus | 246-226 BC |
| | 240 | | | | | |
| | 235 | | | | | |
| | 230 | | | | | |
| 10 | 225 | | | | Seleucus III Ceranus | 226-223 BC |
| | 220 | | | | | |
| 11-13 | 215 | 221-203 BC | Ptolemy IV Philopator | | Antiochus III (the Great) | 223-187 BC |
| | 210 | | | | | |
| | 205 | | | | | |
| 14-19 | 200 | 203-181 BC | Ptolemy V Epiphanes | | | |
| | 195 | | | | | |
| | 190 | | | | | |
| 20 | 185 | | | | | |
| | 180 | 181-146 BC | Ptolemy VI Philometer | | Seleucus IV Philopater | 187-175 BC |
| 21-35 or 46 | 175 | | | | Antiochus IV Epiphanes | 175-164 BC |
| | 170 | | | | | |
| | 165 | | | | Antiochus V Eupator | 163-162 BC |
| | 160 | | | | | |
| | 155 | | | | Demetrius I | 162-150 BC |
| | 150 | | | | | |

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11:5 – The Rise of the Seleucid Empire

“And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.”

The King of the South, Ptolemy I Lagi Soter (Ptolemy I) immediately established his rule over Egypt and the Holy Land. When the Macedonian empire was divided in 323 BC, Seleucus was given the office of chiliarch (commander of 1,000 men). At the second partition, at Triparadisus (321 BC), Seleucus was given the government of the Babylonian satrapy. In 316 BC, when Antigonus had made himself master of the eastern provinces, Seleucus felt himself threatened and fled to Egypt under Ptolemy I's protection. Thus, we see how Seleucus was referred to as a “prince” of the King of the South. In the war which followed between Antigonus and the other Macedonian chiefs, Seleucus actively cooperated with Ptolemy and commanded Egyptian squadrons in the Aegean Sea.

The victory won by Ptolemy I at the battle of Gaza in 312 BC opened the way for Seleucus to return to the east. His return to Babylon was afterwards officially regarded as the beginning of the Seleucid Empire and that year as the first of the Seleucid era. Master of Babylonia, Seleucus at once proceeded to wrest the neighbouring provinces of Persia, Susiana and Media from the nominees of Antigonus. A raid into Babylonia conducted in 311 BC by Demetrius, son of Antigonus, did not seriously check Seleucus' progress. Over the course of nine years (311-302 BC), while Antigonus was occupied in the west, Seleucus brought the whole eastern part of Alexander's empire as far as the Jaxartes and Indus Rivers under his authority. This is the fulfillment of the prophecy that the prince, Seleucus will be strong above Ptolemy I and have a great dominion. Truly, this was just the beginning of Seleucus' empire. As mentioned above, he brought almost the entire Greek Empire, with the exception of the South, under his reign.

11:6 – The Failed Union of the Kingdoms

“And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times.”

End of years –

The prophecy states that the kingdoms will join themselves together through the marriage of the King of the South's daughter to the King of the North. Political marriages were very common at this time as a means of strengthening the position of one or both nations. Looking at the table on page three, we see that Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II was given in marriage to Antiochus II Theos. As a condition of the marriage, Ptolemy II required Antiochus II to divorce his wife, Laodice. Antiochus II complied, but neither the North nor the South benefited from the arrangement.

Berenice's father, Ptolemy II died two years after their marriage. After his death, Antiochus II put aside Berenice and brought Laodice back as his wife. She was so resentful that she is said to have poisoned Antiochus II, who died shortly thereafter. Once Antiochus II was out of the way, she had Berenice and her son murdered, along with the entire Egyptian entourage that accompanied Berenice to the North.

Thus, Berenice did not retain the power of the arm; neither did he stand nor his arm (her father died); but she (Berenice) was given up (Antiochus II took back Laodice and Berenice was murdered) and they that brought her (Berenice's entourage was murdered) and he that begat her (her father died) and he that strengthened her in these times (Antiochus II died). Amazing accuracy!

Sadly, these events led to the wars we are going to begin reading of in the next passage.

11:7-9 – The First War between the Kingdoms

“But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold;

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and he shall continue more years than the king of the north. So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land."

The branch of Berenice's roots refers to her father. It was from her father, another king arose, Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes I. He was angered by her murder and conducted a successful invasion of the Seleucid Kingdom. He also carried away the idols, the princes (perhaps some the royal family), and their precious vessels into Egypt. What was the purpose of this?

He shall continue more years than the King of the North –

Verse 9 may be a mistranslation in the King James. The NASB translates verse 9 as, "Then the latter (the King of the North) will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land."

This is exactly what happened historically. Seleucus II Ceraunus mounted a counter attack on Egypt some years later, but failed and returned to his land.

11:10 – A Reaction from the North

"But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and [one] shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, [even] to his fortress."

Our retranslation of verse 9 now plays an important role in correctly interpreting verse 10 and matching it with history. Because we now understand the end of verse 9 spoke of the King of the North (Seleucus II at that time), we can recognize verse 10 as a reference to his sons. Seleucus II had two sons that ruled over the Northern Kingdom: Seleucus III Callinicus, and Antiochus III "the Great". Both of these sons were "stirred up" by their father's defeat at the hands of Ptolemy III. Seleucus III died after three short years as king. However, Antiochus III mounted several campaigns against the South, as we will read about in the next passage.

11:11-13 – A Reaction from the South

"And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, [even] with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand. [And] when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down [many] ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened [by it]. For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches."

The approach of Antiochus III made Ptolemy IV Philopater angry and he assembled a great army to fight. In 217 BC, Antiochus III and Ptolemy IV's armies met at the Palestinian border of Raphia. There were around 70,000 soldiers on each side. The South won the victory (the multitude shall be given into his hand). Antiochus III escaped, however, and the two sides had to arrange for a treaty, lest Ptolemy IV wage war against the Northern Kingdom. So, we see a fulfillment to this prophecy in verse 12, that even though Ptolemy IV won the battle against Antiochus III, it was to no advantage because he didn't gain any additional land or remove Antiochus III from power.

Antiochus III, the king of the North, turned his attention elsewhere and won many battles, advancing his kingdom to India in the East and North to the Caspian Sea. He also increase his wealth and military strength during this time. Meanwhile, Ptolemy IV and his wife died and the kingdom was left to their infant son, Ptolemy V Epiphanes. This set the stage for the additional campaigns by Antiochus III against the South and Ptolemy V, as prophesied in verse 13.

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11:14-16 – Israel Changes Hands

“And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall. So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither [shall there be any] strength to withstand. But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed.”

As Antiochus III grew his army, he also created an alliance with others against Egypt, including some Jews who saw the weakened state of their oppressor (Israel was under control of the King of the South). The rebel Jews were under the leadership of a man named Tobias and joined with Antiochus III to attack Egypt. They are probably referred to as robbers in this passage because the Jews had generally fared well under the Ptolemaic dynasty. Their rebellion set the stage for the great oppression we will read about later in this chapter.

Antiochus III fought against the King of the South's outposts in Israel and defeated their general, Scopas, at Paneas, which is near the head waters of the Jordan River. Scopas surrendered at Sidon, which means, “a city of fortifications”. This is where the reference to “the most fenced cities” comes from. After this defeat, all attempts to retain control of Israel (the glorious land) failed and it became part of the realm of the Northern Kingdom.

Verse 16 contains a prophetic statement that will be made clearer in the coming verses. The change in power over Israel would not be a good thing for the Jews. It will be the Northern Kingdom that eventually brings the Jews to their knees.

11:17-19 – A Different Tactic

“He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand [on his side], neither be for him. After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause [it] to turn upon him. Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.”

Antiochus III wasn't satisfied with attaining Israel. He wanted more. His sight was now set on conquering all of Egypt. With the Jews now under his control, he would be able to add them to his army (the upright ones with him). However, Rome had grown in power and was a force to be reckoned with. In order to deal with Rome, he would need to have an alliance with the King of the South (Ptolemy V). So, he concocted a plan to make the King of the South his ally and at the same time gain an advantage over him.

Looking at the chart from page three, who was the “daughter of women” given to Ptolemy V? How did he “corrupt” her? What could it mean that she shall not stand on Antiochus III's side or be for him?

The “prince for his own behalf” was the Roman general Lucius Scipio. Antiochus III gained his attention during his attempt to conquer Greece itself. Antiochus III failed after a defeat at Thermopylae in 191 BC and again at Magnesia in 189 BC against Scipio. Antiochus III was forced to retreat after these crushing blows. As he turned back towards his home, he was killed in Elam while plundering a temple. Thus, the prophecy was fulfilled and God again is shown to be sovereign over the affairs of men.

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11:20 – The Tax Man Cometh

“Then shall stand up in his place one that shall cause an exactor to pass through the glory of the kingdom; but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.”

After the death of Antiochus the Great, his son, Seleucus IV Philopater became the next king. As the Roman Empire grew in power, they began to exert their dominance over the Grecian realm. The northern kingdom was required to pay 1,000 talents annually (around 75,000 pounds of gold – almost \$600 million in today's currency).

In order to raise this vast amount of money, he taxed all of the lands within his kingdom. A ruthless tax collector by the name of Heliodorus (an exactor) was hired to oversee the collection of the taxes. Heliodorus took treasures from the temple at Jerusalem to pay the tax (passing through the glory of the kingdom). Soon after he plundered the temple, Seleucus IV Philopater suddenly and mysteriously died. History implies that his death was engineered by none other than his tax collector, Heliodorus. His reign was approximately eight years. As the Lord foretold, he was destroyed within a few days neither in anger or in battle.

11:21 – The Rise of Antiochus Epiphanes

“And in his place shall stand up a contemptible person, to whom they had not given the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in time of security, and shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries.”

During the time of Jewish captivity and the occupation of their land by foreign empires, the Jews had experienced nothing like the time of great trial they were about to face under the hand of Antiochus Epiphanes. That is why a large portion of this chapter and even some of chapter 12 is dedicated to describing his reign in great detail. This is when the Jews would desperately need to know that God was in control! God gave them what they most needed in their hour of need.

His heart was demonically directed again both Israel and the Holy God. Again, we are assured that the Lord has everything under control and even the days of this difficulty were numbered. You may remember Antiochus Epiphanes from Daniel 8:9-14, 23-25. He was the “little horn” that rose up on the goat. The last king, Seleucus IV Philopater plundered the temple, yet Antiochus Epiphanes is referred to as a “contemptible person”. Reread these passages from Daniel 8 and explain why he, above all the other kings mentioned, deserves this title.

We also read from this passage that Antiochus Epiphanes obtained his position as king through deception and flattery. Proverbs 29:5 tells us, “A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his steps.”

Antiochus Epiphanes was not the son of Seleucus IV Philopater but rather his brother. Seleucus had two sons, Demetrius, who was held in Rome as a hostage, and Antiochus, who was little more than an infant. Antiochus Epiphanes was in Athens when his brother died and came to Antioch, the Syrian capital city, under the guise of being young Antiochus' guardian. A man by the name of Andronicus murdered the young baby and Antiochus Epiphanes then put Andronicus to death. It is very likely that Antiochus Epiphanes orchestrated the whole event and killed Andronicus to cover his tracks. Thus, Antiochus Epiphanes took the throne of the Northern kingdom by the guise of flatteries (pretending to be interested in the welfare of his nephew).

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11:22-23 – Overcoming the Prince of the Covenant

“And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.”

Antiochus Epiphanes was a successful king of the North from a military perspective. Heliodorus, the man who probably murdered Antiochus Epiphanes' brother gained an army and launched an attack. Antiochus Epiphanes aligned himself with the Pergamenians and routed Heliodorus. Egypt then planned an assault against the North. Once Antiochus heard of this, he beat them to the punch and invaded Egypt in 170 BC. Antiochus defeated the Egyptians in battle. The first part of verse 22 describes his military conquests as the arms of a flood overflowing his enemies.

However, there was another front Antiochus Epiphanes was also fighting. He was seeking to gain more money from his subjects, especially the Jews. The passage above refers to the “prince of the covenant”. Who might this be?

The high priest at the time Antiochus came into power was a Levite by the name of Onias. Onias had a brother, originally by the name of Joshua. Joshua changed his name to Jason and became “Hellenized” (aligned with the Greeks) by both his name and religion. He then approached Antiochus Epiphanes and promised that if he were made high priest, he would garner more money for the Northern Kingdom. Thus, Onias was demoted and Jason became high priest. Shortly thereafter another man, Menelaus, approached Antiochus Epiphanes and promised greater riches still. Menelaus wasn't even of the tribe of Levi, yet Antiochus granted this request. Menelaus had Onias killed and did not even perform the duty of high priest. However, he aligned himself with Antiochus and helped him in his desecration of the Jewish religion and persecution of faithful Jews.

The last verse in this passage describes how Antiochus Epiphanes formed alliances with other nations to support his own gain.

11:24-26 – The Spread of Antiochus Epiphanes' Power

“He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.”

By entering peacefully, it means that Antiochus entered the wealthiest places of his empire, without any provocation, to take their wealth. He amassed a great fortune this way, but didn't retain it for himself. We read in the second part of verse 24 that Antiochus tried a new tactic that none of the previous kings of the North had tried. What was it?

Antiochus' thirst for power and conquest was unabated. He wanted more. We are told that he will forecast his devices (devise schemes) against the strongholds (powerful kingdoms/cities), but only for a time. His sites were set on conquering Egypt and bringing it under his power. Antiochus attacked both militarily and politically. In order to pursue his intent against Egypt, he supported one of his nephews, Ptolemy VI Philometer against his other nephew, Ptolemy Euergetes II for control of Egypt. Antiochus captured Ptolemy VI Philometer during battle, but portrayed it as doing him a favor by seeking to establish him as the rightful king of Egypt. By doing this he gained more power, influence, and an excuse to invade Egypt. We read that the king of the south was stirred up and came out to fight with a great and mighty army. However, the king of

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the south was unsuccessful against Antiochus. He won a decisive victory at Pelusium, a part of the Southern/Egyptian kingdom, then seized Memphis and aimed for Alexandria (the Greek capital city) itself. The king of the south was unable to continue resistance against Antiochus. The Egyptian army became spread out and dissipated, like water, and many lives were lost in battle. Overall, Antiochus attacked Egypt on four different occasions.

11:27-28 – Turning against the Holy Covenant

“And both these kings' hearts [shall be] to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end [shall be] at the time appointed. Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart [shall be] against the holy covenant; and he shall do [exploits], and return to his own land.”

Remember that Ptolemy VI Philometer was really a political prisoner/puppet of Antiochus. Antiochus treated him like a king, but Ptolemy really had no power. Both of these men devised plans together for conquests, however, both lied and their plans did not prosper. We are not told explicitly what those plans were, but the Lord makes it clear that their plans were not going to change the prophetic calendar because “the end shall be at the time appointed”. What might these plans have included?

Antiochus returned from his exploits against Egypt with great wealth, as he gained control of some of Egypt's most prosperous cities. However, we read that his heart was set against the “Holy Covenant”. What is the Holy Covenant? See Exodus 6:6-8.

True to Scripture, Antiochus conducted exploits against Israel. It is fair to ask the question though, why would his heart be set against Israel? What, of all nations, would most attract his attention to this little province? History indicates that while Antiochus fought against Egypt, a rumor spread that he had died. Once Jason, the former high priest that was replaced by Menelaus, heard these rumors, he gathered an army of 1,000 men and drove Menelaus off and killed many who he considered to be enemies. Antiochus considered this to be a revolt against his authority and determined to reassert his control over the region. Of course, Satan was behind this recent turn of events, perhaps he even orchestrated the rumor and planted the thoughts of rebellion in Jason and revenge in Antiochus. Regardless, God was still in control!

11:29-30 – The Line in the Sand

“At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.”

Precisely on schedule (by the Lord's watch), Antiochus returned to Egypt to finish what he started. He planned to take the whole kingdom. Everything seemed to be stacked in his favor. He had taken much of their wealth, annexed portions of their kingdom, and controlled their rightful heir. What could stop him? However, it was not to be. We are told that his return didn't go as well as the first time.

This final attempt at an invasion took place in 168 BC. Before this, members of the Ptolemaic royal family went to Rome and appealed for help. As Antiochus marched toward Alexandria, the Roman Senate dispatched a consul by the name of Gaius Popilius Laenas. When Antiochus was just four miles from Alexandria, ships from Rome (from the direction of Chittim/Cyprus) came bearing the Roman consul. He told Antiochus that the Roman Senate demanded that he leave Egypt immediately and concede Egypt to Roman power. Antiochus said he would take this into consideration and consult with his advisors. Gaius Popilius Laenas then drew a “line in the sand” around Antiochus and said that he would answer yes or no before he stepped out of the circle. Antiochus agreed to retreat.

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Imagine how Antiochus felt after being humiliated just before what he anticipated would be his greatest victory. He obviously had a lot of anger to vent. Unfortunately, the faithful Jews took the full brunt of his wrath. The Jews had stirred his anger during on his successful return from Egypt a few years prior, but as he returned home in defeat with an army ready to fight, he found use for them in the pillaging and desecration of Jerusalem.

What is implied by “having intelligence (show regard) with them that forsake the holy covenant?”

11:31 – The Abomination of Desolations

“And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.”

The arm is a symbol of strength, in this case, it probably refers to the military power of the northern kingdom. As Antiochus returned home from Egypt, he detached 22,000 men from his army, under the command of Apollonius, to destroy Jerusalem. What is the sanctuary of strength they polluted?

The pollution of the temple was one of the lowest points of Jewish history prior to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. 1 Maccabees 1:54-61 states, ⁵⁴“Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah, ⁵⁵and offered incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. ⁵⁶The books of the law that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. ⁵⁷Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king. ⁵⁸They kept using violence against Israel, against those who were found month after month in the towns. ⁵⁹On the twenty-fifth day of the month (Chislev) they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt offering. ⁶⁰According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, ⁶¹and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks.

Other historians tell us that a pig (the epitome of an unclean animal) was offered upon the altar and its blood was spilled all over the temple. A statute of Jupiter was then erected in the holy of holies. Thus, the sanctuary of strength was polluted and the abomination that makes desolate. We also read elsewhere in Maccabees that the daily sacrifice (offered twice daily) was stopped by Antiochus until the success of the Maccabean revolt.

11:32-35 – The Purifying Persecution

“And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.”

We've already spoken of the renegade Jews who forsook the Lord in favor of Antiochus. We read of them again in the first part of this passage. Remember that Antiochus was one who purchased friends and influence with his great wealth. However, we read that those who REALLY knew God will be strong and do exploits (take action). What is this a reference to?

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In 167 BCE, after Antiochus issued decrees in Judea forbidding Jewish religious practice, a rural Jewish priest from Modiin, Mattathias the Hasmonean, sparked the revolt against the Seleucid empire by refusing to worship the Greek gods. Mattathias slayed a Hellenistic Jew who stepped forward to offer a sacrifice to an idol in Mattathias' place. He and his five sons fled to the wilderness of Judea. After Mattathias' death about one year later, his son Judah Maccabee led an army of Jewish dissidents to victory over the Seleucid dynasty. The term Maccabees as used to describe the Judean's army is taken from its actual use as Judah's surname.

The revolt itself involved many individual battles, in which the Maccabean forces gained infamy among the Syrian army for their use of guerrilla tactics. After the victory, the Maccabees entered Jerusalem in triumph and ritually cleansed the Temple, reestablishing traditional Jewish worship there and installing Jonathan Maccabee as high priest. A large Syrian army was sent to quash the revolt, but returned to Syria on the death of Antiochus IV. Its commander Lysias, preoccupied with internal Syrian affairs, agreed to a political compromise giving religious freedom.

A Brief Intermission to Discuss Telescoping

There is much debate over whether portions of chapter 11 and 12 refer only to Antiochus Epiphanes, to a yet future Antichrist (aka the Man of Sin from 2 Thessalonians 2:3), or perhaps both, with Antiochus acting as a symbol of the Antichrist. This view should not be dismissed out of hand but should be carefully considered.

Although Daniel's prophetic narrative appears to flow without a break that would indicate that he has ceased talking about Antiochus and has moved on to another individual, consider John the Baptist's prophecy about Christ during his ministry in Matthew 3:11-12, *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

John's prophecy combines both the baptism of the Holy Spirit and a baptism with fire, the gathering of the wheat (the saved) and the eternal burning of the chaff (the lost). We understand that this refers to two separate events, but the prophecy does not make this distinction clear and the one who heard the prophecy initially may not have recognized it either. This is not uncommon in biblical prophecy. It is called, "telescoping", in which the prophet has both a near-term and a long-term event combined in one message.

The belief that Daniel's message includes telescoping is supported by the increasing difficulty that is experienced in tying all of these events to Antiochus Epiphanes as we progress through this prophecy. This could be because of our limited understanding of history, or it could be that the Lord was informing Daniel (and us) of events that are yet to come, or at least beyond the scope of Antiochus' reign of terror.

11:36-37 – Antiochus Exalts Himself

"And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.."

Antiochus' reign was characterized by doing "according to his will". He used whatever means were available to accomplish his desired end, event to the point of exalting and magnifying himself above every god. See the coins to the right, and specifically the inscription they bear.

Indignation –

It appears the Lord was using Antiochus to exact discipline upon Israel for her disobedience. This would continue until the Lord accomplished his aim. The result of this persecution was an independent Israel and a short return to the sincere worship of the Lord.



Coin of Antiochus IV. Reverse shows the Greek god Apollo. The Greek inscription reads "Antiochus, image of God, bearer of victory."

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Antiochus' disregard for the god of his fathers could refer to the Syrian or local gods worshipped by those within his empire. It appears that he did not uphold the customs of worship common to the people or to his family. Neither did he allow the guidance of the priests of these gods influence his actions.

As well as being free from the worship of a local deity, he was not swayed by the "desire of women". This could refer to the influence of a wife or mother. It could also refer to a lack of compassion for what a woman desires, meaning that he was impervious to their cries or desires. This was certainly true when we read of his cruelty toward the Jews. Hanging infants around the necks of the mothers and torturing and killing children in front of their mothers certainly implies that even their cries did nothing to abate his hatred.

Ultimately, Antiochus was not subservient to any god but himself. Antiochus was raised abroad and did not indicate a tie to any particular system of religion, except for the one we will study in a moment. This passage gives us an insight into his heart, while the next passage speaks about how his worship will appear to others.

11:38-39 – Worshipping a new god

"But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain."

By Antiochus' authority, he honored the "god of forces", meaning the god of strength or strongholds. This may imply that instead of worshipping the god of his nation, he worshipped the god of force, meaning that the only thing he cared about was military might and power.

There are three things Antiochus is said to do with "a god his fathers knew not":

1. Honor the god with gold, silver, precious stones, and pleasant things

The following is taken from Livy, From the Founding of the City (of Rome) at 41.20.1-10:

"In two great and serious matters, however, his was a really royal spirit: in donations to cities and in cultivation of the gods... One of his truly great deeds for the gods was the temple of Olympian Jove (Zeus) in Athens (which even) incomplete is able to be the one witness on earth to the greatness of (this) god. But he also adorned Delos with inscribed altars & an abundance of statues. And at Antioch (he erected) a magnificent temple to Capitoline Jove (Jupiter), not only with a ceiling lined with gold but with walls completely covered with gilded (gold covered) panels. And he did not complete many other (projects) promised to other places, since his reign was very brief. He also beat superior kings in the magnificence of spectacles of every kind...."

The classic Latin summary of Livy's text, *Periocha*, also includes the following overview at 41: "Antiochus (IV), son of Antiochus (III), whom his father had given to the Romans as a hostage, was sent from the City (of Rome) back to the kingdom of Syria upon the death of his brother Seleucus (in 175 BCE), who had succeeded their father when he died. Apart from being religious, which led him to erect many magnificent temples in many places --- (for example) the one to Olympian Zeus at Athens and to Capitoline Zeus (Jupiter) at Antioch --- he was very poor at playing the king."

2. Acknowledge this god in most strong holds and increase its glory

In the Jewish temple, he erected the statue of Jupiter (part of the abomination of desolations).

He may have done similar acts in the other stronghold cities (Memphis, Sidon, Pelusium, etc...) but we don't know of their occurrence because no other texts have survived. We know what happened to the Jews because of Maccabees.

3. Cause them to rule over many

This probably refers to requiring the worship of these gods by the local people he ruled over, including the Jews in Jerusalem.

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The last thing we read in this passage is that the king will divide the land for gain. In 1 Maccabees 3:34-36 we read, “And he (Antiochus Epiphanes) turned over to Lysias half of his troops and the elephants, and gave him orders about all that he wanted done. As for the residents of Judea and Jerusalem, 35: Lysias was to send a force against them to wipe out and destroy the strength of Israel and the remnant of Jerusalem; he was to banish the memory of them from the place, 36: settle aliens in all their territory, and distribute their land.” Antiochus definitely had intentions to divide Israel for personal gain.

11:40-43 – A Summary of Antiochus’ Reign

“And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many [countries] shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, [even] Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians [shall be] at his steps.”

This is where the history becomes very difficult to reconcile with Antiochus. One theory is that this refers to a future time and is yet to be fulfilled. Another reasonable theory is that the remainder of this chapter is a summary of all that we’ve just read concerning Antiochus Epiphanes. We will consider this passage from the perspective that it is a summary, but I do not discount other reasonable theories.

At the time of the end may be a reference to Antiochus’ reign. It only lasted 11 years, while the entirety of chapter 11 covers a span of 350 years. Therefore, Antiochus’ reign could be considered, “the time of the end” in reference to the scope of this chapter.

The king of the south (Egypt) resisted Antiochus as he drove farther and farther south, but the king of the north (Antiochus) came upon Egypt like a whirlwind, and they were no match. Antiochus conquered some of its chief cities

Antiochus went on to enter into many adjacent lands, overflowing them (e.g. Coelo-Syria and Palestine). Of course, he entered into the “glorious land” (Israel) and spent significant time in Jerusalem, subjecting the Jews to his dominion. Though the text says, “many *countries* shall be overthrown, the word “countries” was inserted by the translators. Many lands, cities, and peoples in that area were overthrown.

We read here that Edom, Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon escaped from him.

- Edom – Gen. 25:30 - descendants of Esau. These people disappear from record after the Jewish wars with Rome, but the land is still called Idumea around 150 AD and King Herod of Jesus’ day was known to be an Edomite.
- Moab – Gen. 19:37: descendents of Lot’s son, Moab. These people disappear from record around the Persian period, but the land is still called Moab through the Crusades around 1095-1291 AD.
- Ammon – Gen. 19:38: descendents of Lot’s son, Ammi. They are last identified around 150 AD.

This text is one of the reasons to consider anchoring this portion of Daniel’s narrative in the past rather than a future reality. The nations of Edom, Moab, and Ammon no longer exist, nor are people identified by ethnicities within existing countries. Antiochus Epiphanes’ furor was directed toward the Jews and not the surrounding kingdoms. It is likely the Edomites (Idumea) were aligned with Antiochus Epiphanes or they retained an adversarial role with Israel because 1 Maccabees 4:61 speaks of setting up a stronghold against the Idumea. Either way, there is no record of Antiochus Epiphanes taking on these kingdoms in war.

As previously mentioned, the land of Egypt does not escape Antiochus, and he was poised to take the whole kingdom. He gained power over the treasures of Egypt’s gold and silver and all their precious things. By possessing their rightful king (Ptolemy VI Philometer), he had at his disposal many of the treasures of Egypt. By capturing Memphis and Pelusium, he gained many of Egypt’s riches

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In regard to Libya and Ethiopia, at this time, Libya neighbored Egypt to the West and Ethiopia neighbored Egypt to the South. Today, Ethiopia is much smaller and is separated from Egypt by the Sudan and Eritrea. A conquest of Egypt would be the stepping stone to take Libya and Ethiopia. These countries allied themselves with Egypt during Ezekiel's time (Ezekiel 30:4-5), which was around 587 BC (400 years earlier) and may have continued to do so during times when it was profitable to their economic and political security. By being "at his steps", they were near and to his expanded territory in Egypt and were almost conquered too.

11:44-45 – A Summary of Antiochus' Reign

"But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him."

During his campaign, Antiochus heard rumors that Armenia and Parthia had armed themselves for war against him.

- Parthia – a civilization situated in the northeast of modern Iran, but at its height covering all of Iran proper (to East)
- Armenia – a civilization just east of modern day Turkey, (to North)

Antiochus' last journey (upon which he died) was an expedition to Persia and Armenia in 147 BC, on the return from which he died. In 1 Maccabees 3:37 we read, "Then the king took the remaining half of his troops and departed from Antioch his capital in the one hundred and forty-seventh year. He crossed the Euphrates River and went through the upper provinces."

When Antiochus left to go to Parthia and Armenia, he was angry and wanted to stop their revolt and replenish his treasury which was exhausted from his war against the Jews. The reference to planting tabernacles of his palace likely means military tents. The land is a reference to the area of Israel between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas, near or in Jerusalem. Perhaps this is a picture of a siege of Jerusalem.

The final words of this chapter indicate the death of Antiochus, "he shall come to his end and none shall help him." Nothing would stop the decree of God's judgment against him. He would die at the time prescribed by God. History tells us that Antiochus died suddenly of an incurable disease in 164 BC.