

Daniel 11

11:1 [See last chapter.]

11:2 And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece.

- “Three more kings will arise.” More than three kings did arise in Persia after Cyrus, but in this case, the message wants to highlight the fourth, Xerxes (called Ahasuerus in Esther, 486-465 B.C.).
- Xerxes ruled Persia at its most affluent time and most powerful (200,000 man army).
- “He shall stir up all against the realm of Greece.” Xerxes attempted a military campaign against Greece (481-479 B.C.) but failed. This sounded the beginning of the end for Persia (see next verse).

11:3 Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.

- “A mighty king.” Alexander the Great (cf. 8:5). Though Xerxes attacked Greece 150 years earlier, Greece never forgot. Alexander conquered Persia in 331 B.C.

11:4 And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.

- “When he has risen.” At the height of his power, “his kingdom shall be broken up and divided.” Alexander died a young man at thirty-two years (ca. 323 B.C.); and eventually, after years of squabbling, Greece was divided amongst four of his generals: Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy.
- “But not among his posterity.” Alexander had no viable heirs: a mentally retarded half-brother; a son born to him by Roxana after he died; and an illegitimate son.

11:5 Also the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion. His dominion shall be a great dominion.

- The prophecy primarily concerns two of the four kingdoms: Seleucus in the North (Syria), and Ptolemy in the South (Egypt). Why, because Israel is right between them, and thus each time they battled one another they marched through Israel.
- Seleucus I once served Ptolemy I as satrap (governor), but then claimed the area he was governing as his own and Ptolemy had no power to stop him.

Daniel 11

11:6 And at the end of some years they shall join forces, for the daughter of the king of the South shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand; but she shall be given up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in those times.

- “At the end of some years.” About 40+ years later “the king of the South” (Ptolemy II Philadelphus) sent his daughter Berenice to marry the king of the North (Antiochus II) in order “to make an agreement” between the kingdoms, so Antiochus divorced his wife (Laodice) and married Bernice.
- “But she shall not retain the power of her authority.” Once Berenice’s father (Ptolemy II) died, Antiochus considered the alliance broken and in turn divorced Berenice and took back his former wife Laodice.
- “Neither he nor his authority shall stand.” In retaliation, Laodice had her husband (Antiochus II) poisoned, and had Berenice, along with her infant son by Antiochus and “those who brought her” (her attendants), killed.

11:7-8 But from a branch of her roots one shall arise in his place, who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail. And he shall also carry their gods captive to Egypt, with their princes and their precious articles of silver and gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the North.

- “But from a branch of her roots.” Berenice had a brother who succeeded their father (Ptolemy II), and took the name Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 B.C.).
- As the new ruler of the South, he immediately set out to avenge his sister’s death and led his troops into Syria. After easily overcoming the Syrian army, he then put Laodice to death.
- “And he shall also carry their gods captive to Egypt.” Ptolemy plundered the North’s temple, taking silver, precious vessels and images of their gods back with him to Egypt.

11:9-10 Also the king of the North shall come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land. However his sons shall stir up strife, and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one shall certainly come and overwhelm and pass through; then he shall return to his fortress and stir up strife.

- About 240 B.C. the king of the North (Seleucus Callinicus) attacked the king of the South (Ptolemy) but failed and went home.
- “However his sons shall stir up strife.” Seleucus Callinicus had two sons: the older who became Seleucus III Ceraunus (rule 227-223 B.C) and the younger, Antiochus III the Great (rule 223-187 B.C.).

Daniel 11

- When the older son was killed in battle, the younger son Antiochus the Great then became king and fought to regain land lost to Egypt in Palestine in 219 B.C., which he accomplished then stopped. However, two years later (in 217 B.C.), he again attacked Egypt and this time pushed them all the way to the southern Palestinian frontier post of Raphia.

11:11-12 And the king of the South shall be moved with rage, and go out and fight with him, with the king of the North, who shall muster a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into the hand of his enemy. When he has taken away the multitude, his heart will be lifted up; and he will cast down tens of thousands, but he will not prevail.

- “King of the South.” This is Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204 B.C.), the son of Ptolemy Evergetes (the brother of Berenice we read about earlier).
- He was “moved with rage” because of the two attacks directed at him by Antiochus the Great in 219 and 217 B.C. Therefore, he attacked Antiochus with a “great multitude” and defeated him and his “multitude.”
- “But he will not prevail (be strong).” But Ptolemy was more inclined to ease of life and luxury than toward vigorous activity, therefore, though he achieved a decisive victory, he did not follow it up to gain the position of strength available to him, and instead returned to Egypt.

11:13 For the king of the North will return and muster a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come at the end of some years with a great army and much equipment.

- Antiochus the Great did, indeed, move again toward Egypt with a “great army and much equipment” fourteen years later (203 B.C.) when Ptolemy IV and his wife died in Egypt and were succeeded by their four-year-old son (Ptolemy V Epiphanes).

11:14 Now in those times many shall rise up against the king of the South. Also, violent men of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision, but they shall fall.

- “Many shall rise up against the king of the South.” Antiochus the Great was not alone in his opposition to Egypt this time. Philip V of Macedonia joined him; as well as some Jews (“violent men of your people”) who did not like Egypt controlling Israel, and therefore, supplied Antiochus with provisions and supplies.
- “But they shall fall.” Israel’s plan to help Antiochus in order to gain Judean independence failed.

11:15-16 So the king of the North shall come and build a siege mound, and take a fortified city; and the forces of the South shall not withstand him. Even his choice troops shall have no

Daniel 11

strength to resist. But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and no one shall stand against him. He shall stand in the Glorious Land with destruction in his power.

- “The king of the North shall come.” The thought here reverts back to verse thirteen and the return campaign of Antiochus the Great against Egypt.
- “And build a siege mound, and take a fortified city.” History reveals Sidon to be the city in view, and by his victory, Antiochus took back control of “the Glorious Land” (Israel) for Syria and brought an end to Ptolemaic rule over Palestine from this time on.

11:17 “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 to destroy it; but she shall not stand with him, or be for him.

- “He shall set his face.” Having gained control over Palestine, Antiochus purposed to gain control over Egypt as well. But rather than using military force, he presented his daughter, Cleopatra, to Ptolemy Epiphanes for marriage (197 B.C.) so that she might become part of the Ptolemaic family to help her father “destroy” the Ptolemaic power over Egypt and thereby give him control over it.
- The marriage did not take place until four years later (193 B.C.), however, because Ptolemy was only ten years old at that time.
- “But she shall not stand with him.” History reveals that Cleopatra did not stand by her Syrian father following her marriage, but rather became a proper wife to her Egyptian husband even when Egypt aided the Romans against her father.

11:18-19 After this he shall turn his face to the coastlands, and shall take many. But a ruler shall bring the reproach against them to an end; and with the reproach removed, he shall turn back on him. Then he shall turn his face toward the fortress of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

- “He shall turn his face to the coastlands.” This refers to the islands and mainland in the Mediterranean Sea, but especially to Rome.
- “A ruler shall bring reproach against him.” A Roman general brought a halt to the military activity of Antiochus the Great. For in 188 B.C. Antiochus was forced to abandon all Asia Minor to the Romans.
- Moreover, Rome demanded that Antiochus repay them for their cost of the war over twelve years, and thus, his “reproach” was truly turned back upon him.
- “Then he shall turn his face toward the fortress of his own land.” Having suffered a humiliating loss to Rome, Antiochus had no recourse but to return to the strong cities in his own land.

Daniel 11

- “He shall stumble and fall, and not be found.” Antiochus died only one year after his return in 187 B.C. so little more is known about him. In the end, after a reign of thirty-seven years, the grandiose plans of Antiochus the Great had failed utterly.

20 “There shall arise in his place one who imposes taxes on the glorious kingdom; but within a few days he shall be destroyed, but not in anger or in battle.

- Upon his death, the elder son of Antiochus the Great, Seleucus IV Philopator (187-176 B.C.), stepped in and imposed heavy taxes on his people in order to pay off Rome.
- “But within a few days he shall be destroyed.” After twelve years, Seleucus IV was poisoned by his treasurer, “and not in anger or in battle.”

21 And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue.

- Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), the “little horn” of chapter eight and type of the Antichrist, is now presented in anticipation of speaking of the Antichrist himself later in this chapter (vv. 36-45).
- “A vile person.” That is, he was a “contemptible” (“to despise”) person; considered to be a schemer and untrustworthy; given to drinking and debauchery.
- “To whom they will not give the honor of royalty.” Upon the murder of his brother Seleucus Philopator, Antiochus was not given the throne because the throne rightfully belonged to his young nephew and son of Seleucus, Demetrius Soter (whom he eventually kills).
- But Antiochus seized “the kingdom by intrigue.” He did this by first winning over support of the king of Pergamos through flattery and empty promises of attractive gains for their assistance and then doing the same with key figures in Syria itself. Even Rome, in an attempt to keep a balance of power in the East, actually helped Antiochus at that time.

22-23 With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant. And after the league is made with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people.

- “With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him.” That is, Egypt’s armies were swept away by Antiochus’ invading forces as by a flood (cf. “flood” for military onslaught, 9:26.)
- “The prince of the covenant.” The identity of this person is not totally clear, however, some commentators believe that it does likely refer to the high priest in Jerusalem,

Daniel 11

Onias III; a man ultimately murdered by his own brother Menelaus at the request of Antiochus (171 B.C.).

- “After the league is made with him.” In an Egyptian struggle for the throne, Antiochus developed an alliance with Ptolemy VI over his rival Ptolemy VII as a plot for him to gain greater power in Egypt. But “he shall act deceitfully.” History shows that Antiochus offered friendship at first, but later withdrew it when he became strong.
- “He shall come up and become strong with a small number of people.” The thought is that, as a result of defeating opposing armies and his practice of deceit, Antiochus did grow in power even though the size of his own nation had become smaller than it was before Rome’s rise to power. As such, Antiochus conquered Memphis and the rest of Egypt all the way to Alexandria.

24 He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers: he shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but only for a time.

- Antiochus apparently would take spoils, booty, and possessions from the rich districts in his own Syrian domain and give them to the poor, thus building favor with his poorer subjects, who made up the majority of his populace. Likewise, he would “devise his plans against” the strong, fortified communities in his kingdom for the purpose of weakening them. (Things neither his “fathers nor forefathers” ever did).
- “But only for a time.” Though the various strategies of Antiochus would work for a while, it was only as long as God permitted.

25 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 devise plans against him.

- In 170 B.C. Antiochus led a “great army” against Egypt, whose king at the time was young Ptolemy Philometer (181-145 B.C.), one two sons of Cleopatra, and nephew to Antiochus (Cleopatra was the sister of Antiochus).
- “He shall not stand.” Ptolemy, despite having an even larger army than Antiochus, was defeated.
- “For they shall devise plans against him.” As we will see again in the next verse, a significant reason for Ptolemy’s defeat was the treachery worked against him by his own forces.

26-27 Yes, those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. Both these kings’ hearts shall be bent on evil,

Daniel 11

and they shall speak lies at the same table; but it shall not prosper, for the end will still be at the appointed time.

- Even those trusted counselors who should have supported Ptolemy conspired against him. Yes, “those who eat the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him.”
- As a result, Antiochus captured Ptolemy. “And they shall speak lies at the same table.” The thought is that the two kings would harbor evil intention toward one another, despite their professed friendship and blood-tie relationship. Meanwhile, as Ptolemy Philometer was rubbing elbows with Antiochus, his brother, Ptolemy VII Euergetes was put on the throne by the people of Alexandria. So Antiochus pretended friendship with Ptolemy Philometer in order to make him think he would help him overthrow his brother and take back his entire rule of Egypt.
- “But it shall not prosper.” As it turned out, Antiochus helped get Ptolemy Philometer installed as king at Memphis but did not succeed in helping him gain control again of all Egypt. Thus, Ptolemy became a “puppet king” to Antiochus.

28 While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land.

- “Returning to his land with great riches.” The prediction is that Antiochus, failing to take full control of Egypt, would return home, taking with him much booty.
- “His heart shall be moved against the holy covenant.” It is generally accepted that Antiochus was looking for a way to vent his anger after his disappointment in Egypt, and the Jews, whom he had come to despise, were handy as he made his way home to Syria. As a result, he worked great havoc against their Temple, the religious personnel, and the Jewish ceremonial system.

29-30 At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.

- “At the appointed time.” Two years later (168 B.C.), Antiochus launched another campaign into Egypt after learning of the coalition formed by the two brothers, and he determined to break it. After all, he had left the one brother, Ptolemy Philopator, in charge at Memphis, and now felt that the young man betrayed him.
- “But it shall not be like the former or the latter.” This campaign would be different from that held two years earlier. During that one, Antiochus had been successful for a time, but he would not be successful at all this second time.

Daniel 11

- “For ships from Cyprus shall come against him.” This is the Romans. They had been persuaded to aid Egypt, and therefore met Antiochus as he moved on Alexandria and forbade him from making war with Egypt otherwise he would be faced with an undesirable war with Rome, which he did not want (remembering how Rome overwhelmed his father). Therefore, he had no option but to gather his troops and to return home to Syria dejected.
- “Return in rage against the holy covenant.” Humiliated by having to obey Rome and retreat from Egypt, Antiochus would stop and take it out on the Jews in the most horrendous ways.
- He shall show regard to those “who forsake the holy covenant.” The thought is that Antiochus would seek out for support those apostate Jews in Judea who had already turned from God’s law.

31-32 And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation. Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.

- Antiochus Epiphanes sought to outlaw Jewish-ness. For example, Jews couldn’t observe the Sabbath or any holy days; couldn’t circumcise their sons; couldn’t read the Torah (in fact, must burn the Torah). Those who did not obey were put to death.
- “The abomination of desolation.” This is the same expression as that found in 9:27. It refers to a statue of Jupiter (Zeus) Olympius Antiochus erected in the Temple, indicating that the Jews were now to worship this Grecian god rather than the God of their fathers. It was truly an abomination that brought a desolate condition to the Temple, for now no one would come to worship at all.
- “Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery.” This refers to the apostate Jews spoken of in verse thirty. The thought is that Antiochus would praise them and make promises of reward for their support.
- “But the people who know their God shall be strong.” The Maccabees are principal among those who were strong enough to resist Antiochus and to “carry out great exploits” to counter his efforts.

33-34 And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue.

Daniel 11

- Mattathias Maccabeus, along with his five sons and others who chose to join them, fled to the mountains and began the famed Maccabean revolt of 167-160 BCE against Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
- Ultimately successful, after severe suffering and death, on 24 December 164 BCE Jerusalem was recaptured by the Maccabees and the Temple of Jerusalem reconsecrated, an act still commemorated today in the Jewish Hanukkah festival.

35 And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.

- The purpose for the Jewish persecution (see also Zech. 13:19).