

Daniel - Chapter eleven

The angelic messenger (likely Gabriel) reveals to Daniel the future history, as it pertains to the nation of Israel, from Darius (first king of the Medes and Persians) to the 'man of sin' (II Thes.2:3), the Antichrist.

Vs.1,2. 'And now I will tell thee the truth'. Note: This, in no way, speaks of that which had been revealed heretofore as not being truthful. Here, he gives the true meaning of the visions of the 'great image' and the 'four beasts').

- Daniel was told that four prominent kings would reign over the Medo-Persian Empire after Darius the Mede. Note: There are differences of opinion as to who these first three actually were. (1) Scotfield: Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes, and Darius (Hystaspes), all mentioned in Ezra 4. (2) Full Life Study Bible: Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis (Gaumata), and Darius I. (3) Matthew Henry: Cyrus, Artaxerxes (called by Greeks 'Cambyses'), and Ahasuerus (he that married Esther). (4) Dake: Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius I. Note: According to the historical list of leaders listed below (with the dates of their reigns), it seems those mentioned by Dake is the most accurate of the four.

- The following is a complete list of the kings that ruled the Medo-Persian Empire:

- (1) Darius (Astyages), the Mede (538-536BC).
- (2) Cyrus, the Persian (536-527BC).
- (3) Cambyses (Artaxerxes), son of Cyrus (527-520BC).
- (4) Darius I (520-485BC). (The first king of Persia to invade Greece, but was defeated at the battle of Marathon - 490BC.)
- (5) Xerxes (485-464BC). Persian king that 'stirred up all against the realm of Grecia' - fulfilling the prophecy of v.2. He was defeated by the Greeks.
- (6) Artaxerxes I (464-424BC).
- (7) Xerxes II (424-423BC).
- (8) Darius II (423-404BC).
- (9) Artaxerxes II (404-358BC).
- (10) Artaxerxes III (358-338BC).
- (11) Darius III (338-331BC). He was defeated by Alexander the Great, whose empire succeeded the Medo-Persian Empire.

V.3. 'a mighty king shall stand up'. This is Alexander the Great, who carried out the plans of his father, Philip of Macedon, to invade the Persian Empire. He accomplished this in 336BC, although his fighting forces were outnumbered 20 to 1, and the Persian king had a much greater treasury to finance the war. Alexander conquered the entire Persian Empire in a period of just 13 years.

- 'shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will'. After conquering Asia, Alexander was worshipped as a god. It was then that he did 'according to his will'.

V.4. After the death of Alexander, the generals of his army agreed to rule until his son, born of Roxanne, became of age to take the throne. In reality, all the generals desired to be king. Then, in 311BC, both the child and his mother were murdered. During the ensuing years there was a struggle for power. And finally, in 301BC, the empire was divided among Alexander's four outstanding generals.

- Their names, and the territories they were assigned, were:

(1) Cassander: Greece and Macedon (Western part of the empire).

(2) Lysimachus: Turkey and Thrace (Asia Minor - Northern part of the empire).

(3) Seleucus: Syria and Babylon. (Territory today consists of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran - Eastern part of the empire).

(4) Ptolemy: Egypt. (Southern most part of the empire.)

V.5. 'And the king of the south shall be strong'. This was Ptolemy I, founder of the Egyptian division of the Grecian Empire. He became strong by defeating Cyprus, Phoenicia, Corinth, etc., and by adding them to the territories of the Kingdom of Egypt.

- 'and one of his princes . . . shall be strong above him'. This was Seleucus I, called 'Nicator the Conqueror', founder of the Seleucid Empire.

V.6. 'And in the end of the years they shall join themselves together'. The king of the north (Seleucus of Syria) and the king of the south (Ptolemy of Egypt) shall make a league together. After warring for years, they agreed to end the conflict by the 'marriage of Bernice' (daughter of Ptolemy II, king of Egypt) to Antiochus II (king of Syria). The marriage was on 'condition' that Antiochus put away his wife, Laodice, and her children. This was done. Antiochus divorced Laodice and married Bernice. Note: Bernice brought a 'fortune of wealth' to her new husband, and, for a while, it looked as if things were going to work out well. But some time afterwards, Antiochus, not happy with the arrangement, brought his wife (Laodice) and children back to be with him.

- 'she shall not retain the power of the arm'. Bernice would not retain the power of the Syrian throne, nor would her posterity reign over Syria. Note: This prophecy was fulfilled not long afterwards. (See the statement that follows below.)

- Laodice, afraid Antiochus might decide to bring Bernice back, not only did she have him poisoned, but she had Bernice and her son murdered, as well.

- 'neither shall he stand, nor his arm'. (A prophecy of the death of Antiochus, having been poisoned by his wife, Laodice.)

- Then Laodice made her own son, Callinicus, king. He was called, Seleucus II.

- 'but she shall be given up'. Bernice would divorce, and later be murdered.

- 'and they that brought her'. The Egyptian women who accompanied Bernice from Egypt tried to defend her, but to no avail. Many of these women were killed, as well.

- 'he that strengthened her in these times'. Refers to her father, Ptolemy.

Vs.7-9. 'But out of a branch of her roots'. The 'branch' is Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt.

- 'king of the north'. Seleucus II, son of Laodice, suffered defeat at the hands of Ptolemy III, of Egypt.

- Note: Ptolemy III, of the 'south', entered the Syrian 'fortress' of the 'north' (probably Antioch) and took both the Syrian and Egyptian images that had been taken years earlier when the Persian King Cambyses conquered Egypt. After some time, Seleucus attempted to invade Egypt to recoup his losses, but failed in his endeavor.

Vs.10-12. 'His sons shall be stirred up'. The two sons of Seleucus II were Seleucus III and Antiochus III. The latter was defeated by Ptolemy IV, and with the defeat Syria lost almost 10,000 soldiers at the fortress of Raphia in southern Palestine. (North defeated by the South.)

Vs.13-16. 'For the king of the north shall return'. Antiochus the Great, of Syria (north), renews the war by returning to the battlefield with more troops than he had previously. Too, on this occasion, he had some powerful allies (v.14). With such a force, Antiochus routed Ptolemy IV and destroyed a major part of his army. Too. Antiochus took control of the 'glorious land' (Palestine). And because of that, the Jews yielded to Antiochus and helped him besiege the garrisons of the 'south'.

Vs.17,18. 'He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom'. Antiochus the Great (of Syria) made plans to march into Egypt with all his fighting forces and conquer the land.

- 'and upright ones with him'. This speaks of the Jews that had assisted in the previous battle.

- But after some thought, rather than go to battle, Antiochus chose to make a 'covenant of peace' with Ptolemy, instead. He would give his daughter, Cleopatra, in marriage to the young King Ptolemy V, thinking that she would be a snare to him. Note: Similar to the occasion of King Saul offering his daughter to David (I Samuel 18:20,21).

- 'But she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him'. But rather than Cleopatra being a snare to her husband Ptolemy and those of the 'south', she told him of her father's evil plan.

- 'After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many'. After Antiochus' plot failed, he turned his attention to the isles of the Gentiles, and conquered such places as Rhodes, Samos, and Delos.

- 'But a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease'. The 'prince' is likely the Roman general, who defeated Antiochus and his 70,000-man army with but 30,000 Roman soldiers, causing Antiochus to return home in shame and disgrace.

V.19. Antiochus, while endeavoring to plunder a heathen temple in the province of Elymais, died in the attempt.

V.20. Seleucus IV Philopater, the elder son of Alexander the Great, oppressed his own subjects and exacted an abundance of money from them in high taxes. When told that he would thereby lose his friends, he said, 'he knew no better friend he had than money'. How sad! Yet, 'money' has been the 'god' of the multitudes through the years. Jesus said, 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon' (Matt.6:24).

- Seleucus IV was poisoned by Heliodorus, one of his own servants, when he had reigned but a few short years.

Vs.21-34. These verses speak of Antiochus Epiphanes. He called himself 'Epiphanes', which means 'the illustrious', but his character was altogether different; called here, 'a vile person'.

- He was the brother of Seleucus IV, but after the death of Seleucus, he took the throne through trickery, which actually belonged to Seleucus' elder son, Demetrius.

- 'he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries'. This was accomplished by his pretending to reign for Demetrius, who at the time was a hostage in Rome.

- With the help of neighboring princes, he gained the favor of the people, and by flatteries he obtained the kingdom. Note: Sounds similar to that which Absalom did in trying to win the hearts of the people of Israel and seize the kingship from his father, David.

- Those who opposed Antiochus were 'overflown' (overthrown) and broken, even 'the prince of the covenant'. Note: There are differences of opinion concerning who this 'prince' might be. (1) Antiochus made a covenant with his nephew, Demetrius (the rightful heir), that when he returned from his being held hostage in Rome the kingship would be his. (2) Antiochus made a 'treaty' with the high priest, Onias. Then had him murdered. Note: The first of the opinions seems to be more in line with the happenings of the day.

- He made several campaigns against Egypt. On one occasion he defeated the Egyptians, and Ptolemy their king was taken prisoner. Afterwards, Antiochus had himself crowned King of Egypt.

Vs.28-31. After conquering Egypt, Antiochus returned to Antioch with much spoils and wealth. But after hearing that there had been great rejoicing in Jerusalem (because of a report that he was dead) he turned against the Jews.

- Some time later, he makes a 'second invasion' into Egypt, but is not as successful as he had been previously. He was defeated by the ships of Chittim, and was ordered by Rome to bring an end to the war. Therefore, he returned to his own land. But he took out his frustration against the Jews, though some Jews forsook the 'holy covenant' and joined him.

- It was then that Antiochus marched into Jerusalem, offered a 'sow' (female hog) on the temple altar, stopped the daily sacrifices (required by God's law), killed 40,000 Jews, sold many into slavery, confiscated golden vessels and sacred treasures from the temple, set up an image of the Greek god 'Zeus', and, then, consecrated the Jewish Temple to this heathen god known by the Romans as 'Jupiter Olympus'. This is what the Bible calls 'the abomination that maketh desolate'.

Note: All of these exploits (listed above) is what brought about the 'Jewish rebellion' under the leadership of the Maccabees.

Vs.32-34. 'Flattery' corrupted some Jews and caused them to join forces with Antiochus, yet God had a faithful remnant amongst His people. There were some who 'knew God' and remained loyal to Him.

- After a period of prolonged fighting (a guerrilla-type warfare) Antiochus was beaten down, so he took his armies and returned home.

- While enjoying a time of liberty and freedom, the Jews cleansed the temple and relit the lamps - an event that is celebrated by the Jews even until today. It's called the 'Feast of Hanukkah'.

Note: This ends the 'historical section' of Daniel's vision. When Daniel received it, it was 'prophecy' (something that was to take place in the future), but it is now history. It happened, in detail, just as the angel declared it would.

V.35. God has not yet finished His dealings with the Jews. This verse tells of a 'purging process' that will continue 'even to the time of the end'. Too, we are given a 'prophetical description' of the final king of the north, 'Antichrist', as well as his conquests of the nations and his dealings with Israel.`

Special note: Since there are several 'words' and 'phrases' outlined in this chapter which are similar to those mentioned elsewhere in Scripture that speak of the Antichrist (world ruler of the end time), some believe verses 2-34 speak of 'him' rather than of Antiochus Epiphanes. But as you study more closely you understand that such as that cannot be. These verses have to do with the battles between Syria (of the north) and Egypt (of the south) - two parts of Alexander's empire which had to do with Palestine and the Jews in the days before the first coming of the Messiah to this earth.

- Antiochus Epiphanes is a type of the 'little horn' of Dan.7:8 and the 'Beast out of the sea' of Rev.13:4-10, the 'Antichrist' of Daniel's 70th week (the 7-year tribulation).

Vs.36-45. The prophecy mentions 'the time of the end' (vs.35,40); and no longer speaks of Antiochus, but the final 'king of the north', the Antichrist, the one of whom Antiochus was a type.

- Antichrist will be a 'ruthless dictator' (doing whatsoever he will). He will present himself as being greater than any god, will 'speak marvellous things' (blasphemies) against Jehovah God, and, will be allowed to prosper until the 'indignation be accomplished' (wrath of God in the 'seals', 'trumpets', 'vials', and 'woes' of Revelation has been poured out).

- He will not regard 'the God of his fathers'; and, will reject the gods which women desire (i.e. Tammuz, a Babylonian fertility god - Eze.8:14). In lieu of the God of his fathers, he will honor 'the God of forces'.

- 'At the time of the end' (v.40) - speaks of the time of fulfillment of the vision, the end of the 'Gentile Age'.

- After Antichrist (from Syria) has conquered Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and the countries that make up the last-day divisions of the Grecian Empire, he breaks the 'peace covenant' (made with the Jews) and enters the 'glorious land' (Israel). Yet, there will be three countries that will escape out of his hand, even though they are on the borders of the 'glorious land'. They are Edom, Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. Note: This is 'Petra', the place where I believe the Jews will be hid away during the last half of the tribulation, cared for by God (Rev.12:13-16).

- Antichrist makes Jerusalem his capital, 'and he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas Dead Sea and Mediterranean Sea) in the glorious holy mountain (Mt. Moriah); yet he shall come to his end and none shall help him' (not even the devil, his angels, nor his demons). He will be defeated at the Battle of Armageddon, and then be cast alive into the eternal lake of fire (Rev.19:20). Amen! And, by the grace of God, I intend to be there, looking on, when it takes place!