

43 DANIEL 11, AN INTERPRETATION

Introduction: In this chapter, Daniel prophesied, with precision, the now historical events of the 500 years before the birth of Christ. This chapter covers the period of time from the Persian Empire to the death of Herod. The words in brackets are not in the original text and should be taken as an interpretation and not identified as scripture.

FROM THE PERSIAN EMPIRE TO GREEK RULE

1. At the time of Daniel's vision, there were three future Persian kings whose rule would precede the powerful King Xerxes (486-465 BC), who is thought to be the Persian king in the book of Esther.

"Now will I show you the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia [Cambyses, Psedo-Smerdis, Darius]; and the fourth [Xerxes] shall be far richer than them all: and when he [Xerxes] has grown strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece [second Persian War]." Dan. 11:2

2. Alexander conquered many lands in his short life. Upon his death (323 BC) and a period of struggle, his empire was divided between four Greek military leaders.

"A mighty king shall stand up [Alexander the Great], who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. 4 When he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of the sky [four-way division], but not to his posterity [Alexander had no heirs], nor according to his dominion with which he ruled ["Greece" no longer unified]; for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides these [infighting and overthrow]." Dan. 11:3-4

GREEK RULE: SOUTH VS. NORTH (KEY: south=Egypt=Ptolemy Dynasty north=Syria=Seleucid Dynasty)

3. General Ptolemy of Egypt aided his Lieutenant Seleucus to take control of Syria, which stretched from Turkey to just short of the Indus River Valley, the most extensive of the four kingdoms by far.

"The king of the south [Ptolemy of Egypt] shall be strong, and [one] of his princes [Seleucus of Syria]; and he [Seleucus] shall be strong above him [Ptolemy], and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion." Dan. 11:5

4. The daughter of Ptolemy II, Berenice, was given to Antiochus II in marriage, but Antiochus's wife, who was replaced by Berenice, poisoned Antiochus and had Berenice and her infant son killed. In the process, the treaty between the two kingdoms was dissolved. (Around 250 BC)

"And at the end of [some] years they [Ptolemy II of Egypt and Antiochus II of Syria] do join themselves together, and a daughter [Berenice] of the king of the south [Ptolemy II] doth come in unto the king of the north to do upright things [agreement]; and she doth not retain the power of the arm [deposed]; and he doth not stand [Antiochus was poisoned by ex-wife], nor his arm [agreement broken]; and she [Berenice] is given up, she, and those bringing her in [those in favor of alliance], and her child, and he who is strengthening her in these times [perhaps Berenice's brother Ptolemy III]." YLT Dan. 11:6

5. Ptolemy III of Egypt, prevailed against Seleucus II of Syria and took Syrian idols and other riches back to Egypt. Seleucus advanced hostilities against Egypt, but without success.

"But out of a shoot from her [Berenice's] roots [Ptolemy II] shall one [Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III] stand up in his [Ptolemy II's] place, who shall come to the army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north [Seleucus II-Syria], and shall deal against them, and shall prevail. 8 Also their gods, with their molten images, [and] with their goodly vessels of silver and of gold, shall he carry captive into Egypt; and he shall refrain some years from the king of the north [no further invasion for a time]. 9 He [Seleucus II] shall come into the realm of the king of the south, but he shall return into his own land." Dan. 11:7-9

6. Antiochus III (Syria) was defeated at Raphia by Ptolemy IV (Egypt) (Around 217 BC).

"His [Seleucus II's] sons [Seleucus III and later, Antiochus III] shall war, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall come on, and overflow, and pass through [the land of Israel]; and they shall return and war, even to his fortress. 11 The king of the south [Ptolemy IV] shall be moved with anger, and shall come forth and fight with him [Syrian king], even with the king of the north [Syrian king]; and he shall set forth a great multitude, and the multitude shall be given into his [Ptolemy IV's] hand." Dan. 11:10-11

7. Ptolemy IV (Egypt), proud of his victory against Syria, swept into Jerusalem, disrespected the temple, and alienated the Jews, making them pro-Syria/anti-Egypt.

"The multitude shall be swept away, and his [Ptolemy IV's] heart shall be exalted; and he shall cast down tens of thousands [persecuted Jews] but he shall not prevail." Dan. 11:12

8. About 14 years later, Antiochus III of Syria struck out against young Ptolemy V of Egypt.

"The king of the north [Antiochus III] shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former; and he shall come on at the end of the times, [even of] years, with a great army and with much substance. 14 In those times there shall many [other kings also conspired to take Egyptian holdings] stand up against the king of the south [young Ptolemy V] ..." Dan. 11:13-14a

9. Antiochus III put down a minor rebellion in Jerusalem. (Generally speaking, Antiochus III treated the Jews quite well, favoring them with tax cuts and support of the temple.)

"...Also the children of the violent among your people [zealot-like Jews] shall lift themselves up to establish the vision [of independence]; but they shall fall." Dan. 11:14b

10. Antiochus III defeated Ptolemy V of Egypt, took control of Egyptian holdings, Israel lands and vastly increased his power.

"So the king of the north [Antiochus III] shall come, and cast up a mound, and take a well-fortified city [Egyptian city, Pan]: and the forces of the south shall not stand, neither his chosen people [Israel], neither shall there be any strength to stand. 16 But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him [Ptolemy lost]; and he shall stand in the glorious land [Israel], and in his [Antiochus III's] hand shall be destruction." Dan. 11:15-16

11. Antiochus III struck a treaty with Egypt, giving his daughter to the young Ptolemy V in marriage, hoping his daughter would encourage Egyptian allegiance to Syrian security and holdings. She, however, favored the rising Roman Republic.

"He [Antiochus III] shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and with him equitable conditions; and he shall perform them: and he shall give him the daughter of women, to corrupt her, but she shall not stand, neither be for him [She favored Rome]." Dan. 11:17

12. Antiochus III (Syria) turned his eye toward Roman lands in Asia Minor and Europe, but was beaten back by Rome, his Asia Minor holdings were reduced, and reparations to Rome required.

"After this shall he [Antiochus III] turn his face to the islands, and shall take many: but a prince [Rome] shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease [Antiochus humiliated]; yes, moreover, he shall cause his reproach [pride] to turn on him." Dan. 11:18

13. Antiochus III (Syria) was killed in a Baal temple near Susa trying to exact tribute to pay Rome in 187 BC.

"Then he shall turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found." Dan. 11:19

14. A tax collector was sent by Seleucus IV (Syria) to Jerusalem to plunder the Jerusalem temple for tribute to pay Rome, but was resisted. The tax collector then joined a conspiracy to assassinate Seleucus IV.

"Then shall stand up in his [Antiochus III's] place one [Seleucus IV] who shall cause a tax collector to pass through the kingdom [Israel] to maintain its glory; but within a few days he [Seleucus IV] shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle [but by assassination]." Dan. 11:20

15. Antiochus IV (175-164 BC), who became Israel's most oppressive and detested Syrian ruler, usurped the vacant Syrian throne under the pretense of preserving it for Seleucus IV's son, Demetrius I, who was hostage in Rome.

"In his place shall stand up a contemptible person [Antiochus IV], to whom they had not given the honor of the kingdom [he usurped it]: but he shall come in time of security [without violence], and shall obtain the kingdom by flatteries [false promises]." Dan. 11:21

16. Antiochus IV took control of Syria without much difficulty and swept into Jerusalem, deposing the temple high priest, Onias III. Onias was later murdered.

"The overwhelming forces shall be overwhelmed from before him, and shall be broken; yes, also the prince [high priest] of the covenant." Dan. 11:22

17. When Demetrius I, son of Seleucus IV, came to Syria, Antiochus IV claimed he never promised to save the throne for him. Instead, it appears Antiochus IV had spread much of the wealth of Syria to key people in order to consolidate loyalty and power.

"After the treaty made with him [Demetrius I's representatives] he shall work deceitfully; for he [Antiochus IV] shall come up, and shall become strong, with a small [group of] people. 24 In time of security shall he come even on 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 prey, and spoil, and substance: yes, he shall devise his devices against the strongholds, even for a time." Dan. 11:23-24

18. Antiochus IV (Syria) defeated Ptolemy VI (Egypt), who was misled/betrayed by some of his own court.

“He [Antiochus IV] 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 war in battle with an exceeding great and mighty army; but he shall not stand; for they shall devise devices against him. 26 Yes, they who eat of his dainties shall destroy him, and his [Antiochus IV’s] army shall overflow; and many [in Egypt] shall fall down slain.” Dan. 11:25-26

19. In defiance of the Syrian conqueror, the Egyptian city of Alexandria, installed its own king, causing the hostage-taking, Ptolemy VI, and the victor-king, Antiochus IV, to join together against the rouge Alexandrian king. But because of Roman interest in Egypt, Antiochus IV decided not to try to take Alexandria.

“As for both these kings, their 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.” Dan. 11:27

20. On his way home from Egypt to Syria, Antiochus IV stopped by Jerusalem to exact taxes and loot the temple treasury.

“Then shall he return into his land [Syria] with great substance; and his heart [shall be] against the holy covenant [Israel]; and he shall do [his pleasure], and return to his own land.” Dan. 11:28

21. Antiochus IV (Syria) marched additional forces to Egypt once again to finish the take-over, but a very convincing Roman official threatened Antiochus with the full might of Rome if he did not leave Egypt alone.

“At the time appointed he shall return, and come into the south; but it shall not be in the latter time as it was in the former. 30 For [Roman] ships of Kittim shall come against him...” Dan. 11:29-30a

ANTIOCHUS IV IN THE PROMISED LAND (and continuation of Greek rule about 168 to 142 BC)

22. Humiliated by Rome, Antiochus IV retreated to Jerusalem to continue an attack on the Jewish religion and culture, seeking to make it Greek/hellenized. Hellenized Jews were in favor of these new innovations.

“...therefore he shall be grieved, and shall return, and have indignation against the holy covenant, and shall do [his pleasure]: he shall even return, and have regard to those [Hellenized Jews] who forsake the holy covenant.” Dan. 11:30b

23. In 168 BC, Antiochus IV erected a statue of Zeus in the temple, sacrificed a pig on the altar and demanded pagan worship. He ordered the complete dismantling of Jewish practices.

“Forces shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress [temple], and shall take away the continual burnt offering [halted for 3 years], and they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate [pagan practices, rituals].” Dan. 11:31

24. Hellenized Jews (proto-Sadducees) embraced the new pagan life style, apparently glad to be liberated from the restraints of traditional Jewish practices and proud of their progressive identity.

“Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he pervert by flatteries...” Dan. 11:32a

25. Thousands of faithful Jews were forced to renounce their faith or die. They were persecuted and slaughtered. The Hasidim (proto-Pharisees) upheld truth in their teachings and often demonstrated remarkable courage in the face of martyrdom.

“...but the people who know their God shall be strong, and do [exploits]. 33 Those who are wise among the people shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil, [many] days.” Dan. 11:32b-33

JEWISH INDEPENDENCE: “LEGS OF IRON” 142-63 BC

26. The Hasmonean family (“Maccabees”) finally ended the Syrian tyranny in 142 BC. There were Jews who joined with the Maccabees, not on principle, but because of the Maccabees’ remarkable success.

“Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help [Maccabees]; but many shall join themselves to them with flatteries.” Dan. 11:34

27. Jewish independence was not an unalloyed blessing. On the contrary, Hasmonean rule became hellenized with many conservative Jews persecuted by the increasingly “liberal” Hasmonean rulers. The writer assures the readers, however, their suffering had a purifying effect in preparation for the coming Messiah.

“Some of those who are wise shall fall, to refine them, and to purify, and to make them white, even to the time of the end; because it is yet for the time appointed.” Dan. 11:35

HEROD: “IRON MIXED WITH CLAY” 63 BC to 70 AD

28. Roman client king, Herod the Great, exalted himself with his many building projects, defiling Jewish lands with secularism, pagan temples and Caesar worship. He was, at the core, the epitome of paganism, but maintained the title, king of the Jews, procuring a measure of Jewish favor by building the magnificent Jerusalem Temple.

"The king [Herod] shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods; and he shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done." Dan. 11:36

29. Herod gave lip service to the worship of Yahweh and the glad anticipation of Messiah, (desire of women), but was primarily concerned with self-preservation and self-glorification—not the welfare of the people.

"Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all." Dan. 11:37

30. Herod honored himself and earthly power with numerous lavish building projects— many fortresses, cities, and temples of various kinds, complete with pagan statuary. He made great effort to honor the "divine" emperor and those who promoted Herod's power.

"But in his place shall he honor the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers didn't know shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. 39 He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god: whoever acknowledges [Herod] he will increase with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for a price." Dan. 11:38-39

31. In the late days of the Roman Republic, Herod allied himself with Marc Antony and Cleopatra against Octavian (later called Augustus). Octavian took Egypt and entered Palestine.

"At the time of the end shall the king of the south [Cleopatra and Marc Antony] contend [side by side] with him [Herod]; and the king of the north [Octavian] 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 through." Dan. 11:40

32. Herod deftly switched allegiance to Octavian when Octavian took Egypt and entered Palestine. Rome gained control of Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia along with all their wealth, but was unsuccessful in annexing Edom, Moab and Ammon.

"He [Octavian] shall enter also into the glorious land [Israel], and many [countries] shall be overthrown; but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. 42 He shall stretch forth his hand also on the countries; and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 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." Dan. 11:41-43

33. Herod was troubled by the wise men from "the east" looking for a "King of the Jews" causing Herod to slaughter the infant boys in Bethlehem. He appears to have been consumed by a persistent state of paranoia, having eliminated many of his numerous family members and religious dissidents. Since Rome was considered to come from "the north" in verse 40, as a client king of Rome, Herod may have suffered angst over displeasing the emperor, thus fueling his suspicions and cruelty.

"But news out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; and he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to sweep away many." Dan. 11:44

34. Herod had a palace in Caesarea on the sea and another in Jerusalem. He died a painful death eaten up with disease, paranoia, and universally hated by the Jews.

"He shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." Dan. 11:45

NOTES:

Josephus praised Simeon Maccabee for freeing the Jews from Greek rule.

"Simeon managed the public affairs after a courageous manner, and took Gazara, and Joppa, and Jamnia, which were cities in the neighborhood. He also got the garrison under, and demolished the citadel... he also laid a great many men in ambush in many places of the mountains, and was superior in all his attacks upon them. And when he had been conqueror after so glorious a manner, he was made high priest, and also freed the Jews from the dominion of the Macedonians [Greeks], after a hundred and seventy years of the empire." Josephus, Wars 1.2.2

Independent Judea formed an alliance with Rome (to keep Syria at bay).

"And it was heard at Rome, and as far as Sparta, that Jonathan was dead; and they were very sorry. But when they heard that Simon his brother was made high priest in his place, and was possessed of all the country, and the cities therein; they wrote to him in tables of brass, to renew the friendship and alliance which they had made with Judas, and with Jonathan his brethren... And after this Simon sent Numenius to Rome, with a great shelf of gold the weight of a thousand pounds, to confirm the league with them." I Maccabees 14:4-24

For more information, please see:

Adam Maarschalk's post on Daniel 2, the fourth kingdom:

<https://adammaarschalk.com/2017/01/10/rome-congratulated-israel-on-becoming-the-fourth-kingdom-of-daniel-2/>

Book: Bruce Gore, Historical and Chronological Context of the Bible

Bruce Gore, YouTube Video: "#25 The Hellenistic Age: Alexander to Antiochus III" and following videos.

Various videos on the Maccabees, Hasmonians, Syrian kings, Antiochus IV etc. on YouTube.