

Daniel Chapter Eleven (Part II)

This chapter forms the bulk of the *final* (fourth) vision given to Daniel which summarises the history of Gentile nations as they affect and interact with God's chosen nation – Israel. The vision commences with the Persian period (11.2) and rise of Greece (11.3-4) before dealing largely with the conflict between various kings of the *north* (Syria) and *south* (Egypt), i.e. two of the four divisions of the original Greek empire under Alexander. The prophecy proceeds to unfold the *near* future (11.2-35) before leaping to the *far* future of the tribulation end times and Antichrist (last Gentile ruler) of which Antiochus Epiphanes is a mere shadow (11.36-12.4). The vision closes with Israel's ultimate deliverance and resurrection to the blessings of the kingdom of God (12.1-3).

The chapter contains approximately 135 prophecies of the *near* future (vv.2-35). They been fulfilled in such minute and accurate detail that it has given rise to many critics who say the book must have been written *after* the events. Their basic supposition denies the inspiration of Scripture and characterises Daniel as a liar. See *Introduction to Daniel* notes for more. The incredible detail is verifiable in various historical records, not least the books of Maccabees contained in the Apocrypha. Allen: *[These books] do not carry the stamp of inspiration, and therefore are not authoritative for doctrinal or moral issues, but they are valuable, eye-opening, and heart-stirring accounts of what the faithful ones suffered under the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes.*

Artaxerxes of Medo-Persia [v.2]

v.1: This verse belongs with the preceding chapter (for which see notes). **v.2:** Gabriel proceeds to communicate to Daniel the substance of that which is inscribed in heaven by the eternal decree of God, i.e. the 'truth' (cf. 10.21). Cyrus, the present Persian king, would be succeeded by a further four kings, the fourth of which would be 'far richer' than his predecessors. These kings were *Cambyases* (530-522BC), *Smerdis* (522BC), *Darius I Hystaspes* (522-486BC) and *Xerxes I Ahasuerus* (486-465BC) of the book of Esther (Esther 1.1-12). The various military campaigns of these kings, and the vast system of empire taxation had made them rich. *Xerxes* used this wealth to enlarge and equip one of the largest armies of the ancient world. It is possible the 180-day feast depicted in Esther 1 was the occasion *Xerxes* 'stirred up' (to 'make hot') support for an assault on Greece which ultimately resulted in humiliating losses (481-479BC).

Alexander of Greece [vv.3-4]

v.3: The divine record bypasses 150 years until the embittered 'mighty king' of *Alexander the Great* sought retaliation for the Persian military assaults during the reigns of *Darius I* and *Xerxes I*. Ultimately, *Alexander* never lost a battle, ruling with 'great dominion' and conquering the known world in a mere *twelve* years (334-323BC). His kingdom stretched from Greece to Alexandria (Egypt), all the lands eastwards including Babylon and Persia even to the boundary of the Indus river in western India. As an absolute monarch he did 'as he pleased'. **v.4:** And yet, at the height of his power, *Alexander* died suddenly (323BC). The kingdom was 'broken up' (cf. 8.8), even 'uprooted' (destroyed) and divided between his four generals, not 'to his posterity' as both his young sons were murdered. The generals were named *Cassander* (Macedonia and Greece), *Lysimachus* (Thrace and Lydia), *Seleucus* (Syria and Babylonia) and *Ptolemy* (Egypt and Palestine). All this is documented in more detail in the notes on Daniel 8.5-8.

Ptolemy I, II & III of Egypt [vv.5-9]

v.5: From this point the emphasis falls on the two divisions of the Greek empire, namely the 'king of the south' (i.e. *Ptolomies* of Egypt) and 'king of the north' (i.e. *Seleucus* of Syria and his descendants). The text describes the various struggles between these kings until the rise of *Antiochus IV* (Epiphanes) – a period of 150 years. *Antiochus IV* would have the greatest impact on the nation of Israel and foreshadow the future Antichrist. The 'glorious land' of Israel stood between these two great powers of

Egypt and Syria, and thus was a territory caught up in constant conflict between the two. In this verse, the 'king of the south' refers to *Ptolemy I* (Soter) and 'one of his subordinates' being *Seleucus I* (Nicator). *Seleucus I* was first appointed 'satrap' over Babylon and Syria in 321BC. But *Antigonos*, a fellow general in Alexander's army, seized Babylon in 316BC causing *Seleucus* to flee for his life to *Ptolemy I* in Egypt, becoming one of his commanders. Together, they defeated *Antigonos* at Gaza in 312BC and *Seleucus I* returned to ultimately rule a kingdom greater in extent than that of *Ptolemy I* – even the largest of the four divisions of the Greek empire. *Seleucus I* was soon acknowledged as king, moving his

The South (Ptolemies—Egypt)

Ptolemy I (Soter) 323–285
Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) 285–246

Ptolemy III (Euergetes) 246–221

Ptolemy IV (Philopator) 221–204
Ptolemy V (Epiphanes) 204–181
Ptolemy VI (Philometor) 181–145

The North (Seleucids—Syria)

Seleucus I (Nicator) 312–280
Antiochus I (Soter) 280–261
Antiochus II (Theos) 261–246
Seleucus II (Callinicus) 246–226
Seleucus III (Ceraunus) 226–223
Antiochus III (the Great) 223–187
Seleucus IV (Philopator) 187–175
Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) 175–164

capital to Antioch in 300BC. **v.6:** After some years of constant conflict between the two dynasties (known as the Syrian Wars, 304-250BC), *Ptolemy II* (Philadelphus) and *Antiochus II* (Theos) sought a mutual and peaceful alliance through marriage. This is a reference to *Berenice*, the daughter of *Ptolemy II* who was given in marriage to *Antiochus II* to seal a peace treaty (along with vast quantities of gold and silver). Unfortunately, *Antiochus II* was already married to *Laodice* whom he subsequently divorced. After the sudden death of *Ptolemy II*, *Antiochus II* seized the moment to repudiate the agreement by divorcing his new Egyptian wife (*Berenice*) and reinstating *Laodice*. But in revenge she poisoned *Antiochus II* and encouraged her disinherited son *Seleucus II* (Callinicus) to murder *Berenice*, all her attendants, and her young child (by *Antiochus II*, and thus the new heir to the throne). **v.7:** These atrocities inaugurated the Third Syrian War (246-241BC). In 246BC, new monarchs came to the throne in both Egypt and Syria. With the peace accord broken, *Berenice's* brother ('a shoot of her roots') and new king of Egypt (*Ptolemy III*) came with an army to attack *Seleucus II* and avenge his betrayed father and sister. *Ptolemy III* successfully attacked Syria, even capturing and looting the fortified capital city of Antioch and putting *Laodice* to death. **v.8:** In early 245BC, *Ptolemy III* returned to Egypt to deal with local unrest, not without a huge booty of 'cast images' (idols) and prized utensils of silver and gold. *Ptolemy III* refrained from attacking *Seleucus II* for some time, a peace treaty being agreed in 240BC. **v.9:** In defiance, it would seem that *Seleucus II*, 'king of the north' (see NET translation), made an unsuccessful attack on Egypt during the ensuing years.

Antiochus III the Great of Syria [vv.10-19]

v.10: The preceding verses set the scene for a period of dominance by the north (Syria). The skirmish with the south, and consequent chastening of their father motivated the sons of *Seleucus II* to raise a huge army. One of the sons, *Seleucus III* (Ceranus), died in battle after a short reign (226-223BC) and *Antiochus III* (the Great) continued the conflict. He made a number of territorial gains towards the south which brought him to the border of Egypt. **v.11:** By 217BC, an enraged *Ptolemy IV* (Philopator) marched to fight *Antiochus III* at the Battle of Raphia (southwest of present-day Gaza). Both armies had near to 70,000 infantry as well as light cavalry and 70-100 elephants. *Antiochus III* was defeated, barely escaping capture himself. **v.12:** Such a victory – a reported 17,000 Syrian soldiers were killed in the battle – strengthened the proud ego of *Ptolemy IV*. Yet he failed to pursue his advantage and led a self-indulgent lifestyle. Unexpectedly both he and his wife died mysteriously in 203BC. **v.13:** The ensuing time (following successful incursions into the east) enabled *Antiochus III* to muster a larger army and, following the crowning of the new king *Ptolemy V* (Epiphanes), seize his chance to launch another attack on Egypt commencing the Fifth Syrian War (202-195BC). **v.14:** This is a parenthetical verse explaining why *Antiochus III* chose this time to attack Egypt. He was strengthened by 'many' that joined forces to oppose Egypt. History tells of *Philip V* of Macedonia and Scripture speaks of 'robbers (violent ones) of thy people' – likely pro-Seleucid Jewish revolutionaries seeking to shake the Egyptian yoke from Judea (an Egyptian garrison was built near the temple in Jerusalem). But they 'failed' in their efforts to gain national independence through favour with *Antiochus III*. **v.15:** *Antiochus III* marched through Judea, first defeating Egyptian forces at Panium in 200BC (later known as Caesarea Philippi). He eventually fought them back to Sidon, a 'most fenced city' and besieged it until surrender in 198BC. **v.16:** Having defeated Egyptian forces, *Antiochus III* was free to impose his will on the newly subjected nations torn from the grasp of Egypt. He gained complete control over the 'glorious (beautiful) land', i.e. Israel (Daniel 8.9; 11.41; Ezekiel 20.6) and turned his hand to 'consume' (devour) it, using its resources to support his military endeavours. **v.17:** Under pressure from Rome, *Antiochus III* 'set his mind' to make peace with Egypt, sealing the alliance by giving his daughter, Cleopatra, in marriage to *Ptolemy V* (193BC). His treacherous purpose was to 'corrupt' (destroy) the Egyptian kingdom by her influence and offspring, but his strategy failed when she gave her undivided loyalty to her husband instead. **v.18:** *Antiochus III* then turned his attention to the Mediterranean 'isles' and borders of Greece which brought him into conflict with the rising world power of Rome. Despite having an army of some 80,000 men he was utterly routed by the Roman legions at Magnesia (Smyrna, Turkey) in 190BC. He was made to 'pay for his shameful conduct' (NET) by signing the *Treaty of Apameia* in 188BC. Part of the conditions of the treaty involved the surrender of much of his army, the payment of a huge annual indemnity and the giving of twenty hostages to Rome, one of which was his son, later to be known as *Antiochus IV* (Epiphanes). **v.19:** In his humiliation, *Antiochus III* turned back towards his 'own land' only to 'stumble and fall'. In desperation for money he pillaged the temple of Zeus at Elymais but was killed by enraged citizens defending their sanctuary (187BC).



Seleucus IV Philopator of Syria [v.20]

v.20: The successor of *Antiochus III* was his son, *Seleucus IV* (Philopator). With a large burden of tribute to be paid to Rome (a thousand talents of silver annually), he raised taxes from all the peoples and lands under his domain. A man called *Heliodorus* was appointed to the task, coming even to the 'glory of the kingdom', i.e. Israel. According to 2 Maccabees 3.7-17, he was sent to plunder the temple in Jerusalem but was prevented by a frightful vision of mighty angels. After some years, *Seleucus IV* was required, under the terms of the treaty, to send his only son, *Demetrius*, to Rome as a hostage to replace his own younger brother (see v.18). After a relatively short reign, *Seleucus IV* mysteriously died, possibly having been poisoned by *Heliodorus* who sought the throne for himself. Thus the 'few days' could refer to his sudden sickness.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria [vv.21-35]

v.21: The remaining verses of this section deal solely with the 'vile' ('contemptible' or 'despicable') person that is *Antiochus IV* (Epiphanes) who reigned from 175-164BC. A good deal of his history has already been noted in Daniel 8.9-14, 23-25, verses which emphasise his power. He is the most important person in the angel's revelation due to his bitter persecution of the Jewish people. He gave himself the name 'Theos Epiphanes' meaning 'God manifest'. *Antiochus IV*, though a son of *Antiochus III*, was not the rightful heir to the throne but 'seized' it through 'deceit' (i.e. underhanded plots and slippery actions). The true heir was the first son of *Seleucus IV*, *Demetrius*, who was hostage in Rome and only a boy of eleven years of age. *Antiochus IV* came onto the scene 'peaceably', possibly acting as guardian to the second son of *Seleucus IV* (*Antiochus* by name), whom *Heliodorus* had installed as king. **v.22:** Having seized the throne, his power was unquestioned as armies were 'suddenly swept away' (NET) in defeat – a possible reference to conflicts with *Ptolemy VI* (*Philometor*) of Egypt who launched an attack against Syria (through Israel) in protest at the usurpation of the throne. *Ptolemy VI* later entered into a peace alliance with *Antiochus IV* (hence 'prince of the covenant') in return for help to regain his throne in Egypt which had been taken by his younger brother *Ptolemy VII*, both nephews of *Antiochus IV* (see v.17). **v.23:** Such an alliance was soon betrayed by the deceitful *Antiochus IV*. He sent a small army up the Nile as far as Memphis and besieged the city – seizing its treasures and wealth. Thus, with only a 'small army' at his disposal he had gained great power. **v.24:** Without warning, and likely with promises of peaceful intentions, *Antiochus IV* entered the 'fattest' (richest) parts of Egypt and plundered its treasures. He likely distributed the spoils, not only to his followers, but also to buy friends and bribe his enemies (cf. 1 Maccabees 3.27-31). Despite the riches and power of *Antiochus IV*, a divine limitation was placed on his conquests – it was only 'for a time'. **v.25:** History records at least five invasions of Egypt by *Antiochus IV*. It is unclear to which this verse refers, but in any case, the great and mighty Egyptians armies could not prevail because of his well-devised plans. **v.26:** It seems that even the most trusted counsellors of *Ptolemy VI*, those that sat at meat with him, gave poor advice, and thus became the cause of his defeat, resulting in his army being swept away and many killed. **v.27:** The two kings in view are *Ptolemy VI* and *Antiochus IV*. *Ptolemy VI* had been the subject of a coup by his younger brother and needed the help of his uncle to regain the throne. Both sat down with 'evil intentions' at 'one table' making promises neither would keep. But their plans of peace would not succeed, for it was not yet God's appointed time of the 'end'.

v.28: After gaining 'great riches' through his campaigns in Egypt (1 Maccabees 1.19), *Antiochus IV* returned to his own land (Antioch in Syria) via Jerusalem (c.169BC). At this time, his hatred for the Jewish nation and their covenant relationship with Jehovah was clearly manifested. The city was in a state of civil war as *Onias III*, the pious High Priest, had been removed from office and replaced by his ungodly brother *Jason* who had bribed *Antiochus IV* for the privilege (175BC). *Jason* was pro-Seleucid and in favour of Hellenization (the promotion of Greek culture and religion). Ultimately, *Menelaus* (with no priestly heritage or claim) betrayed and replaced *Jason* by delivering a larger bribe (172BC) funded by the selling of gold and silver vessels belonging to the temple. *Antiochus IV* dealt ruthlessly with the revolt, killing 80,000 men, women and children and plundering the temple (1 Maccabees 1.20-24; 2 Maccabees 5.12-21). **v.29:** Again, at the divinely appointed time, *Antiochus IV* returned toward Egypt. This could have been during the spring of 168BC when the two Ptolemaic brothers had reconciled and re-established joint rule in Egypt. *Antiochus IV* viewed this as a breach of the covenant (cf. v.27). But *this* invasion was not as successful as the last. **v.30:** The reason given is the 'ships of Chittim', an ancient name for Cyprus, but used of all the lands around the Mediterranean Sea in general, and particularly here of the Romans. History dramatically describes the occasion *Antiochus IV* was handed a letter from the Roman senate at Alexandria. *The Roman ultimatum was very straightforward in its demand: the immediate cessation of the war and complete withdrawal from Egypt in the shortest time possible. When Antiochus asked for time to consider, Popillius drew a circle with a stick around the king and 'bade him to give his answer to the note within the circle'. The humiliated Seleucid king agreed to the ultimatum and acted accordingly.* Upon his return through Palestine (167BC), *Antiochus IV* heard of yet further rebellion amongst the Jews in Jerusalem who would not accept his programme of Hellenization. He sent his chief tax collector, *Apollonius*, to Jerusalem with a contingent of 22,000 soldiers on the pretence of peace. But on the Sabbath day he suddenly attacked and massacred 40,000 Jews with 40,000 more led to captivity and slavery. The

city was burned, and temple worshippers slain. However, any who were willing to 'forsake the holy covenant' and worship according to Greek idolatry were 'honoured'.

v.31: The objective was to exterminate Judaism and Hellenize the Jews. Any copies of the Mosaic law were burnt. The temple was 'polluted' (defiled), even 'the fortress', suggesting Antiochus had already fortified part of the temple (1 Maccabees 6.7). This was accomplished by the sacrifice of a pig on the brazen altar, and its blood sprinkled around the temple. It was December 16, 167BC. In addition, he 'stopped the daily sacrifice' (burnt offering) by polluting the temple and declaring all Mosaic ceremonies illegal. An image to Zeus was installed in the temple, and a pagan altar erected on the brazen altar. This was the 'abomination that caused desolation' (12.11) – a detestable thing that makes desolate – since it polluted the altar and made sacrifices impossible (8.23-25), cf. 1 Maccabees 1.45-54, 59; 4.44. **v.32:** The programme of intense persecution and desolation manifested two parties in Israel: those who remained faithful on pain of death, and those who 'do wickedly against' (disobey) the covenant (cp. v.30). Some unfaithful Jews were deceived by the 'smooth words' and flattering promises which, ultimately, defiled them (1 Maccabees 2.18; 2 Maccabees 7.24). But those who were 'loyal' to God did 'exploits' (acted valiantly). This is no doubt a reference to the Maccabean revolt, which began with *Mattathias* and his five sons, who, in 164BC cleansed and rededicated the temple (1 Maccabees 4.52).

NAC: A certain priest named Mattathias who lived in the town of Modein (17 miles NW of Jerusalem) refused to forsake his God. He had five sons, three of whom (Judas, Jonathan, and Simon) became known as the Maccabees. The Maccabees successfully overthrew the Syrian yoke through a series of brilliant military victories (cf. Zechariah 9.13-17) against Antiochus's military commanders, Apollonius, Seron, Gorgias, and Lysias (cf. 1 Maccabees 3.10–4.35) between 166 [or 165] and 164BC. As a result the temple was rededicated (Hanukkah) to Yahweh on 25 Chislev (December 14) 164 BC (1 Maccabees 4.52).

v.33: 'They that understand' (cf. 12.3) likely equates with those that 'know their God' (v.32). They are wise because they have spiritual discernment and obey the word of God. Such individuals would 'instruct' or 'teach' others to maintain a faithful testimony to God in such difficult circumstances. The price was severe. Some fell by the 'sword', others were burned at the stake, imprisoned or sold into slavery. The whole period lasted just over three years from 167-164BC. **v.34:** Any who 'fell' would be given a 'little help', perhaps by sympathetic bystanders (cp. Matthew 25.37-40). Some joined the resistance of the Maccabees 'deceitfully', i.e. without pure, spiritual motive. Many uncommitted Jews joined the rebels to save their own lives as the movement began to slaughter those who were sympathetic to the Seleucids (known as 'compromisers'). **v.35:** Even some of the 'wise' fell in the persecution (cf. v.33). Yet, this was serving a divine purpose in refining, purifying and cleansing the nation. It was the white heat of the fire of tribulation which separated the true believers from the unregenerate Jewish community. The dross was removed. Those who came through the time of testing would be ready to welcome the Messiah (at His first advent). The tribulation will do much the same thing in a coming day (Revelation 3.10). But the period of testing had a limited span. God would bring this persecution, and thus their suffering, to an 'appointed end'.

All the tremendous detail of the chapter furnishes some important, practical and spiritual lessons.

1. The **control** of God (cf. vv.27, 29, 35). God knows history before it happens. There is a sense throughout of divine, sovereign control over nations and kings who act according to His appointed plan. Isaiah 44.6-7.
2. The **condition** of mankind. The verses are a sad commentary on the covetous, power-hungry nature of human beings. Their only desire is for dominion, authority and wealth, whatever the cost to human life (cf. vv.3, 8, 10).
3. The **centrality** of Israel in the plan and purpose of God. All this history is only significant in as far as it affects Israel. The 'glorious land' is embroiled in the constant conflict of the kings of the north and south (vv.16, 28, 31).
4. The **confirmation** of faith. True believers in Israel would need the warning given here to preserve their faith through the terrible days of turmoil this king would bring to Israel before Messiah arrived (Allen). The same will be true of the tribulation, when the faithful in Israel will again be persecuted during the time of Jacob's Trouble, prior to the *second* coming of Christ.
5. The **character** of Antichrist. Clearly foreshadowed in the person and activities of Antiochus Epiphanes (vv.30-32). *Antiochus was the man used by Satan to attempt to destroy Israel in light of the first coming of the Messiah; he portrays the man who will be used by the same power to attempt to destroy Israel in light of the second coming of the Messiah.*