

## Lesson 30

We are continuing our verse by verse march through the longest and most detailed prophecy in the Bible.

Let's keep in mind the reason we have this prophecy, which is to reinforce the central theme of the book - God is in charge! Or as Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way:

**Daniel 4:32** - The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

I think this chapter is showing Daniel what God was going to do between the days of Daniel and the time of Christ, rather than just God looking down through history as an outside observer and telling Daniel what was going to happen.

Why? For starters, look at what was going to happen! The great and mighty Persia was going to lose to Greece. Young Alexander was going to rise up and conquer the known world, but then die and leave his kingdom to others. Rome was going to rise up and conquer Greece. Even today, historians wonder how these things happened. They did not happen by accident!

But that does raise another question - was God then causing all of the murders and backstabbing that we see in these verses? A few answers to that question:

First, in many cases the prophecies are less sordid than the fulfillment. What do I mean? Later in verse 20 we will meet a king who "shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle." How was he killed? He was poisoned by his prime minister. There were a lot of ways that prophecy could have been fulfilled. God had determined that it would happen, but we are not told here that God had determined *how* it would happen.

Second, we can turn to Romans 9 for an answer to this question. In that chapter, Paul dealt with the complaint by the Jews that they could not be blamed for crucifying Jesus if that event was the way God had blessed the entire world.

**Romans 9:17-18** For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

I think that what God said about Pharaoh could be said about each of the kings in Daniel 11. God raised them up, that he might show his power in them, and that his name might be declared throughout all the earth.

And can those kings then complain to God that he is not being fair? No. Paul explains why in the verses that follow.

**Romans 9:19-24** Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

God can turn evil into good. We see it over and over again in the Bible, with the greatest example being the crucifixion of Christ, which God used to bless the entire world. And when God uses the evil actions of men to accomplish something good, those evil men have no right to complain. They are still responsible for the evil that they have done.

And one more point on this question - sometimes there is a concern that God must have overridden someone's free will to cause these things to happen. That is a very deep issue for another day, but I will point out that this problem is not overcome by adopting the other view of Daniel 11.

I think Daniel 11 is telling us what God plans to do, but if Daniel 11 instead is God just telling us what he sees by looking into the future, that question of free will remains. Why? Because if everything I will ever do, say, or think was known before I was born, do I have free will, or am I just acting out my role and saying my lines in a play that was written before I was born?

As I said, these are difficult issues, and perhaps we can look into them someday.

## Daniel 11:10

10 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.

The phrase "his sons" in verse 10 refers to Seleucus II and his two sons, Seleucus III Soter (Savior) and Antiochus III (Antiochus the Great).

Seleucus II was succeeded by his son Seleucus III Soter, who reigned for only three years before being murdered and who was then succeeded by his brother Antiochus III, who had a long reign from 223 to 187, which, along with his military successes, is why he was called Antiochus *the Great*.

Antiochus (the second son to reign) is the "one" who "shall certainly come."

What about the end of verse 10?

In the south, Ptolemy IV Philopator (father-loving) took the throne but he was not up to the task. Antiochus III took back large tracts of his land, conquered the Egyptians at Sidon, and swept down through Palestine, going far enough south to attack Gaza. Gaza, which is on the doorstep to Egypt, is the fortress mentioned at the end of verse 10.

Antiochus the Great is significant here for two reasons. First, it was under his reign that Palestine finally shifted from Ptolemaic control to Seleucid control. And second, that shift in power set the stage for his son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, to arrive and inflict all of the horrors on God's people that we saw back in Chapter 8 and that we will see again here in Chapter 11.

## Daniel 11:11-12

11 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. 12 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.

The king of the south in verse 11 is Ptolemy IV Philopator, and the king of the north is still Antiochus III.

The pronouns in verses 11 and 12 are a bit confusing, but I think this is the best way to understand them:

"And he (Antiochus III) shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his (Ptolemy IV) hand. And when he (Ptolemy IV) hath taken away the multitude, his heart (Ptolemy IV's heart) shall be lifted up; and he (Ptolemy IV) shall cast down many ten thousands: but he (Ptolemy IV) shall not be strengthened by it."

What we see in these two verses is the king of the South marching out in a rage against the king of the North, who loses despite having raised a large army.

That is a perfect description of the famous Battle of Raphia, which occurred on June 22, 217 BC.

Raphia was in the most southern part of Palestine. One reason that battle is famous is that it is the "only known battle in which African and Asian elephants were used against each other."

The Ptolemaic side had the advantage in numbers and won the day.

According to Polybius, Ptolemy had 70,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, and 73 war elephants, while Antiochus had 62,000 infantry, 6,000 cavalry, and 102 elephants. Antiochus retreated to his capital in Antioch after losing 14,000 men.

Ptolemy IV got back all of the territory of Phoenicia and Palestine, but Ptolemy's success did not last very long, which is what we see in the final phrase of verse 12 - "he (Ptolemy IV) shall not be strengthened by it (by winning the Battle of Raphia)."

## Daniel 11:13

13 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.

Fifteen years after the Battle of Raphia, Antiochus III (the king of the north in verse 13) showed why he was called "Antiochus the Great."

Ptolemy IV had died a year earlier in 203 BC, and his young son, Ptolemy V Epiphanes (God Manifest), then between four and six years old, became the new king of the south.

Sensing weakness in the south, Antiochus invaded Phoenicia and Palestine, marching all the way to Gaza, which fell in 201 BC.

Ptolemy V was defeated at the Battle of Panium in 200, and Antiochus recaptured the territory that he had lost.

This is where we see a big turning point in history. The Ptolemies lost their dominance, but instead we see a period of Seleucid supremacy.

Ptolemy V is famous today for another reason - he is famous for one of his decrees.

The famous Rosetta Stone, which finally allowed us to understand Egyptian hieroglyphics, was found in 1799 built into an old wall that was being demolished by the French near a village they called Rosetta. Located now in the British Museum, it contains a decree given by Ptolemy V written in three languages: Greek, Egyptian Demotic, and Egyptian hieroglyphics.

## **Daniel 11:14**

14 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.

The king of the south here is still Ptolemy V, the young son of Ptolemy IV.

Agathocles was a chief minister under Ptolemy IV and was also a priest of a Ptolemaic cult that worshipped Alexander the Great. When Ptolemy V died, Agathocles and his allies kept the event secret so they could plunder the royal treasury. They also formed a conspiracy aimed at placing Agathocles on the throne or at least making him regent for the new boy king, Ptolemy V Epiphanes.

In 203/202 BC, the Egyptians and the Greeks of Alexandria rose against Agathocles, who eventually was killed by his friends to avoid an even worse fate.

This insurrection is part of what is described in the first half of verse 14: "And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south," where the king of the south refers to Agathocles, the regent of young Ptolemy V.

But that word "many" in the first half of verse 14 also likely includes Philip V of Macedon, who was preparing to invade Egypt in 200 BC, and who became an ally of Antiochus the Great.

In short, the king of the south at this time was having lots of problems (in addition to the problem of being about 10 years old).

Things really start to get interesting in the second half of verse 14.

For the first time reference is made to the reaction of Jews, in whose land much of this military activity had been taking place. Verse 14 tells us that some among the Jews would also exalt themselves against the Egyptians, under whose control they had been living.

These "robbers" (better translated "men of violence") were the pro-Seleucid Jews who rebelled against the Ptolemies.

The vision they were establishing in verse 14 may refer to the very vision that Daniel was now receiving and which at the time of this fulfillment these "men of violence" possessed and could read. That raises all sorts of interesting questions, but the "vision" here could instead just mean that they were inspired by some ideology. We don't know for sure.

What we do know is that the Ptolemies had placed a corrupt, greedy high priest in Jerusalem, which led some Jews to support the Seleucid side.

These Jewish allies of the Seleucids may have believed that they were helping to fulfil the vision of bringing the temple and city's desolations to an end, but they backed the wrong side. They had actually invited the help of a dynasty that would eventually defile the temple and city, the very thing they were trying to avoid.

We see here an early example of how closely the fortunes of the Jews were intertwined with those of the warring nations around them, and how soon the Jews could become deeply involved in trouble.

Verse 14 tells us that these Jewish rebels would fall, and that is what happened. The Egyptians, led by General Scopas, punished the Jewish rebels severely until his own defeat by Antiochus the Great at the Battle of Panium.

## Daniel 11:15-16

15 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. 16 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.

In 199 BC, the king of the north (still Antiochus the Great) defeated the Egyptian General Scopas at Panium (near Caesarea Philippi). Scopas then retreated to Sidon (a fortified or fenced city) on the Phoenician coast. Antiochus's forces pursued him and besieged Sidon. General Scopas surrendered in 198 BC. His "chosen people" in verse 15 is better translated his "best troops."

After a century of Ptolemaic rule, Palestine (the glorious land in verse 16) came under the control of the Seleucids.

When Antiochus the Great entered Jerusalem in 198 BC, he was welcomed as a deliverer and a benefactor. We are told that:

"He released Jerusalem from all taxes for three years, and afterwards from one-third of the taxes. He also sent a large sum of money for the service of the Temple, and released the elders, priests, scribes, and singing men from all taxes for the future."

But the final phrase in verse 16 ("by his hand shall be consumed") is an ominous hint of what was coming. Although Antiochus initially treated the Jews kindly, that would change very soon, particularly when his evil son arrived on the scene.

## Daniel 11:17

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, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.

The beginning of verse 17 is better translated, "He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them."

That is, after defeating Scopas, Antiochus had plans to invade Egypt again, but the text does not say that he actually did that, and history agrees. Instead of invading Egypt, Antiochus tried to get his way through an agreement, which in this case was a marriage agreement.

Antiochus' plan was to place the ten year old king Ptolemy V under the influence of Antiochus' daughter Cleopatra I. (This is not the "Elizabeth Taylor" Cleopatra from the movie. That was Cleopatra VII, and we will meet her later in this chapter.)

Antiochus knew that a son of Ptolemy V and his own daughter, Cleopatra I, would be the legal heir to both thrones and would give him a good excuse to interfere in Egypt anytime he wanted to without having to invade it.

But when the marriage finally did take place a few years later, Cleopatra became completely sympathetic to Ptolemy V and Egypt, which greatly disappointed her father. And so, their son, Ptolemy VI Philometor (loving his mother), gave no advantage to Antiochus III.

When Ptolemy V died, Cleopatra I became queen of Egypt, and her death years later put an end to any possibility of Seleucid influence in Egyptian affairs.

## Daniel 11:18

18 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.

The "he" in verse 18 is Antiochus the Great.

Soon after his victory over Scopas at Sidon, Antiochus moved against a new front, Pergamum and the Aegean coastline island of Rhodes. This what we see in verse 18: "After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many." The Rhodians appealed to Rome for help.

Meanwhile, Hannibal (who had been exiled by the Romans) joined forces with Antiochus as a military advisor. The Romans were not happy that Antiochus had given asylum to their enemy and that Antiochus had invaded territory over which Rome exercised some control.

The Roman commander Lucius Cornelius Scipio defeated Antiochus the Great in 190 BC at Magnesium. (This same general had defeated Hannibal in 202 BC.)

This is what we see in the second half of verse 18, which is better translated "but a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him."



And that is what happened because Antiochus was completely humiliated by the Romans.

Antiochus lost most of his land and his army, and his son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, was taken back to Rome as a hostage of the Roman Republic under the terms of the Treaty of Apamea in 188 BC, which also forced Antiochus to pay heavy tribute to Rome and to give up all of his war elephants.

We don't know whether Antiochus III was more grieved by the loss of his son or his elephants, but had Antiochus IV Epiphanes remained a Roman hostage, history would have been very different, but, as we will see, he did not remain a hostage.

## **Daniel 11:19**

19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

Verse 19 describes the end of Antiochus the Great, and what we find is that Antiochus the Great did not end in greatness.

After his humiliating defeat, Antiochus returned to his country, where he was killed by an angry mob in 187 BC.

In desperate need of money to pay the heavy Roman tribute, Antiochus pillaged the temple of Zeus at Elymais, where he was killed by his own people while they were defending their temple.

As verse 19 tells us, Antiochus the Great turned his face toward a fort of his own land (the temple in Elymais), he stumbled, he fell, and he was not found.

## **Daniel 11:20**

20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.

Antiochus the Great was succeeded by his oldest son, Seleucus IV Philopator (father-loving).

Seleucus IV was not popular with the people because of the heavy burdens he placed on them to pay

the Romans the tribute they required.

The "raiser of taxes" in verse 20 refers to Heliodorus, Seleucus' prime minister, who was tasked with raising the money Seleucus needed to pay Rome.

Heliodorus was sent to rob the temple at Jerusalem, which a Jewish spy had said contained enough treasure to meet all of the Roman demands.

According to Second Maccabees, the high priest Onias prayed to God, who then sent a horseman assisted by two young men to drive Heliodorus out of the temple.

This scene is the subject of a famous fresco by Raphael in the Vatican, which I saw on a recent visit to Rome (but you had to be a bit of a "Daniel geek" to know what you were looking at!).

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Heliodorus went back and, perhaps seeking to gain the throne for himself or possibly working with Antiochus IV, he poisoned the king. Thus, as verse 20 tells us, Seleucus IV did not die in anger or battle.

## Daniel 11:21

21 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

We now arrive at a major focus of Daniel 11, which is a major focus that we also saw back in Daniel 8. Verses 21-35 are devoted to the activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

As we recall, Antiochus IV Epiphanes did his best to completely wipe out the Jewish religion and culture by persecuting the Jews and forcing them to adopt Greek culture.

Let's pause to look at two issues about Antiochus IV.

First, we have been saying that Daniel 11 is showing us what was God was planning to do. Does that mean that this great persecution was part of God's plan?

We might be tempted to reject that notion at once, but maybe we should look a bit closer. As bad as persecution is when it occurs, there are some good things we can say about it.

For one thing, persecution purifies. The great heresies began, not when people faced death by the Romans for being a Christian, but later when it became fashionable to be a Christian. Perhaps God allows persecution at times when it is particularly important for his people to be focused and pure, such as in the infancy of the church under Roman persecution or when his people were close to the time when they would welcome Jesus into the world.

When the angel appeared to Mary in Luke 1:28, and said, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women," what if Mary had responded, "Who?" What if there had been no faithful people to welcome Christ? What if there had been no descendants of King David who could be traced or identified?

The persecution we are studying here is a big reason why Mary and Joseph were who they were and what they were in the first century.

#daniel