

Daniel
Wars, Rumors of Wars, and the Last War (Part 1)
Daniel 11
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Tonight in our study of the book of Daniel we come to one of the most amazing passages in the Scripture. In fact for those who deny the supernatural this passage is not only amazing it is one of the most troublesome passages in all of the Bible. Leon Wood writes, “The detail of this history as presented in Daniel 11 provides one of the most remarkable predictive portions in all of Scripture.” In fact what we’re going to study together here, the history that is predicted in this chapter is so incredibly precise that the reader of Daniel is left with only two options, two possibilities. The first is that there is a sovereign God who knows and determines all things that will happen and He has chosen to reveal those things to His prophet. That of course if what we believe. But the other option if you’re not willing to embrace the supernatural is to say that this chapter was written after the historical events that it describes actually occurred. That’s how precise it is. You have to say, well it couldn’t have happened then and that’s what the unbelieving sceptics do as they respond to Daniel 11. They argue that it is so accurate that there is simply no way that it could have been written until after the events actually occurred. And so they argue that means that it couldn’t have been Daniel that wrote it, it had to have been written 400 years later than Daniel, somewhere in the mid-second century BC, somewhere around 165-164 BC after all of the events that are described here had already occurred and the author looks back and in kind of a genre of which he imagines that these things haven’t yet happened he recounts what in fact what already has occurred.

It’s just like fallen sinful man to miss the whole point. To miss the point God is making. You see ultimately the detailed minute history recorded here in Daniel 11 serves God great purposes, first of all as an apologetic for Yahweh as the only true God. I pointed out this passage to you before but I have to take you back there again because this is the point. Turn to Isaiah 46, keep your finger there in Daniel, but Isaiah 46 verse 5, God says, “To whom would you liken Me and make Me equal and compare Me, that we should be alike?” And then He goes on to describe the idols that people make and they have to be made, they have to be carried, they have to be moved

from one place to another. Verse 7, you cry to it and it can't answer, it can't deliver you. Verse 8, "Remember this," God says, "and be assured; recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me." Now notice what distinguishes the true and living God from the idols of the nations. Verse 10, "I declare the end from the beginning." In other words, before it even starts I tell you how it's going to end.

"And from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all of My good pleasure;' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country,"

Here in the context He's talking about His specific plans and then He adds this in verse 11.

"Truly, I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it. Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded, who are far from righteousness. I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off; and My salvation will not delay. And I will grant salvation in Zion. And My glory for Israel."

God says look if you want to know the reality that I am God then just look at My word. Look at the fact that I tell My prophets what's going to happen and it happens exactly like that.

That's one of the key points of Daniel 11 – it's an apologetic for who God is. It's also a preparation for the people of God; Daniel tells God's people that these things are going to unfold as a gracious preparation so that when they come they are not taken off guard they are not somehow swept away in their confidence. In fact look at Daniel, go back to Daniel chapter 10 and notice specifically verse 14. The angel says to Daniel, "I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future." You need to understand, your people need to understand what's going to happen. This was God's grace to the people of Israel, to tell them what was coming. And it is at the same time a comfort and reassurance to God's people that God is on His throne. Chapter 11 is going to describe some pretty horrific events that will unfold in the lives of the people of God and God wants the people of God to know that in fact they just need to hang on. In fact look at

Daniel chapter 12 verse 12, here's the point as you think about all that's going to unfold, "How blessed is he who keeps waiting" specifically attains to the end of the tribulation period, but the point is much larger than that. Just keep waiting, keep waiting, God's on His throne, He's got a plan, He's working it out, you can have confidence in Him.

So that's really the point of what we're seeing unfold in Daniel's final vision. His last vision actually runs to the end of the book, from chapter 10 verse 1 all the way to chapter 12 verse 13. And the prophecy in this vision extends from the time that Daniel had it during the Persian Empire until the future kingdom of God. Let me give you an outline of these chapters. We've already looked at Daniel chapter 10 where there's an introduction, that's all it really is to Daniel's final vision. When you get to chapter 11 verse 2 and running through the end of the book, you have the actual content of Daniel's final vision. And there are prophecies regarding a series of things. You have prophecies regarding Persia in chapter 11 verse 2, prophecies regarding Greece in chapter 11 verse 3 to 35, prophecies regarding antichrist at end times chapter 11 verse's 36 to 45. In chapter 12 you have prophecies regarding the Great Tribulation, the first 12 verse's there of chapter 12 and then the last verse is a prophecy regarding Daniel himself. And so these are the prophecies that God opened up and revealed to Daniel in this final vision that he received from God. He's over 80 years old, somewhere around 85 years old when God grants him this final vision.

So tonight let's begin to consider it together, the content of Daniel's final vision. Although this vision covers a huge period of human history, from the year 536 BC when Daniel had this vision, all the way to the final and future resurrection although that's a huge amount of history, in reality these chapters and this vision focuses on just two men primarily. One of them is a man by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes, Antiochus the Fourth Epiphanes and the other is the antichrist. Antiochus was like just an introduction to the kind of man antichrist would be, and so both of them are the focal point of these two chapters. That's because of the intensity with which they persecute the Jewish people. But the vision begins, this final vision of Daniel, begins with prophecies regarding Persia. Prophecies that cover from the year 536 when Daniel received the

vision, we're told exactly when he received it, all the way until the year 331 BC and that's covered in just one verse. From just one verse, verse 2 we have 205 years of human history. From the time Daniel received the prophecy until Alexander conquered Persia in the year 331 BC.

Look at it with me, verse 2, "And now I tell you the truth," as amazing as the revelation contained in this vision is, the angel begins by assuring Daniel that what he's going to hear is in fact true. You remember back in chapter 10 verse 21 he said "I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth." That is in the book of truth. In other words, God has a plan and I'm going to tell you what's in that plan and it is absolutely true. Verse 2 goes on to say, "Behold three more kings are going to arise in Persia." You obviously had Cyrus who was already king, but three more. These three kings were Cambyses, Smerdis, Smerdis was actually an imposter who ruled less than a year. Then you had Darius the first, Hystaspes and then you had verse 2 says, and "then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them." This is Xerxes the First, one of the more famous kings in history. This is the same king by the way Xerxes the First this fourth king in verse 2; he's the same king that's also Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. His identity is clear both from the great wealth ascribed to him that's portrayed in that feast, you remember 180 days. And also because he is the Persian king who launched an attack against Greece that this passage describes. Notice verse 2 goes on to say, this fourth king, Xerxes the First, "as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece." As soon as Xerxes accumulated sufficient resources, he stirred up the entire empire of Persia to launch an attack on Greece. It's mentioned here because it was his attack that prompted the counter attack of Alexander the Great in which he forever smashed the Persian Empire and ended its domain. So, that's all we're told about Persia, 200 years of history swept away in those words.

The next prophecies are regarding Greece. This runs from chapter 11 verse 3 all the way to verse 35. It covers from the year 331 BC all the way to 146 BC and we'll see why that is as it all unfolds. It begins, this prophecy regarding Greece begins with a prophecy regarding its greatest

and first ruler, Alexander the Great, who came to power over Persia in 331 and died in the year 323. We read about him in verse's 3 and 4. It's interesting that although Daniel is going to tell us a great deal about Greece, a lot of verse's about Greece, in just two verse's he encompasses the brief reign of Alexander the Great. Notice verse 3, "And a mighty king will arise," Scholars universally agree that this mighty king is Alexander. He came to power in the year 336, but it wasn't until the year 331 that he crushed Persia. And he then began his assault, I should say he began his assault on Medo-Persia in the year 334 BC and the victory was then complete by the year 331. Notice the description of Alexander's power, verse 3 says, "he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases." Quintus Curtius was one of the earliest biographers of Alexander the Great, and Curtius wrote this, "He seemed to the nations to do whatever pleased him." If you've read history you understand that and we even see that recorded in the book of Daniel. We've met him before you remember and we've seen his lightning fast conquest of the Mediterranean world. He seemed to do as he pleases. That's the perspective of human history.

At the same time Sinclair Ferguson notes, "Scriptures version of Alexander is that he was a broken horn, Daniel 8 verse 22. The people of God do not view the great ones of this world through the eyes of the media, but through the spectacles of scriptural revelation." So he looked absolutely unconquerable, unstoppable and scripture says he's a broken horn, lost his power, crushed. Isaiah chapter 40 verse's 22 and 23 speaks of God, not Alexander, not the great rulers of the world but God,

"It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers.
Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.
It is He who reduces rulers to nothing, who makes the judges of the earth meaningless."

Notice verse 4 as he continues to write about Alexander, "But as soon as he has arisen," As I said Alexander came to power in the year 336 BC, defeated the Persians by 331 BC and then he conquered the known world. You can see on the map the extent of Alexander's conquest from essentially the year 331 to the mid- 320's he had conquered the world and then he died in the city of Babylon in the year 323 BC. Think about that short time. For such a powerful man, with such an expansive empire it all ended so quickly. "As soon as he has arisen", verse 4. As a

result verse 4 says, “as soon as he has arisen his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.”

Now folks do not forget what we’re reading here. We’re reading prophecy given to Daniel in the 500’s BC. More than 200 years before these events unfolded. But notice the precision of this prophecy, after his untimely death at the age of 32 the empire of Alexander was broken up, it was parceled toward the four points of the compass and not surprisingly the center point of the compass was the little land of Israel. Specifically Alexander’s kingdom was divided after 40 years of infighting among his commanders, between four of his military commanders. There was Antipater, and later Cassander ruled Greece and Macedonia. You had Lysimachus who ruled Thrace and much of Asia Minor. You had Seleucus who ruled Syria, Babylon and much of the Middle East, and you had Ptolemy who ruled Egypt and Palestine.

Now as we’ll see the last two factor prominently in Biblical history since the land of Israel was literally sandwiched between them. Notice Daniel here was told that none of Alexander’s successors would be his own descendants. Don’t miss the precision. None of his successors would be his descendants. Why is that? Well because his brother and his two sons, Alexander the Fourth and Heracles were all murdered, just as scripture predicted. The angel also adds that none of these four successors would exercise the same level of authority that Alexander did. And this proved of course to be exactly true. As one writer puts it, “None of the divisions of the Greek empire ever rivaled the combined strength of Alexander’s dominion. Don’t miss though the powerful point that the angel makes at the end of verse 4. Notice what he says, “for his sovereignty” speaking of Alexander, “will be uprooted and given to others besides them.” Notice the divine passives. Uprooted, who uproots? Given to others. Who gives Alexander’s authority to others? It’s God. Look when you read your history book, remind yourself that God is on His throne, that earthly rulers come and go, but God endures unchanging on. The reason

Alexander the Great had such a short reign and came to such a quick and untimely end is because of the decree of our God. He was uprooted by God. His dominion was given to others by God.

Now the next part of the prophecy concerning Greece moves on from the prophecies about Alexander the Great to another portion of Greek history and that is prophecies specifically concerning Egypt and Syria. You can see how relevant this is, I mean this stuff is still on the front page of the newspapers. Well it was in Daniels time as he anticipated what would unfold in the centuries before him. Now this conflict back and forth between Egypt and Syria lasts from Alexander's death in 323 BC all the way to 175 BC and it's described for us in a lot of verse's. Starts in verse 5 runs all the way down through verse 20. This section still concerns Greece, but it focuses on the history of an ongoing conflict between two of the four divisions of Alexander's kingdom. Here is a slide which shows these two divisions we're talking about. The two main divisions were the Egyptian side of things – this is the south. You know if Israel is the middle of the compass you move south you get to Egypt. That's the south you're going to see again and again references to the king of the south. So when you read that think south of Israel – Egypt. And then that kingdom was ruled by the Ptolemy's. Then there is the king of the north, if you go north you run into Syria. That was ruled by the Seleucid Dynasty, so you had the Ptolemy's in the south, you had the Seleucid's in the north, you had Egypt in the south, you had Syria in the north and these two factor prominently in Israel's history.

Now why does the angel focus on just two of these divisions of Alexander's kingdom? Well, look at the map. It's because the tiny land of Palestine lay between these two rivals. It was the land bridge between these two great kingdoms. If you were going to go from one of these kingdoms to the other, you didn't go through the Mediterranean, traveling in the ancient world on the water was treacherous. We read about ship wrecks all the time in the New Testament. You didn't want to go to the east because on the east you had desert. You didn't want to travel across the desert. So all you had between the Ptolemy's in the south in Egypt and the Seleucid's in the north in Syria, all you had the only way to get from one to the other was that tiny little land bridge between them called the land of Palestine. And so for 150 years as these two kingdoms

fought back and forth for preeminence their conflict took them constantly back and forth across the land of Israel. Often their battles were fought on its plains, and they fought for control of that little seemingly unimportant piece of land because it was the stronghold that showed who really controlled the Middle East in ancient world. Because it was the only way to get from one place to another.

Dale Ralph Davis writes this about this portion of the scripture, he says, “It hardly seems right for Alexander the Great to get whisked off the page in just 27 Hebrew words. And all the attention to be focused on these two dynasties of also rans - the Ptolemy’s of Egypt and the Seleucid’s in Syria. But Alexander doesn’t matter that much, not here. The reason for the zoom lens on the kings of the south and north is because of the people of God, a substantial number of them, will be back in the land of Israel living on that sliver of land at the east end of the Mediterranean, that crossroads where Africa, Asia, and Europe come together where they will be scrunched between and subject to the whims of these two opposing dynasties besides the fortunes of God’s people Alexander’s empire doesn’t matter much.” There’s a great lesson there folks. Where do you think God and our Lord and the angels, where do you think their greatest attention is on this planet today? I can promise you it’s not Washington DC, it’s not Moscow, it’s not the capital of China, it’s not Iran, it’s the people of God. It’s congregations like this one scattered across this world because that’s always the preoccupation of God. It’s the people He’s redeeming for His Son, that’s what matters to Him. So Alexander, he gets 27 Hebrew words. And then we learn about these other countries, not because they’re important, not because these kingdoms matter, but because the people of God matter and they effect what’s happening with the people of God.

Now this part of Israel’s history begins with the period of Egypt’s dominance over Palestine, so as these two rival kingdoms fight back and forth it starts with Egypt being the most powerful of the two. This runs from the death of the Alexander in the year 323 BC all the way to 199 BC and this period of Egypt’s dominance over Palestine is described in verse’s 5 through 12. We’re

going to meet rival kings. Now you may forget some of the details, in fact you'll forget many of the details, that's okay, just don't miss the big picture as we work our way through this.

So, Egypt's dominance over Palestine begins with two kings. Ptolemy the First Soter versus Seleucus the First Nicator, okay so Ptolemy the First and Seleucus the First. Verse 5, "Then the king of the South will grow strong." Again don't forget king of the south is what? What land? Egypt, the king of the north is primarily what land? Syria. Alright. So, the king of the south will grow strong, now in verse 8 we are told explicitly that the king of the south is the ruler of Egypt. This specific king of Egypt is Ptolemy the First. Ptolemy the First was a highly capable, highly decorated general under Alexander. Verse 5 says, "now he will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion." One of his princes here is a reference to a man named Seleucus the First who had also served as a general under Alexander but at a lower level than Ptolemy. Seleucus the First was initially appointed satrap over Babylonia in 321 BC. But then another of the generals of Alexander came along, a man by the name of Antigonus and he captured Babylonia and he forced Seleucus to flee and Seleucus fled from Babylonia down to Egypt and there he began to serve under Ptolemy the First as one of his princes, as is described here in verse 5. Eventually Antigonus was defeated, driven out of Babylonia and Seleucus left Egypt, returned to Babylonia but this time he consolidated his power eventually gaining control over more territory than Ptolemy had in Egypt, you saw the map a moment ago and you saw how much larger the kingdom of Syria was than that of Egypt. In fact notice verse 5, "his domain will be a great dominion indeed." He became king of Syria in the year 304 BC. The very same year ironically that Ptolemy the First became king down in Egypt. So they both began together as kings. But when Seleucus became king of Syria in 304 BC it began the Seleucid Era. Seleucus' kingdom included the former Babylon, it included Syria, and it included Media of the Medo-Persian Empire. It was huge as the scripture says here. It would become the greatest and the largest of all of the divisions of Alexander's Greek Empire.

Now verse 6 introduces us to the next pair in this conflict, Ptolemy the Second Philadelphus versus Antiochus the Second Theos. So again you can see there's some back and forth with the

names, I think you can stay tracking with me, if you can do Roman numerals one and two you're good. Alright? So, shortly after these two divisions began conflict began to arise between the Ptolemy's of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria. Ptolemy the First died in the year 285 BC, but the conflict continued when his son Ptolemy the Second came to power. This is an interesting guy, according to tradition it was Ptolemy the Second who initiated the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. The Bible of the New Testament era that our Lord and the Apostles used. Verse 6 says, "after some years" these two kings who were rivals who were in constant conflict, "will form an alliance" about 250 BC this would have been about 54 years after Ptolemy the First and Seleucus the First became kings. About 54 years later Ptolemy the Second initiated a peace treaty with the grandson of Seleucus the First, a man by the name of Antiochus the Second Theos, in a desire to bring the conflict of these two rival kingdoms to an end. Verse 6 goes on to say, "and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement."

Here's where there's a lot of intrigue. You know if you think soap operas are something, they've got nothing on what's about to unfold here. Because here's what happened, the terms of this peace accord stipulated that Ptolemy's daughter; Ptolemy, where are the Ptolemy's? in the South, in Egypt, the terms of the peace accord stipulated that Ptolemy's daughter a woman named Berenice was to marry Antiochus the king of the North to seal the alliance between these two kingdoms and the result of that would be that her son, once they had a child would be the heir of the Syrian throne. Seems like a good plan, right? But there was one huge problem. And that is that Antiochus was already married. In fact he was married to a powerful and manipulative and evil woman named Laodice. But Antiochus decided that he wasn't going to let a little thing like marriage get in the way of this peace accord and so he decided to put her away and to move forward with this arranged marriage to bring peace between the two kingdoms.

Verse 6 goes on to say, "But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in and the one who sired her as well as he who supported her in those times." So in other words things aren't going to work

out well. And here's what happened. Two years after the marriage, after this arranged marriage, Ptolemy the Second who sort of forced this arrangement on this couple died. So Antiochus decided he was done with this deal so he divorced Berenice, the forced marriage and he took his first wife, Laodice back. It seems like a good idea. But the problem was Laodice, a woman once scorned, did not trust her husband. And so Laodice actually murdered Antiochus, and she had Berenice and their child also killed. So their power didn't last, scripture says, that was an understatement. Laodice ruled as queen regent then after she committed these acts of murder, she ruled as queen regent until her son Seleucus the Second was old enough to take the throne.

That brings us to the next generation, Ptolemy the Third versus Seleucus the Second; this is described in verse's 7 through 9. Notice verse 7, "But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place," This was a descendant of Berenice and her family line; this turns out to be her brother. Her brother is now called Ptolemy the Third. He succeeded his father Philadelphus on the throne of Egypt, verse 7 says, "and he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength." Ptolemy the Third in order to retaliate for his sister's murder attacked Syria with a huge army. The war that he initiated lasted five years, from 246 to 241 BC. Ptolemy ended up defeating Syria, capturing the capital of Antioch and executing the wicked Laodice. Verse 8 says, "Also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt." Ptolemy's defeat of Syria was so complete that he pilfered and plundered her. He took their gods, he took their treasures, he even returned treasures to Egypt that had been taken 300 years before. Verse 8 goes on to say, "and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years." After all this unfolded in the year 240 BC Ptolemy entered into a treaty of peace with Seleucus the Second so he could have peace there and could initiate some conquest into the Aegean. Verse 9 says, "Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land." This describes a brief unsuccessful military campaign by Seleucus the Second toward Egypt, but he didn't even get to Egypt, he swiftly retreated to Syria.

Now verse's 10 through 12 introduce us to the next players on the stage of this regional conflict that dominated the land of Israel. We meet a man named Ptolemy the Fourth Philopator and Ptolemy the Fifth Epiphanes those are on the Egypt side versus Antiochus the Third, also will be called the Great on the Syrian side. This is described in verse's 10 through 12. Look at verse 10, "His sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress." Again the precision of this prophecy is amazing. Seleucus the Second died in the year 222 BC. His sons here described Seleucus the Third and Antiochus the Third continued in constant conflict with the Ptolemy's of Egypt. Seleucus the Third was a blip on the screen after a brief three year reign he was murdered. His brother, however, Antiochus the Third then came to power. Antiochus, are you ready for this, was 18 years old when he came to the throne.

He eventually came to be called Antiochus the Great because of his military successes. In the year 219-218 BC he launched a campaign into Palestine, into Israel and into Phoenicia which at the time belonged to Egypt, they were part of Egypt's empire. Verse 11 says, "The king of the South" who's the king of the south? Who rules in the south? The Ptolemy's, that's Egypt. "The king of the South will be enraged and will go forth and fight with the king of the North." Now this king of Egypt is now Ptolemy the Fourth, he's the king over Egypt at this point. He was a wicked, wicked man. One author, Archer puts it this way, "Ptolemy the Fourth was a cruel, debauchee who began his reign by murdering his own mother, then his wife, his sister, and his brother. He then gave himself over to a degenerate, dissipation with male and female sex partners and finally succumbed to disease in the year 203 BC." This is Ptolemy the Fourth. But when he learned of Antiochus' attack he was enraged and he launched a counter attack against Antiochus with a huge army. Historian Polybius tells us that Ptolemy had a, are you ready for this; Ptolemy had an army of 70,000 infantry, 5000 cavalry, and 73 elephants. Verse 11 says, "Then the latter will raise a great multitude." So Antiochus responds to this counter attack with his own great army, it was an army of 62,000 infantry, 6000 cavalry, and 102 elephants. Verse 11 says, "but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former." In the year 217 BC the battle ended and Ptolemy the Fourth had defeated the Syrians in a little town on the border of Egypt and Palestine called Raphia.

Verse 12 says, “When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will call tens of thousands” in the Hebrew it’s a very large number. He will cause a very large number to fall. Ptolemy the Fourth killed 10,000 infantry, 300 cavalry, 5 elephants and took 4000 prisoners. Because of this devastating victory the scripture says Ptolemy’s heart was lifted up, that is he was filled with pride and he slaughtered thousands more of the Syrian troops. Verse 12 says, “yet he will not prevail.” That is a very important point, in spite of the fact he had won this battle the angel explained to Daniel that the supremacy of the Ptolemy’s of Egypt would come to an end. That brings us then to the period of Syria’s dominance over Palestine up to a man named Antiochus the Fourth. So up to this point it’s been Egypt, Egypt has really controlled the land of Israel, they’ve gone back and forth but Egypt’s been in charge. Now it’s going to be Syria, from 199 to 175 BC. This is described in verse’s 13 to 20.

Notice verse 13, “For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment.” Now verse 13 fast forwards to about 15 years after Antiochus the Third’s defeat at Raphia. The year’s about 202 BC, once again Antiochus invaded the territories of Egypt but this time with an even larger army and he had chosen his timing this time very deliberately, very intentionally. It was a moment of great potential weakness in Egypt because Ptolemy the Fourth, that wicked man we talked about just a moment ago had died of disease just a year before and his son who was only four years old Ptolemy the Fifth Epiphanes had been crowned king of Egypt. Antiochus took advantage of this opportunity and attacked Palestine and Phoenicia and by one year later in 201 BC, he and the Syrians had conquered the land of Israel, they had conquered the fortress at Gaza. Yes, Gaza was in the news even then. Now Antiochus didn’t do it alone, he had help this time. Notice verse 14, “Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South;” This was, most believed this was a reference to Philip the Fifth of Macedon who was an ally of Antiochus. There were also citizens of Egypt who rose in insurrection against Ptolemy the Fifth, this four year old king. In addition some of the Jews got involved. Notice verse 14, “the violent ones among your people” Daniel “will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision.” Apparently there were Jews who aided Antiochus in his fight against Ptolemy.

They rebelled against Egypt notice, “to fulfill the vision.” Probably a reference to this prophecy. In other words in their own time they would interpret this prophecy as legitimate grounds to rebel against Egyptian control.

Verse 14 says, “but they will fall down.” Although the Egyptians would ultimately be defeated the Egyptian general, a man named Scopas punished all of the leaders of Jerusalem and Judea who had rebelled against the Ptolemy’s, against Egypt. They fell down. They were killed. Verse 15, “Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand.” Again, the precision of this, hundreds of years before it occurred. In the year 199 BC the Syrian forces engaged the armies of Egypt under General Scopas at the battle of Baniyas. Baniyas is what is in New Testament time is called Caesarea Philippi. The Egyptian army suffered losses. General Scopas retreated. He retreated with Egypt’s forces to the Mediterranean, to Phoenicia to the city of Sidon. Antiochus pursued him and put the well-fortified city of Sidon under siege, just as is described there in verse 15. General Scopas and the Egyptian forces surrendered a year later in 198 BC.

Verse 16, “But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him;” Now this verse marks a remarkable turning point in the history of the Middle East and the people of Israel. Again from the year 323, the death of Alexander all the way to 199 BC Egypt had controlled and dominated the land of Israel. But with this defeat of the Egyptians at Sidon, Antiochus gained permanent control over Palestine. Verse 16 says, “he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land.” obviously a reference to Israel, “with destruction in his hand.” In other words with no one to oppose him Antiochus now had complete power over Israel, including the power to destroy it and he punished those Jews who had allied themselves with Egypt. But interesting, when he entered Jerusalem, when Antiochus entered Jerusalem in the year 198 BC, he was welcomed as a deliverer, as a savior. Now if you know what’s going to unfold you can only imagine the irony of that because tragically none of the Jews who welcomed

Antiochus into Jerusalem could have imagined that this change in political power would lead 23 years later to one of the darkest, most tragic, most horrific periods in Israel's history.

Verse 17, "He will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect." Antiochus and the Syrians forced Egypt into terms of peace. Verse 17 says, "He will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side." Again you have to remember folks, it's hard for us to forget, this isn't history, this is prophecy written before it happened. Here's how it unfolded. To seal this treaty described in verse 17, Antiochus gave his daughter, a woman named Cleopatra to Ptolemy the Fifth as a wife. Now don't get confused here, this was the first Cleopatra in Egypt's royal history. Don't confuse her with the one that's connected to Julius Caesar and Marc Anthony, she comes much later. Clearly when Antiochus gave his daughter Cleopatra in marriage he intended to use her to gain greater control over Egypt. But that was not to be even as the scripture says here. Because Cleopatra it turns out actually loved her new husband most of all and she ended up supporting Egypt over Syria.

Now verse's 18 and 19 record the tragic defeat and end of this man Antiochus the Great. Verse 18 says, "Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many." Having beaten the Egyptians around 197 BC, he turned his attention to the islands or countries of the Mediterranean and he had some success. But verse 18 continues, "But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn." I love this verse. Because guess who this is? This is Rome. What happened was this. Antiochus had been warned by a new big muscular player on the block, Rome, to stay out of Greece. But instead of listening to this warning Antiochus invaded Greece, why? Because he had joined forces with the renowned Hannibal of Carthage who had encouraged him to attack Greece in spite of the Roman warning. Of course the Romans never liked to be ignored and this was no exception. So they sent a general. General Lucius Cornelius Scipio against him. By the way, his brother is the general who had defeated Hannibal. In the year 191 BC the Romans and their Greek allies completely routed the Syrians in a place called Thermopile. The Syrians were forced to withdraw from

Greece, flee to Asia Minor and 30,000 Roman soldiers pursued Antiochus' army of 70,000 into Asia. So here's an army of 30,000 chasing an army of 70,000 and they're running. With an army less than half the size of his the Romans defeated Antiochus at the Battle of Magnesia in Turkey in 190 BC. Two years later in 188 BC the Romans forced him to sign a treaty in which he surrendered territory, he surrendered much of his army, he surrendered 20 key hostages and he was forced to pay an ongoing annual taxation or indemnity to Rome.

Verse 19, "So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land." What's that about? Well, remember what just happened. He's just been forced to surrender much of army, much of his power and he's going to have to pay 1000 talents a year to Rome. Where is he going to get that money? Antiochus returned to his own country in desperate need of funds necessary to pay the annual payments to Rome. In an effort to acquire the funds he actually tried to loot the Temple of Zeus at Elimaos. Verse 19, "but he will stumble and fall and be found no more." This is a tragic story because at the temple of Zeus he's trying to loot it to get the resources necessary to pay Rome he's confronted by an angry mob and was killed by his own citizens as they defended their idols temple in the year 187 BC. "He will stumble and fall and be found no more." Verse 20, "Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the jewel of his kingdom;" The one who succeeded Antiochus the Third was Seleucus the Fourth Philopator. Antiochus the Third was dead but Rome was still there and Rome still expected their annual payment of 1000 talents.

So Seleucus sent his prime minister, a man named Heliodorus as a tax collector to try to raise the money to pay Rome. He went to the temple in Jerusalem, to loot the temple in Jerusalem. Maccabees says, and we don't know if this is true or not, but Maccabees tells the story that as he got to the temple in Rome he had a dream, he had a kind of vision of mighty angels and a terrifying vision of these angels that kept him from stealing from the temple in Jerusalem. Verse 20 says, "yet within a few days he will be shattered." Seleucus the Fourth only reigned for a few years before he was killed. Verse 20 says, "though not in anger." He wasn't killed by an angry mob like his father, "nor in battle." Instead you know how Seleucus the Fourth died?

Heliodorus, his prime minister and tax collector in an effort to gain the throne for himself poisoned Seleucus. And guess who is accomplice was? His accomplice was likely a man who would eventually be called Antiochus Epiphanes whom we will meet next time.

What a remarkable prophecy? Now those of you who aren't history fans, you're thinking why? Let me tell you why, let me give you some lessons. Number one, Yahweh is the only true God and He is sovereign over every detail of life on this planet. That's what you learn. Remember this is hundreds of years in some cases before these events unfolded and they are told with such incredible precision and it is God who is behind them all. Look at chapter 11 verse 4, notice the passives, notice what happens to these guys, "his kingdom will be broken up" by whom? By God. "And parceled out...his sovereignty will be uprooted given to others besides him." Look at the end of verse 6, it says, "she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain in power but she will be given up." Again you get that passive. It's God at work behind the scenes making all of this unfold. Verse 9, "Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but he will return to his own land." He thinks he's going to do one thing but he ends up doing something else. Thwarted, because God's purpose is unfolding. Look at the second half of verse 11, "then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former." The guy who's supposed to win doesn't win. Look at the same chapter verse 12, the second half of verse 12 says, "he will cause tens of thousands to fall, yet he will not prevail." Verse 14 says, they are going to rebel against Egypt, these Jewish people "but they will fall down." Look at the second half of verse 17, "He will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side." It doesn't work out like he planned. Verse 18, "But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn." Things don't happen the way he planned. Verse 19, "He will stumble and fall and be found no more." And verse 20, "yet within a few days he will be shattered." Don't miss the point. The point is these penny ante rulers come and go, but God sits on His throne and that hasn't changed in our day. Read your favorite news source, look at the big names and realize that their names will go in the dust bin of history because God is in control and He will accomplish His purpose.

Those verse's I just shared with you are like what Dale Ralph Davis calls a literary sledgehammer; when you look at the sheer weight of them, one after another, God at work behind the scenes. He writes, "What massive comfort this view of history provides for the people of God. How often God's people worldwide must feel they are caught in the gears of vicious regimes, simply mash them at will, but our text teaches that our Lord brings judgment not only at the climax of history, but He also injects futility into their designs so that their schemes in the end lie in shambles. Not that He always does this but the text by its repeated examples implies that this is His tendency. That He does it far more often than we may be aware. How could God's people bear to live if God simply allowed the self-styled deities of this age to fulfill all of their plans?" Not going to happen. God is on His throne. Psalm 33:10 and 11 says, "He frustrates the plans of the peoples. But the counsel of our God stands forever. And the plans of His heart from generation to generation." Habakkuk 2:13 says, "Is it not indeed from the Lord of hosts that peoples toil for fire, and nations grow weary for nothing? They've got plans, big plans but it's just weariness. Yahweh is the only true God.

A second lesson that we learn from this history is that all the great empires and emperors of history are nothing to God. God is unimpressed. Isaiah 40 verse 15, "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket." You know the picture as you're pulling a bucket up out of a well and as you're pulling it up the water's falling off and as you get near the top there's like a single drop that falls from the bucket. That's what all of the nations of this world in their combined strength are to God. "And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales." It's like if you had a set of scales and you wanted to make sure they were perfectly accurate and you looked carefully with a little magnifying glass and you saw one of them had a tiny little speck. That's what all the nations on this planet are to God. "And He lifts up the islands like fine dust."

Thirdly history is filled with events that we call successes. And events that appear to us to be setbacks, both of them are within God's sovereign purpose. You know what I'm really encouraging you here? Is don't be surprised when you pick up the newspaper and things have gone badly. The person you think is the worst person possible gets elected to president. Or, the

person that you think is the savior of the nation is elected, both of them alike are temporary. They were in that time, they are in all times. And they're within God's sovereign purpose. So don't rise and fall on the latest political event. So many Christians live their lives in angst because of the latest headline of who's running ahead in the polls. Who cares? God is on His throne and there're going to be successes as we see them and setbacks, but they're all in God's plan.

Number four, human history is a story of conflict, personal, national and spiritual. It's because of sin, as James 4 says, where do these quarrels and conflicts come, where do wars come? It comes from your lusts. It's true in personal relationships; it's true with nations and empires. And finally God is just as involved in the details of your life and mine as the events that unfold with rulers, nations, and empires. Listen God knows just as many details about your life as He knew about all of these events before they transpired. And He doesn't just know, but he has orchestrated and arranged. So, trust in the Ancient of Days who is on His throne. Let's pray together.

Father, this is amazing prophecy. Thank You for giving it to Your people before it transpired. And thank You for the privilege that we have of looking back and seeing how incredibly detailed these things unfolded. Father You are our God, You are our King, You are the Ancient of Days, and You reign forever. Lord forgive us for being carried about by every little wind and piece of news. Help us to sit back, to relax and to trust You until we're in Your presence. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.