"WALKING IN THE SHADOW OF THE ANTICHRIST"

"War & Peace" (Daniel 11:1-19)

We must not allow the chapter divisions to artificially divide the narrative of Daniel 11 from Daniel 10 or even from the other visions in Daniel 2 and 7-9. From those visions, Daniel had been given a detailed overview of world history. He now knew much of the sequence of the Gentile Empires:

Kingdom	Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8
Babylon	Head of Gold	Lion with Eagle's Wings	
Medo - Persian	Chest of Silver	Bear with 3 ribs	Ram with 2 horns
Greek	Torso of Brass/Bronze	Leopard with 4 wings	Goat: **Greece** Great horn: **Alexander the Great** 4 Horns: **4 Generals**
Ancient Rome	Legs of Iron	Great Beast with 10 horns	
Antichrist Empire	Feet of Iron and Clay	Little Horn	Little Horn: **Antiochus Epiphanes** (a type of the Antichrist)

The angel now moves to unfold the details of the final vision for Daniel in chapter 11. This vision adds to or further clarifies those prophecies previously given. It covers a historical time frame of "the 70 weeks" prophecy from Cyrus through to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Some of these details are not controversial, as they are widely agreed, but others have no broad consensus. It seems v1-35 deal with past history (that was future prophecy to Daniel) and v36 details future prophecy to Daniel and to us (more than 2,500 years after it was first given). However, there are three major historical divisions in this chapter:

(1) Darius to Antiochus III (v1-19)
(2) Rise and Reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (v20-35)
(3) Rise and Reign of Antichrist (v36-45)

Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. (v1-2)

The angel was involved with Michael the archangel in resisting the demonic assault of the Prince of Persia (10:20-21). This struggle was likely an attempt by the devil to prevent the rise of the Persians, who were great instruments of good in fulfilling prophecy to the Jews. The devil's long-term ambition has been to completely destroy the Jewish people, as he knows they are the key to prophecy and his own eventual destruction. The Persians were critical to the preservation of the Jews in redemptive history. It was the Persian king Cyrus who sent the Jews back from Exile and the Persian king Darius who later assisted them and reinforced the decree of Cyrus (cf. Ezra 6). Hence, the heavenly angels resisted assaults on them by the agents of hell, "*even I, stood to confirm*

and to strengthen him." Four great Persian kings are listed to follow, "*Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all…*" History reveals they likely were:

(1) **Cambyses II** (530-522 BC)
(2) **Pseudo- Smerdis** (522 BC)
(3) **Darius I Hystaspes** (522-486 BC)
(4) **Xerxes I** called Ahasuerus in Esther (486-464 BC)

This final king Xerxes 1(486-464 BC) was the most significant of the four. He ruled from Ethiopia to India and became incredibly wealthy. This vast wealth allowed him to maintain a great army of millions. One of his burning ambitions was to conquer the Greek people. He failed to do so. The seeds of the destruction of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great were sown that day. For the next century and a half, the Greeks swore to take revenge. That is why we transition in the next verse directly to that endpoint without reference to the Persian kings that followed Xerxes 1. The failure to destroy the Greeks was the beginning of the end for the Persians. Their days were numbered!

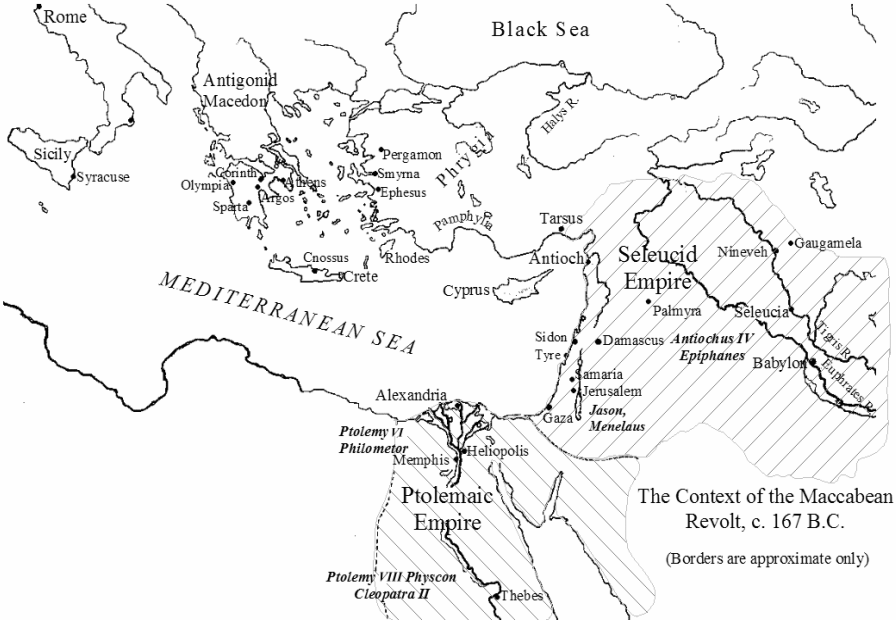
And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those. (v3-4)

The mighty king that will arise from Greece is no stranger to history. Alexander the Great was introduced in some detail in Daniel 8 as the "*he goat.*" He had a bitter hatred of the Persians after the failed invasion of Xerxes 1. This anger drove him to destroy their Empire without mercy. Alexander became the undisputed ruler of the Middle East, "*that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.*" When Alexander suddenly died at the age of 32 in 323 BC his kingdom was eventually divided among four of his generals – Lysimachus, Antipater, Ptolemy, and Seleucus, "*and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven.*" (cf. Daniel 7:6; 8:8) His children were ruthlessly murdered, "*and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity.*"

And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion. And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times. (v5-6)

The focus shifts here to the dynasties of two of these generals – the king of the south (Ptolemaic Empire) and the king of the north (Seleucid Empire). The northern empire was ruled by Seleucus and became known as the Seleucid Dynasty. He was headquartered in the city that is today Damascus. He ruled over Syria, Turkey and Greece itself. The southern empire over Africa was ruled by Ptolemy Lagus and was headquartered in the city of Alexandria in Egypt. His Empire was a powerful one – surrounded by desert and sea, his defences were good and Egypt had the wealth of the fertile Nile delta. That is why it was prophesied, "*And the king of the south shall be strong.*"

These two Empires intersected over the land of Israel. They would rule the Mediterranean world until the rise of the Romans. The Jews in Israel were, therefore, part of a disputed border between the two Greek rivals, Seleucus and Ptolemy. For nearly two centuries they would fight over the Promised Land.



Eventually their descendants came to the realization after over a century of conflict that it would be better to be allies than rivals, "*And in the end of years they shall join themselves together.*" A common practice to seal and alliance between two kingdoms is by intermarriage of the royal families. In 216 BC Berenice the daughter of Ptolemy II married the Seleucid king, Antiochus II fulfilling the prophecy, "*And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement.*" Antiochus II divorced his first wife to marry Berenice. This alliance didn't last. Eventually Antiochus II tired of Berenice and returned to his first wife, Laodice. The former wife Laodice was a ruthless and formidable political operator. She executed her revenge by murdering Antiochus II and then had Berenice assassinated, which is why the prophecy foretold, "*but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times.*" The twists and turns were like an ancient soap opera.

But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north. So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land. (v7-9)

The new king of the Ptolemy dynasty was Ptolemy III, the brother of Berenice. Greatly angered at the murder of his sister and the betrayal of the covenant between their kingdoms, he attacked the Seleucid Empire. He defeated the Seleucids, killed Laodice, and plundered their cities and treasuries. Ptolemy III returned to Egypt with the great spoils. Josephus claims Ptolemy III took

back 2,500 idol statues and 40,000 talents of silver. The Seleucid king, Seleucus II was driven into Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The Ptolemaic kingdom was now at the height of its power.

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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. (v10-16)

The sons of Seleucus II decided to fight back against the Ptolemaic kingdom to recover the lost treasures and land. Led by his son Antiochus III they overran the forces of Ptolemy III down to his "*fortress*" at Gaza. They seized back from Ptolemy III most of the lands they had lost. Despite enraged Ptolemaic attempts to counterattack and some initial success, Antiochus III's armies eventually drove the Ptolemaic armies back to Egypt. A very significant event occurred when they also took the land of Israel back from them in 198 BC. Antiochus III would be aided by rebellious Jews, "*also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall*," who believed that their best interests would be served by overthrowing the yoke of the Ptolemaic rulers. The Seleucids now controlled the Holy City of Jerusalem, "*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.*" Antiochus III was well disposed at this time to the Jews. Josephus recorded that he lowered taxes and permitted them to live according to their beliefs and customs. Because of his great success in rebuilding the Seleucid Empire after the humiliation inflicted by the Ptolemaic Empire, he became known as Antiochus the Great.

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. 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. Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found. (v17-19)

Antiochus III decided to subvert the remaining power of the Ptolemaic Empire by making peace. He offered his daughter Cleopatra I to marry Ptolemy V, who was still a child at the time. Antiochus III hoped that his daughter would be able to undermine the power of the Ptolemaic rulers from within. Instead, to his dismay, she remained loyal to her new family, "*but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.*"

Angered by his failure and his daughter's "betrayal," Antiochus switched his attention to other territories to the West, "*After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many.*" Initially he had some success. After declaring himself the "champion of Greek freedom against Roman domination," he then decided to seek to conquer Greece and this brought him into a direct

confrontation with the powerful army of the rising new superpower of Rome. The Romans, led by the famous commander, Lucius Cornelius Scipio, after a four-year war famously defeated Antiochus at the *Battle of Thermopylae* in 191 BC on mainland Greece and finally at the *Battle of Magnesia* in 190 BC on mainland Turkey.

The Romans in the *Treaty of Apamea* in 188 BC made Antiochus surrender his navy and pay an annual tribute to them. This loss of power and subsequent financial pressure forced Antiochus III to the East to provide funds for the tribute, "*Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.*" This humiliation was the beginning of the end for Antiochus. The self-styled "Antiochus the Great" was not so great now! He was eventually killed trying to pillage a temple in Persia in 187 BC. His life epitomised the frustrating failure of man seeking to live a life without God. John Walvoord sums up the life of Antiochus III,

> Antiochus the Great, who could have gone down in history as one of the great conquerors of the ancient world if he had been content to leave Greece alone, instead fulfilled the prophecy of verse 19 in that he had to return to his own land, defeated and broken. He was killed trying to plunder a temple in Elam. From the standpoint of the history of Israel, this was important because Antiochus the Great…was succeeded by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC), the notorious persecutor of the Jews described in detail in Daniel 11:21-35. In these prophecies, properly interpreted, is an accurate prophetic picture of this period, which would be remarkable even if it was history. As prophecy, it bears the unmistakable imprint of divine inspiration.

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THESE VERSES?

(1) The depraved nature of humanity hasn't changed over time. History reveals the Empires of man had their share of political intrigue, betrayal, violence, revenge, and lust for position, power and possessions. Millions were ruthlessly murdered so that one man or woman could seize a piece of land or a crown. It was "dog eat dog" and the "survival of the fittest" that was the watchword for them and is the driving motto of humanity today. The only thing has changed is the time.

(2) The continual failure of man to control history is a warning that we are fallible and finite beings. We tend to overestimate the ability of the flesh and underestimate the ability of God. Empires and kings come and go, whether they want to or not. Despite the great plans powerful men may have had, only God's plans prevailed. The story of history is one of man's inability and limitations and God's great sufficiency and sovereign power.

(3) The absolute sovereignty of God over the affairs of mankind. The reason God was able to plainly reveal the facts of future history to Daniel in such perfect detail was because God controlled history (Isaiah 44:6-8). He is not generally in control but in complete control. History is, as someone once said, "His story." Even the actions of wicked men are under His sovereign control. God is not bound by time. That is still true today. He is the God of Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow! Circumstances should not lead us to lose our confidence in God. Our God is great enough to handle any situation. Therefore, God alone is worthy of all worship.

(4) Just as God proved the truth of prophecy in the past, so we can be absolutely certain that He will fulfill all the future prophecies yet to be realised. Daniel saw prophecy that became history. Not a single one of His promises ever has failed or ever will fail. As Jesus Christ declared, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*." (Matt. 24:35) From a human perspective, it seemed impossible for the Greeks to supplant the mighty Persian Empire when Daniel received these prophetic visions. But they did. Man's words and promises fail all the time. But God's never does.

We tend to judge the world by our feelings, our struggles, and our circumstances but we must judge it by the Person and Promises of the God who controls history. Someone once asked the wife of Albert Einstein if she understood the theory of relativity. She replied, "No, but I know Albert, and he can be trusted." In a greater way we should be able to say this even more emphatically about God. We don't full understand what He's doing in the world and in our lives right now. But we know God and He can be trusted.

God is your wisdom, God is your might;
God's ever near you, guiding the right;
He understands you, knows all you need;
Trusting in Him you'll surely succeed.

Let us press on, then; never despair!
Live above feeling, victory's there;
Jesus can keep us so near to Him,
That nevermore our faith shall grow dim.