

## DANIEL 11 ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES: HIS RISE AND RUIN – PART 1

The Speaker from the last chapter – Whom we understood to be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself – now performs His promise that He would show Daniel “what should befall his people in the latter days,” according to that which was “written in the scriptures of truth.” Very particularly does He here foretell the succession of the kings of Persia and of Greece, and the affairs of their kingdoms – especially the mischief which Antiochus Epiphanes would do to God’s people (which was foretold before, in chapter 8:11-12).

Daniel is first told about the good service which the Lord Jesus had done to the Jewish nation (verse 1): “In the first year of Darius the Mede,” who destroyed Babylon and released the Jews out of that house of bondage, “I stood a strength and fortress to him” – that is, “I was instrumental to protect him and give him success; and after he had conquered Babylon, to confirm him in his resolution to release the Jews.” We must acknowledge the hand of God in the strengthening of those who are friends to the Church.

After this, Christ proceeds to foretell the reign of four Persian kings (verse 2). Three kings would arise in Persia, besides Darius the Mede. These three were Cyrus, Cambyses (the “Ahasuerus” of Ezra 4:6), and Darius Hystaspes (the “Ahasuerus” of the Book of Esther). But then there was to be a fourth king, who would be far richer than them all – namely, Xerxes. By his strength, his vast army (consisting of at least 800,000 men), and his riches (with which he maintained and paid that vast army), he stirred up all against the realm of Greece. Xerxes’ expedition against Greece, and the shameful defeat that he met with, are famous in secular history.

Daniel is next told of Alexander the Great’s conquests, and the subsequent dividing up of his kingdom (verses 3-4). He would stand up against the kings of Persia, and rule with great dominion over many kingdoms – and with a despotic power, for he would do according to his own will. But his kingdom would soon be broken up and divided into four parts, but not to his own posterity. Never was the vanity of the world and its greatest things shown more evidently than in the story of Alexander the Great.

Verses 5-10 tell us of the rise and power of two of the four kingdoms that were established out of the remains of Alexander’s conquests. One of these was the kingdom of Egypt, which was made great by Ptolemy Lagus, one of Alexander’s captains. He is called “the king of the south” (verses 8, 42, 43) – that is, Egypt. The other kingdom was that of Syria, which was set up by Seleucus

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Nicanor. He was one of Alexander's princes, and had the greatest dominion and was the most powerful among all of Alexander's successors. Both Egypt and Syria were strong against Judah (the affairs of which are particularly eyed in this prophecy). Ptolemy, soon after he gained Egypt, invaded Judea; and he captured Jerusalem on a Sabbath Day, pretending to make a friendly visit. Seleucus also raised disturbance in Judea.

A fruitless attempt was made to unite these two kingdoms (verse 6). Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt (or "the king of the south") had a daughter named Berenice; and Ptolemy wished to marry her to Antiochus Theos, king of Syria (or "the king of the north"), who already had a wife named Laodice. Berenice was to come to Antiochus, to make a marriage-agreement; but it would not hold. It is said that neither she nor her posterity would establish themselves in the kingdom of Syria, neither would Ptolemy her father nor Antiochus her husband be able to stand (between which two men, there was intended to be a great alliance). This unhappy marriage between Berenice and Antiochus occasioned much mischief, instead of producing a coalition between the Syrian and Egyptian crowns (as had been hoped). Antiochus divorced Berenice, took his former wife Laodice again (who poisoned him not long afterwards), caused Berenice and her son to be murdered, and set up his own son by Laodice as king. His name was Seleucus Callinicus.

A war erupted between the two kingdoms (verses 7-8). A branch from the same root as Berenice would "stand up in his estate." Berenice's brother, Ptolemy Euergetes (who was the son and successor of Ptolemy Philadelphus), would come with an army against King Seleucus Callinicus of Syria, to avenge his sister's death. And he would prevail. Indeed, he would carry away a rich booty of both persons and goods into Egypt; and he would continue for more years than Seleucus. Ptolemy Euergetes reigned for 46 years; and one historian says that if his own affairs had not called him home, he would – in this war – have made himself master of the whole kingdom of Syria. But he would be forced to come back to his own kingdom, and keep peace there (verse 9); and thus he could no longer carry on the war abroad.

Seleucus Callinicus was overcome by Ptolemy Euergetes, and he died miserably. But he left two sons, named Seleucus and Antiochus. These sons assembled a multitude of great forces to recover what their father had lost (verse 10). But Seleucus, the elder son, was weak and unable to rule his army. He was poisoned by his friends, and reigned for only two years. So his brother Antiochus succeeded him, who reigned for 37 years, and was called Antiochus the Great. He was only 15 years old when he began to reign, and he eventually restored what his father had lost.

*(continued in Part 2)*

## DANIEL II ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES: HIS RISE AND RUIN – PART 2

For a while, the king of Egypt, Ptolemy Philopater, the successor of Ptolemy Euergetes, had very great success in his war with Antiochus the Great. He was generally a slothful man, but he was moved with outrage at the indignities done by Antiochus (verse 11). He brought a vast army into the field, consisting of 70,000 foot-soldiers, 5,000 horsemen, and 73 elephants; and the great army of Antiochus – who had 62,000 foot-soldiers, 6,000 horsemen, and 102 elephants – was given into his hand. Having gained this victory, Ptolemy Philopater grew very insolent; his heart was lifted up (verse 12). He next went into the Temple of God at Jerusalem; and in defiance of the law, he entered the Most Holy Place – for which God had a controversy with him; so that although he cast down many myriads, yet he would not be strengthened by that victory. For Antiochus the Great returned with an even greater army than before (verse 13), and he came against the young child-king Ptolemy Epiphanes (who succeeded his father Ptolemy Philopater) and gained an advantage over him. In this expedition, he had some powerful allies (verse 14); “many,” it was said, “shall stand up against the king of the south.” Philip of Macedon was confederate with Antiochus against King Ptolemy Epiphanes of Egypt, and so was Scopas his general, whom he sent into Syria. Antiochus routed Ptolemy Epiphanes and destroyed a great part of his army; whereupon the Jews willingly yielded to Antiochus, joined with him, and helped him besiege Ptolemy Epiphanes’ garrisons. They – “the robbers of thy people” – would exalt themselves to help set forward the accomplishment of this prophecy, but they would fall and come to nothing (verse 14). Hereupon (verse 15), Antiochus the Great would carry on his plans against Ptolemy in another way; he would assault his strongholds, and Ptolemy would not be able to withstand him.

But Antiochus also made himself master of the land of Judea – the “glorious land” (verse 16). By his hand, that pleasant land was wasted and consumed; and with its spoil, he paid his vast army. The land of Judea lay between these two strong kingdoms of Egypt and Syria; and so in all the struggles between them, it was sure to suffer – for they both hated the Jews.

Antiochus still continued his war against the king of Egypt; and he determined to become the ruler of his whole kingdom, by taking advantage of the youth and inexperience of Ptolemy Epiphanes (verse 17). He cunningly planned to give his daughter Cleopatra in marriage to Ptolemy – intending that she should be a snare to him, and do him a mischief; just as Saul hoped when he gave his

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daughter Michal to David. But she would not support her father in this crafty endeavor; rather, she stood up in support of her husband – and so Antiochus’ plot failed.

Verse 18 then goes on to foretell Antiochus’ war with the Romans, after his failure to make himself sovereign over Egypt. He took many of the isles around the Hellespont; by war or treaty, he made himself master of them. But “a prince” (verse 18) – that is, a leader, even the Roman general – would return Antiochus’ own reproach upon his head, with which he had abused the Romans.



An army was sent against Antiochus. Hannibal was then with him, and advised him to invade Italy and lay it waste; but he did not take his advice. So the Romans joined battle with him, and gave him a total defeat – even though Antiochus had 70,000 men, and the Romans only 30,000. He was totally routed by the Romans, and he was forced to surren-

der to them all that he had already captured in Europe; and moreover, he had a very heavy tribute exacted upon him. After this shameful and humiliating defeat, he returned to his own land (verse 19). In an effort to devise a way to raise the money he needed to pay his tribute to the Romans, he plundered a temple of Jupiter; and this so enraged his own subjects against him that they attacked him and killed him.

Antiochus the Great’s successor was his son, Seleucus (verse 20). He is described as “a raiser of taxes.” He was a great oppressor of his own subjects, and extorted loads of money from them; and when he was told that he would thereby lose his friends, he said that he knew no better friend than money. He attempted to rob the Temple in Jerusalem; but within a few days, he was destroyed – but not in anger nor in battle. Rather, he was poisoned by Heliodorus – one of his own servants – when he had only reigned for 12 years, and done nothing remarkable.

From all of this, let us learn a few things. First, God Providentially sets up one person and pulls down another, as He pleases. He advances some from low beginnings, and humbles others who were very high. Some call great men “the footballs of fortune”; but rather, they are the tools of the Lord’s Providence. Second, this earth is full of wars and fightings; these come from people’s lusts, and make the world a theater of sin and misery. Third, all the changes and revolutions of nations and governments, and every event – even the most minute and contingent – are plainly and perfectly foreseen by the God of heaven. To Him, nothing is new. Fourth, no Word of God shall fall to the ground, but whatever He has decreed shall infallibly come to pass. Even the sins of wicked men shall be made to serve His purpose, but yet God is not the author of sin.

*(continued in part 3)*

## DANIEL 11 ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES: HIS RISE AND RUIN – PART 3

Verses 21-45 contain a very detailed prophecy of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. He was the son of Antiochus the Great, and the brother of Seleucus and Cleopatra (mentioned in part 2). He was the “little horn” spoken of in chapter 8:9, a sworn enemy to the Jewish religion, and a bitter persecutor of those who adhered to it. These troubles in the days of Antiochus were foretold in great detail, because by the time that they came to pass, the line of prophecy would cease; and so God’s people would find it necessary to have recourse to the written Word. Some things in this prediction concerning Antiochus are alluded to in the New Testament predictions of the Antichrist, especially verses 36 and 37. And as is usual with the prophets, when they foretell events concerning the Jewish nations, they make use of expressions that are applicable – in a broader sense – to the Kingdom of Christ. So when Daniel speaks of the troubles of the Jews under Antiochus, he speaks in such a way that his words may be extended further to refer to the rise and ruin of the spiritual kingdom of the Antichrist.

Concerning the character of Antiochus Epiphanes – he was a vile person (verse 21). Even heathen writers have described him as an ill-humored man – rude and boisterous; base and sordid. For a long time, he had been a hostage at Rome in order to guarantee the obedience of his father when the Romans had subdued him; and it had been agreed that when the other hostages were exchanged, he should remain a prisoner. By trickery, however, he got his elder brother’s son, Demetrius, to be sent as a hostage to Rome in exchange for him; and since his elder brother had been killed (verse 20), he himself took the kingdom. The states of Syria did not give it to him (verse 21), because they knew it belonged to his elder brother’s son; nor did he get it by the sword. But he came in peaceably, pretending to reign for his brother’s son Demetrius; and then by flatteries, he obtained the kingdom and established himself in it. He crushed Heliodorus (his father’s assassin), who resisted him “with the arms of a flood.” Those who opposed Antiochus were overthrown and broken before him – even the prince of the covenant, who was his nephew and the rightful heir; with whom he had pretended to covenant that he would resign the throne to him whenever he would return from Rome (verse 22). But he worked deceitfully (verse 23) and became strong (verse 24). Unlike his predecessors, he scattered spoil and riches among the people, in order to insinuate himself into their affections; but at the same time, he was forecasting plots against the strongholds, planning to make himself master of them. And thus his generosity lasted only

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for a short time; for when he had gotten the garrisons into his hands, he ruled by force. Those who first come to power like fraudulent foxes shall eventually begin to reign like forceful lions.

Antiochus made war with the king of the south, or Egypt; and this was his second expedition there. This is described in verses 25-27. He stirred up his power and courage against Ptolemy Philometer, king of Egypt (who was the son of Ptolemy Epiphanes and Cleopatra, mentioned above); and being thus provoked, Ptolemy came against him with a very great and mighty army. But it was in vain, for Antiochus' army overpowered and overthrew it; and this was no wonder, for the king of Egypt was betrayed by his own counselors – those who partook of his own bread and meat (verse 26) – who were bribed by Antiochus to plot against their master. After the battle, a treaty of peace was drawn up; and both kings met at one table to negotiate the articles of the treaty between themselves. But neither of them were sincere in it; for even while they were pretending promises of amity and friendship, they were lying through their teeth to one another – for their hearts were dead-set to do all the mischief they could against the other. So the peace did not last; but the end of the peace-period was at the time appointed by Divine Providence, and then the war broke out again.

From the former campaign into Egypt, Antiochus returned with loads of great riches (verse 28); and so he took the first occasion to invade Egypt again, at the time appointed by Divine Providence, two years afterward (verse 29). But this attempt did not succeed as the two former ones did, for the ships of Chittim (verse 30) came against him – that is, the navy of the Romans. Ptolemy Philometer was now in a strict alliance with the Romans, and so he craved their aid against Antiochus – who had besieged him and his mother Cleopatra in the city of Alexandria. The Roman Senate thereupon sent an embassy to Antiochus, to command him to raise the siege; and when he desired some time to consider the command and consult with his friends about it, one of the ambassadors (named Popilius) took his staff and drew a circle in the dirt around Antiochus, and told him – as one having authority – that he would give a positive answer before he came out of that circle. Thus, in fear of the Roman power, he was forced to immediately give orders for the raising of the siege and the retreat of his army out of Egypt. Of course, he returned in great grief; for it was humiliating to him to be forced to yield in such a manner.

Upon his return from this failed expedition into Egypt, Antiochus proceeded to take out his rage upon the Jews. He had already plundered Jerusalem and its Temple once before, but the most terrible storm was during his humiliating return from Egypt. He invaded Judea on his way home; and because the Romans had interposed and prevented his purposes against Egypt, he wreaked his revenge upon the poor Jews, who had given him no provocation – although, sadly, they had greatly provoked God to permit him to do it (chapter 8:23).

*(continued in part 4)*

## DANIEL II ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES: HIS RISE AND RUIN – PART 4

This awful man, Antiochus Epiphanes, had a deep-seated antipathy to the Jews' religion; his heart was "against the holy covenant" (verse 28), by which the Jews were incorporated as a distinct people from all other nations. He hated the law of Moses and the worship of the true God, and he was annoyed at the privileges of the Jewish nation and the promises that God had made to them. He carried on his malicious plans against the Jews by the assistance of some apostate traitors among them, for he kept up correspondence with those who were false to their religion and forsook the holy covenant (verse 30). He profaned the Temple itself (verse 31) – not only with the assistance of his own army, but also with the aid of a great party of those Jewish deserters. Having resolved to bring all people under the yoke of his heathen religion, he took away the Jews' daily sacrifice; and then he set up "the abomination of desolation" – the image of Jupiter Olympius – in the very Holy of holies of Jehovah's Temple itself! But he did not stop there. He proceeded to cruelly persecute those who steadfastly retained their integrity and faithfulness to the Lord. Sadly, many forsake the covenant and do wickedly against it; yet there is a people who know their God, and they shall be strong and do great things! (verse 32) When some yield to the tyrant's demands, and surrender their consciences to his impositions; these others bravely stand their ground, resist the temptation, and make the despot himself ashamed of his attempts upon them. The right knowledge of God is, and will be, the strength of the soul; and in that strength, gracious souls do great things.

Why did God allow the faithful ones among the Jews to suffer all this? The answer is given in verse 35; it was so that they might be tried, purged, and made white. Their dross would be purged out, and their troubles would sanctify them by the grace of God; they would be the means of mortifying their corruptions, of weaning them from the world, and of awakening them to greater seriousness and diligence in religion. Their sufferings for righteousness' sake would try and purge the nation of the Jews, and convince them of the truth and excellency and power of that holy religion – which some of these persons even died for! But although the cause of religion may suffer thus, it shall not be run down for good. When God's people fall, they shall not be utterly cast down; for they shall be helped with a little help (verse 34). Judas Maccabaeus and his brethren, and a few with them, made headway against the tyrant Antiochus; they pulled down the idolatrous altars, and cleansed and purified the Temple of the Lord. Those who stand by the cause of religion when it is threatened may not be im-

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mediately delivered and made victorious, yet they shall indeed have present help! And although these troubles were to continue for a long time, yet they would have an end. The power of the enemy shall only come so far – according to the purpose and plan of God – and no further.

Antiochus grew very proud, insolent, and profane. Being puffed up with his conquests, he defied heaven and trampled upon everything that was sacred (verses 36-39). Herein Antiochus was a picture of that great spiritual enemy, the Antichrist – that is, any person or entity or thought-system that opposes the Gospel and Kingship of Christ! This blasphemous wretch impiously dishonored the God of Israel, the only living and true God; and in defiance of Him and His authority, he did whatever he pleased against His people and His holy religion. But at last he had run his length, and filled up the measure of his iniquity.

In verse 40, we seem to see another expedition into Egypt – or at least, a struggle with Egypt. The Romans had prevented Antiochus from invading Ptolemy Philometer; but now Ptolemy pushed at him (verse 40), probably by making an attempt to seize some of his territories. But upon hearing this, Antiochus (“the king of the north”) came flying at Ptolemy like a whirlwind – with incredible swiftness and fury, with chariots and horses, and with many ships. In this flying march against Egypt, many countries were overthrown by him (verse 41); and he would again enter into “the glorious land,” which was the land of Israel.

The last two verses of this chapter contain a prediction of the fall and ruin of Antiochus Epiphanes, similar to that which we had before in chapter 8:25. When he was in the height of his honor, flushed with victory, and loaded with spoils; then tidings out of the east and out of the north troubled him (verse 44). He heard rumors that the king of Parthia was about to invade his kingdom. This obliged him to drop the enterprises that he had in hand, and to go against the Parthians that were revolting from him; and this annoyed him, for now he had planned to utterly ruin and extirpate the Jewish nation. But this expedition called him away; and in that very same expedition, he perished. Yet he made one last great effort of rage against the Jews. When he found that he was baffled and humiliated in his affairs, he went forth with great fury to destroy many (verse 44). But God cut him off in the midst of his days, and none were able to prevent his fall. Those who covet to be feared by all when they are in their grandeur shall discover that they are loved by none when they come to be in distress.

What a picture is presented in this chapter of the tangled web of earthly politics! They have been too much, and for too long, in the hands of those who sought only their own aggrandizement – to attain which, they have been willing to sacrifice their honor, their countrymen, and even their own daughters. But in all of this, we are enabled to realize that even the events of our present hour are being overruled by Divine Providence, in the best interests of Christ’s Church!

*Lord Jesus, thank You for working out all things in this world – even the changing of hands in government – for the best interests of Your Church, Your Bride! Amen.*