

When Nations Are Shaken, Part 3

Daniel 11:21-29

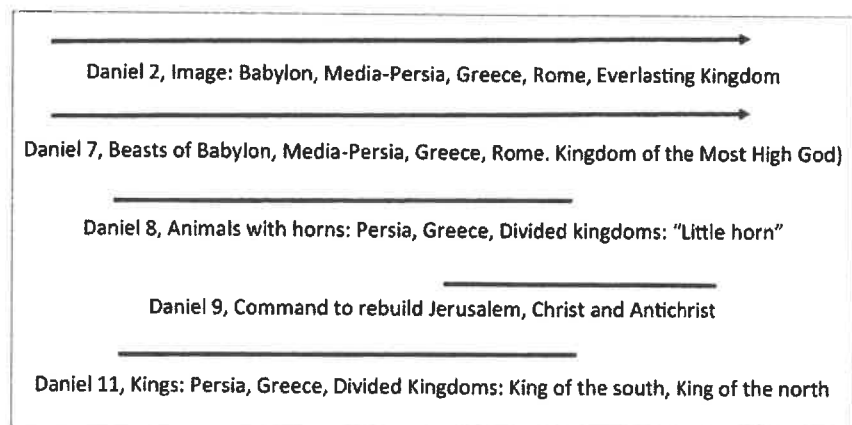
How can we live in a stable, confident manner when our nation is shaken by assassinations, fraudulent leaders, diplomatic intrigue, military force and greedy political leaders, who turn against their own countrymen? Many of us here will remember where we were on March 30, 1981, shortly after 2:40 p.m. when a stark realization settled in on us all; and our nation was shaken.

In Isaiah 44:6-8, the prophet introduced the Lord, the King of Israel, and His credentials: **“Thus says the LORD the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: Have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? You are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.”** (Isaiah 44:6-8)

There are several noteworthy aspects to this remarkable introduction: 1.) At least two Persons are introduced: The Lord (the King of Israel) and His Redeemer, (the Lord of hosts) and both are divine,ⁱ 2.) Though two persons are introduced, the introduction (with the first person singular pronoun) states, “I am the first, and I am the last and beside me there is no God.”ⁱⁱ 3.) The Lord, the King of Israel, exercises absolute, sovereign control over events. 4.) The Lord God declares these events in advance so that witnesses can conclude that there is no God other than He – the one true God.

As we turn today to Daniel 11:21-29, we do so with confident expectation. The Lord our God gives us prophecies depicting “the big picture” of the future of the world. But He also exercises absolute control over specific events. After all, the big picture is made up of small brush strokes. A talented artist exercises control over his or her materials (to paint a canvas or use tiles in a mosaic). But the Lord our God exercises control over all the moments of time (past, present, and future). We might be astounded when a science fiction writer makes the occasional accurate guess.ⁱⁱⁱ In 1726, Jonathan Swift predicted that Mars had 2 moons, in his book, “Gulliver’s Travels.” 150 years later, astronomers discovered that his guess was correct! In her book, “Frankenstein,” Mary Shelley predicted organ transplants. In “Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea,” Jules Verne predicted the development of the electric submarine.

These are all great guesses, but they pale in comparison to the precise Biblical prophecies that we can see today in Daniel 11:21-29. So precise are they that critics see them as beyond belief; they cannot accept that the Sovereign God has this kind of power. But when the nations are shaking, these prophecies are part of the basis for our belief.



Let’s remember the “big picture” from Daniel chapters 2-11; then study the small brush strokes. One of the ways that communication has been taught is three simple steps: 1. Tell them what you are going to tell them, 2. Tell them, and 3. Tell them what you told them. A good introduction leads to the main

message, and a good conclusion sums up that message. We can see this pattern in the prophecies of Daniel. In Daniel 2, the Lord taught the broad general outline (the “big picture”) of coming world history. In Daniel chapters 7, 8, 9 and 11 we have been learning the specific details (the “small brush strokes”). And make no mistake, the Lord has given us specific details, even about the coming Antichrist. So when the nations are shaking, we can be confident in God’s prophecies, the basis for our belief.

We Can Be Confident: When the nations are shaken by assassinations, v. 20

“**And in his estate**” is a reference to Seleucus IV Philopator residing in what is now Syria. He was a ruler who greatly increased taxes (v. 20) was assassinated by the usurper Heliodorus in September 175 B.C.^{iv} But the brother of Seleucus IV, Antiochus (whose real name was “Mithradates”), quickly traveled to Syria, arriving in November 175 B.C.. When we look back at political assassinations in our own country, it’s important to remember where to place our confidence. Our prayer to the Lord, using Psalm 60:11 would be “**Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man.**” On March 30, 1981 at George Washington University hospital, as the nurses gently cut away the man’s coat and shirt, the stark realization settled in on them all: the president of the United States, Ronald Reagan, had been shot. Christians everywhere began to pray earnestly and confidently for our president.

We Can Be Confident: When the nations are shaken by fraudulent leaders, v. 21

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

The despicable person described here is Antiochus IV. Antiochus was the first of the Seleucids to successfully take the kingdom by fraud, rather than by legitimate succession. The legitimate heir of Seleucus IV was his son, Demetrius I Soter was a hostage of Rome, so Antiochus proclaimed himself as co-regent with the infant son of Seleucus IV. In 170 B.C., Antiochus killed his 5 year old nephew in order to take power alone. He was indeed despicable.

Antiochus did not deserve the honor of being king, yet he came in peaceably and obtained it by intrigue and hypocrisy. He took to himself the title “Epiphanes” meaning “God manifest.”^v But the Jews took their cues from others who called him “Antiochus Epimanes” (Antiochus the Madman). But they probably didn’t say that to his face. The historian “Tacitus likewise reports that “King Antiochus endeavored to abolish Jewish superstition and to introduce Greek civilization” (*Hist* 5.8.2).”^{vi} As we noted during our study of Daniel chapter 8, there are many notable parallels between Antiochus Epiphanes and the coming Antichrist. Students of God’s Word would do well to study these characteristics, remembering that “the mystery of iniquity” has been at work for thousands of years (2 Thessalonian 2:7). John Walvoord notes that “From the standpoint of Scripture and the revelation by the angel to Daniel, this was the most important feature of the entire third empire [Greece]. The reasons for the prominence of Antiochus IV Epiphanes were his desecration of the Jewish temple and altar, and his bitter persecutions of the Jewish people.”^{vii}

In our own day, watchdogs monitor fraudulent voters^{viii} and fraudulent elections.^{ix} But even when political leaders act in a fraudulent manner, we have this confidence: the Most High God rules in the kingdoms of men (Daniel 4:17).

We Can Be Confident: When the nations are shaken by diplomatic intrigue and military force, 22-28

22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant.

“The arms of a flood” refers to strong military action and verse 22 prophesied that this king of the north would triumph over his adversaries. Antiochus defeated the Egyptians in 170 B.C. Scholars have wrestled with the identification of “the prince of the covenant.” The majority view is that “The “**prince of the covenant**” probably refers to the former high priest Onias III, who would be assassinated at Antiochus’s court around 171 B.C.]^x Others think it could refer to Ptolemy Philometer, a brother of the leader of Egypt, who felt that he had been defrauded. Always the schemer, Antiochus Epiphanes found ways to advance his designs. Like politicians today who say, “Don’t let a crisis go to waste,” Antiochus forged his way.

And after the league *made* with him [Antiochus IV] he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do *that* which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers’ fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: *yea*, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. (vs. 23-25)

By forming diplomatic leagues with various parties, the king advanced toward his selfish goals. Entering peaceably, without warning, Antiochus IV specialized in surprise attacks. By this means, he plundered the richest places in the region. But unlike his ancestors, Antiochus spread the wealth around to others in his constant drive for more power. Each time the Egyptians returned to battle this Syrian king, he defeated them.

26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat [the king of Egypt’s royal advisors] shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.

Even the advisors to the Egyptian king were willing to betray him in support of Antiochus. Antiochus Epiphanes’ constant diplomatic intrigues and military maneuvers led to his domination of the Mediterranean coast in spite of the Egyptians’ efforts. In 169 B.C., Antiochus captured Ptolemy VI.

We Can Be Confident: When nations are shaken by greedy political leaders who turn against their own countrymen. 27-28

And both these kings’ hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land. (vs. 27-28)

Always looking for an advantage, Antiochus began to conspire with his prisoner, Ptolemy VI. Neither man had any intention to fulfill his part of the bargain. Unfortunately, even modern day negotiations between nations can be characterized by the words of verse 27: “they shall speak lies at one table!” But in the end, the “agreements” fell apart. As we shall see, the schemes of Antiochus “toward the south” (v. 29) would be stopped by the Romans who had their own plans for Egypt. Then greedy Antiochus turned his eye toward his own land, and the riches of the temple in Jerusalem.

Like the Antichrist described in Daniel 9:26b-27, Antiochus confirmed covenants (treaties and leagues) that he had no intention of keeping. Like Antiochus “Epimanes” the Madman, the Antichrist will seek more and more power; he will try to dominate the entire world. We’ve seen this pattern in modern times.

We Can Be Confident: When the nations are shaken, because we know that the Most High God reigns. v.29

²⁹ At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.

The phrase “the time appointed” in verses 27-29 gives us fuel for our faith. We will not be moved nor shaken, for we know the One who has appointed all these events. In verse 21, a “vile person” shall stand up and shall come in peaceably – and he did, at first. But in verses 22-25, he shall win military victories; he shall deceive; he shall come up and he shall be strong; he shall invade prosperous places; he shall stir himself up to invade Egypt – and Antiochus did. And in verses 25-26, the Egyptians shall not stand before him and many shall be slain – and it happened just as God prophesied. And verses 27-29 foretold that the kings shall do mischief and shall speak lies at one table and shall not prosper – and it all came true. And tragically in verse 29, the heart of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (the madman Epimanes) shall turn against Jerusalem, hoping to plunder its temple – and God’s Word was fulfilled then too. You can be confident that the Most High God reigns. But He did all of this to fulfill another prophecy: “**But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting**” (Micah 5:2) – and He did fulfill that prophecy. The Promised Lord, the Messiah, the Eternal God and Ruler of all, came to be born to a humble virgin who laid Him in a manger in Bethlehem. Then He lived a spotless life – as we should have done. But then He died a horrifying death – as a substitute for sinners like you and me. And He did so in order that “whoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!” (Romans 10:13). Will you place your confident faith in this Lord today? When the nations are shaking, His work is the real basis for your belief.

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ⁱ The Lord of hosts is God. See Isaiah 37:16; 48:2; 51:5; 54:5

ⁱⁱ In John 10:30, Jesus said, “I and my Father are one.” Fully understanding what He said as a claim that He is divine, John 10:31 states that the Jews took up stones to stone Him.

ⁱⁱⁱ Megan Willett-Wei, “These 15 Sci-Fi Books Actually Predicted the Future” Business Insider, November 8, 2018 accessed at <https://www.businessinsider.com/books-predicted-future-sci-fi-2018-11>

^{iv} Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Wikipedia, accessed at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus_IV_Epiphanes

^v Hans Volkmann, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Antiochus-IV-Epiphanes>

^{vi} John Joseph Collins and Adela Yarbro Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 64.

^{vii} John Walvoord, Daniel, the Key to Prophetic Revelation, Chicago: Moody Press, 1989, p.264

^{viii} The Heritage Foundation, A Sampling of Recent Election Fraud Cases from across the United States, accessed at <https://www.heritage.org/voterfraud>

^{ix} See analysis by the Hoover Institution, February 3, 2021 accessed at <https://www.hoover.org/research/no-evidence-voter-fraud-guide-statistical-claims-about-2020-election>

^x Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 380. Walvoord and Calvin hold this view. Stephen Miller expresses the opinion that it refers to the Egyptian ruler, but maintains that no one can be sure.