

# DANIEL 11:1-35

## HISTORICAL COMMENTARY

By Clyde E. Billington, Ph.D.

The blue portions below are the Biblical text, and the black portions are my historical notes and commentaries. The Biblical portions below in blue are mainly taken from the NIV translation, but I have made several minor retranslations of a few verses for historical clarity.

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An angel is speaking to Daniel:

1. *In the first year of Darius the Mede (539 BC), I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him.*

Darius the Mede (Gobyras), the father-in-law of Cyrus the Great, only ruled as a sub-king over the great province of Babylon, and he never ruled the entire Persian Empire. It should be noted that Daniel 9:1 states that Darius the Mede “was made ruler over the Kingdom of Babylon.” The first year of Darius the Mede is also the first year of Cyrus the Great’s rule over his newly established Persian Empire in 539 BC.

2. *And now I will tell you the truth. Behold three more kings are going to arise in Persia.* Three Persian kings arose after the reign of Cyrus the Great who was killed in battle in 530 BC. The three kings were: Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis, and Darius the Great. *And then a fourth king will arise (Xerxes ruled 486-465 BC) who will gain more riches than all of them, and as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole (Persian) Empire against the realm of Greece*

(Hebrew “Javan”). (Note that there is almost a 150-year gap between verses Dan. 11:2 and 11:3).

3. ***A mighty king*** (Alexander the Great) ***will arise*** (and defeat the Persian Empire), ***and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases.***

4. ***But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up*** (Alexander died young at the age of 32 in 323 BC), ***and it will not be given to his own descendants*** (Alexander’s son, wife, and brother will all be murdered). ***It will be parceled out to the four points of the compass, but*** (the four Greek families who will split up Alexander’s empire) ***will not rule with the same great authority that he wielded. His*** (Alexander the Great’s) ***sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others*** (i.e. to four Greek families: the Antigonids in Macedonia and Greece; the Attalids in Asia Minor; the Seleucids in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Iran; and the Ptolemies in Egypt).

5. ***Then the King*** (Ptolemy I 322-283 BC) ***of the South*** (Egypt) ***will grow strong. But one of his generals*** (Seleucus I) ***will become stronger than he is and will rule his own larger kingdom.***

General Seleucus I (312-280 BC) will double-cross his boss Ptolemy I and seize his own kingdom in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Iran. Seleucus I’s kingdom will be the largest of the four kingdoms which arose out of the massive territories conquered by Alexander the Great.

6. ***After some years*** (Ptolemy II 283-246 BC and Antiochus II 261- 246 BC) ***will form an alliance, and the daughter*** (Berenice) ***of the King of the South*** (Ptolemy II) ***will be sent to be the wife of the King of the North*** (Antiochus II). As a part of this diplomatic deal Antiochus II agrees to divorce his first wife Laodice and remove her son as heir to the throne, and Bernice’s baby son was to be the heir when he was born. ***But she*** (new Queen Berenice) ***will not retain her position of power, nor will he*** (Antiochus II) ***remain in power. She*** (Queen

Berenice) *will be handed over to* (Antiochus II's first wife Queen Laodice) *to be killed along with her royal escort* (Egyptian servants who came to Antioch with Berenice) *and her father* (Ptolemy II 284-246 BC, whom Laodice had poisoned), *and the one* (Antiochus II's prime minister) *who made the diplomatic deal* (which brought Berenice to Antioch), *they will all be killed.*

Berenice's father Ptolemy II was poisoned by Egyptian officials whom Laodice had bribed. When Ptolemy II died, Antiochus II violated his treaty and renamed Laodice as his queen and again made her son Seleucus II his heir. As soon as she was reinstated as queen and her son was made heir, Laodice killed her husband Antiochus II, his prime minister, Queen Berenice, Berenice's young son, and all of Berenice's Egyptian servants.

7. *One of her family line* (Berenice's brother King Ptolemy III 246-223 BC) *will arise to take his* (Ptolemy II's) *place* (and he will come to the throne of Egypt seeking revenge for the murders of his father, sister, and young nephew). *He will attack the army of the King of the North* (Laodice's son King Seleucus II 246-226 BC), *and he will* (defeat him and) *enter his* (Seleucus II's) *fortified palace* (in Antioch). (Laodice and Seleucus II will escape capture by fleeing from Antioch). *He* (Ptolemy III) *will fight* (a later battle against Seleucus II and Laodice) *and again be victorious.*

8. (When he conquers Antioch), *he* (Ptolemy III) *will also seize their gods* (statues of the gods of Seleucus II and Laodice), *their metal images, and their valuable articles of gold, silver, and he* (Ptolemy III) *will then carry his booty away to Egypt, but he will refrain from attacking the King* (Seleucus II) *of the North for a number of years.*

9. *Then the King* (the now-grown-up Seleucus II) *of the North will attack* (Egypt in 235 BC) *and invade into the realm of the King* (Ptolemy III) *of the South, but* (his attack will not accomplish much and) *he will return to his own kingdom* (without conquering Egypt).

**10. *However, his* (Seleucus II's) *sons* (Seleucus III 226-223 BC and Antiochus III 223-187 BC) *will mobilize and assemble a huge army, which will sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his* (Ptolemy IV's) *fortress.***

Seleucus III and Antiochus III ruled jointly for 3 years, and they jointly planned to invade Egypt. However, Seleucus III died unexpectedly in 223 BC. About 6 years later, Antiochus III will attack Egypt going south through Israel. He even attacks as far south as the fortress city of Pelusium in the northeastern area of the Egyptian Delta. The new Pharaoh of Egypt is now Ptolemy IV).

**11. *The King of the South* (Ptolemy IV 221-204 BC) *will be enraged and will go out to fight with the King of the North* (Antiochus III). (Ptolemy IV will raise a huge army by training Egyptians to fight like the Greeks). *The king of the North* (Antiochus III) *will also raise a huge army, but* (Antiochus III) *will be defeated by the King of the South* (Ptolemy IV won the Battle of Raphia in 217 BC near Gaza in southern Israel).**

Ptolemy IV's training of native Egyptians to fight like Greek soldiers will prove to be a huge mistake because these Egyptian troops had defeated Greek troops in battle, and as a result they feel empowered to rebel and to seek freedom from the rule of the Ptolemies who were Greeks. For several decades, the Ptolemies will be weakened by having to fight against revolting Egyptian guerillas.

**12. *When the army* (of Antiochus III), *is defeated the King of the South* (Ptolemy IV) *will be filled with pride and will kill tens of thousands* (of the troops of Antiochus III), *yet he will not remain triumphant* (in the end).**

**13. *For the King* (Antiochus III) *of the North will again raise another army, even larger than before, and after an interval of some years* (and after Ptolemy IV has died), *he will attack with a large well-equipped***

**army** (and he will defeat the young King Ptolemy V of the South in 201 BC at the Battle of Panium in northern Israel).

**14. *In those times many*** (Egyptian officials, and Ptolemy V's brother and sister) ***will revolt against the king of the South. Those who are violent among your own people will also rebel because of a*** (false) ***prophecy*** (of freedom from foreign rule), ***but without success.***

After his victory at the Battle of Panium in 201 BC, Antiochus III will move south and take all of Israel and Lebanon away from the Ptolemies. At that time, the Greeks called Israel and Lebanon "Coele-Syria."

**15. *Then the king of the North will attack south and build up siege ramps and will capture the fortified city*** (of Pelusium in the northeastern Delta area of Egypt). ***The forces of the South will be powerless to resist; even their best troops will not have the strength to stand.***

After his victory in 201 BC at Panium, later named Caesarea Philippi, the King of the North (Antiochus III) will capture Israel and Lebanon and come south out of Israel to attack Egypt. Using siege ramps, he will capture the well-fortified Egyptian city of Pelusium in the northeastern Delta which was the key to attacking all the rest of Egypt. The military forces of the young King Ptolemy V of the South (Egypt) will not be able to stand against the large and well-equipped army of Antiochus III; not even his best (Greek mercenaries) troops will be sufficient to turn the tide of battle.

**16. *The invader*** (Antiochus III) ***will do as he pleases*** (in Egypt); ***no one will be able to stand against him. He will also establish himself in the Beautiful Land*** (of Israel) ***and will have the power to destroy it.***

**17. *He*** (Antiochus III) ***will threaten to come with the might of his entire kingdom against Egypt, but*** (because of his dominant position of power) ***he will win*** (Egypt by not so much by fighting but) ***by forcing***

*the King of the South (Ptolemy V) into making an alliance (of subservience) with him. He (Antiochus III) will give him a daughter (Cleopatra II) in marriage (to Ptolemy V) in order to control the kingdom of Egypt, but his plans will not succeed or help him.*

Threatening to use all the power of his entire Kingdom in a massive attack on Egypt, Antiochus III will propose a peace treaty of subservience to Ptolemy V. In order to seal this treaty of subservience, Antiochus III will give his daughter Cleopatra II to be the wife of the young Ptolemy V. Ptolemy V is to be a sub-king under Antiochus III. Antiochus III intends for his daughter Cleopatra II to control her husband Ptolemy V and Egypt, but she will eventually take the side of her husband against her father. Thinking that he now has Egypt under control, Antiochus III decides to try to conquer the other two major parts of the old empire of Alexander the Great, the Kingdom of the Antigonids in Macedonia and Greece, and the Kingdom of the Attalids in Asia Minor. He also begins to call himself “the Great.” As a result of Antiochus III’s attacks in western Asia Minor, the Attalids will appeal to Rome for help and their joined armies will fight against Antiochus III.

*18. Then he (Antiochus III) will turn his attention to the coastal lands (of Asia Minor and Greece) and will conquer many of them, but a (Roman) general will put an end to his insolence and will turn his insolence back on him.*

When Antiochus III attacks western Asia Minor, the Attalid king appeals to Rome for help. The Roman general Scipio Asiaticus will defeat Antiochus III in the massive Battle of Magnesia in 190 BC in western Asia Minor, and will end his arrogant contempt for Scipio and for Rome’s military power.

*19. After this, he (Antiochus III) will turn back toward the fortresses of his own country (today the areas of Syria, Iraq, and Iran), but he will stumble and fall, to be seen no more.*

**Antiochus III was forced to agree to a humiliating treaty with Rome in which he was forced to pay a huge war fine, give up all of his land in eastern Asia Minor to the Kingdom of the Attalids, surrender his entire navy, and send a son, the future Antiochus IV, as a hostage to Rome. As a result, Antiochus III will return in total defeat to his capital of Antioch, and there he will die in 187 BC.**

**20. *His successor* (and son, Seleucus IV) *will send out a tax collector* (his Chancellor/ Prime Minister Heliodorus) *to maintain the royal splendor* (and to pay war reparations to Rome). *In a few years, however, he* (Seleucus IV) *will be destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle.***

**Antiochus III's son Seleucus IV (187-176 BC) will send his Prime Minister Heliodorus as an oppressive tax collector into Israel to collect taxes, and he will even attempt to rob the Jewish Temple. However, shortly after trying and failing to rob the Jewish Temple, Heliodorus will return to Antioch and poison Seleucus IV.**

**21. *He* (Seleucus IV) *will be succeeded by a contemptible person* (his brother Antiochus IV Epiphanes) *who had not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the* (Seleucid) *kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue.***

**With a relatively small army provided by the Kingdom of the Attalids, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (176-164 BC) will defeat Prime Minister Heliodorus in battle and kill him. Heliodorus was ruling the Seleucid Empire in the name of Seleucus IV's young son. However, since Antiochus IV then only had a relatively small army, he could not hope to take the well-fortified city of Antioch by force of arms. However, because of his use of flattery and bribes, Seleucid government officials and the widowed wife of his brother Seleucus IV will allow him entrance into the city of Antioch. To gain admittance into Antioch, Antiochus IV agreed to marry his brother's widowed wife and to adopt her son, for whom he was supposed to rule until the boy came of age.**

**The right to the Seleucid throne did not belong to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, but rather it belonged to his young nephew and adopted son for whom he was supposedly ruling. After marrying his brother Seleucus IV's widowed wife, Antiochus IV Epiphanes eventually murdered her son who was the true heir, and he seized the throne to the Seleucid Empire for himself.**

***22. Then an overwhelming (Egyptian) army (sent by Ptolemy VI) will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant (the Jewish High Priest Onias III) will be destroyed.***

**Thinking that the Kingdom of the Seleucids was then weak, Ptolemy VI of Egypt (181-145 BC) attacked with a huge army in 170 BC. However, because of spies, Antiochus IV Epiphanes knows the military plans of Ptolemy VI, and he will set a trap and crush his huge Egyptian army. At that same time in 170 BC, a Prince of the Covenant (the High Priest Onias III) will be murdered while in exile in the city of Antioch.**

***23. After earlier making an agreement with him (Onias IV), (Antiochus IV, 176-164 BC) will act deceitfully, and with only a few people (heretical Jews in Jerusalem) he will assume power (in Jerusalem and Judea).***

**After earlier agreeing to retain Onias III as High Priest, Antiochus IV Epiphanes had removed him, and made an alliance with compromising, heretical Jewish leaders whom he placed in power over the Jews. Antiochus IV founded a branch of his new, pagan, Antiochene Republic in Jerusalem, and he expected Jews to become citizens and worship idols. Antiochus IV, who had earlier lived in Rome as a hostage, had come to the conclusion that the only way that the Seleucid Empire could compete with Rome was to become a Republic like Rome then was. He thus founded what he called his "Antiochene Republic."**

***24. When his (Antiochus IV Epiphanes's) richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will do what neither his fathers nor his***



*forefathers did. He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his own (Antiochene) citizens. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses—but only for a time.*

Because he needed money badly, Antiochus IV Epiphanes will do something that his royal ancestors had never done before, he will enter and loot some of the richest cities and temples in the eastern half of his own kingdom. These cities and temples had refused to join his new Antiochene Republic, and thus he treats them as his enemies. He will distribute the plunder, booty, and possessions from these cities and temples to his army and to the new loyal citizens in his Antiochene Republic. He will then make plans to attack the fortifications of his primary enemy—who was also his nephew— King Ptolemy VI, 180-164 BC) in Egypt.

25. *“With a large army, (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South (Ptolemy VI 170-145 BC). The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him (by Egyptian officials Eulaeus and Lenaeus, his sister-wife Cleopatra II, and also his brother, the future Ptolemy VIII).*

26. *Those who eat from the king’s provisions (two powerful political Egyptian officials named Eulaeus and Lenaeus who eat Ptolemy VI’s choice food will plot against him, and) will try to destroy him, and his army will be swept away (by Antiochus IV), and many will fall in battle. (Eulaeus and Lenaeus, probably at the behest of Ptolemy VIII, will treasonously tell Antiochus IV of Ptolemy VI’s military plans).*

Antiochus IV Epiphanes moved his large army south to fight against King Ptolemy VI (170-145 BC) and set a trap for him. Ptolemy VI moved his own extremely large army north for war, but he was defeated by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in a surprise attack near the city of Gaza in 170 BC. Ptolemy VI was defeated largely because of the treasonous political plots against him led by his rebellious sister-wife

**Cleopatra II and his brother Ptolemy VIII, who revolted and seized control of the city of Alexandria.**

**27. (After Antiochus IV defeated Ptolemy VI in battle near Gaza, he invaded and looted much of Egypt in 170 BC), *the two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table* (to negotiate a treaty with one another) *and will lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time.***

**28. *The king of the North* (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) *will return to his own country* (Antioch in Syria) *with great wealth* (from looting Egypt), *but his heart will be set against the people of the holy covenant,* (Jews who will not become Antiochene citizens and worship Greek gods). *He will attack and kill them* (rebels in Judea and Jerusalem who had revolted during his war in Egypt), *and then he will return to his own country of Syria.***

**Antiochus IV Epiphanies will exploit the civil war between Ptolemy VI and his brother Ptolemy VIII and sister Cleopatra II. As a result, Antiochus IV will capture almost all of Egypt except for Alexandria. However, Antiochus IV Epiphanies' conquest and looting of Egypt will lead to the brothers Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy VIII—and their sister Cleopatra II-- temporarily settling their differences. While he is conquering all of Egypt except for Alexandria, Antiochus IV Epiphanies hears that the Jews have revolted in Jerusalem, and he was thus forced to return back north to Antioch with great riches from looting Egypt. Agents sent by the Ptolemies had told the Jews that Antiochus IV had been killed in battle, and thus some Jews revolted against his rule. However, while going back through Israel, his heart will be set against those rebelling pious Jews and their Holy Covenant. He will take military action and will kill thousands of Jewish rebels and innocent Jews. He then will return to Antioch.**

**29. *At the appointed time* (in 169 BC, Antiochus IV Epiphanes) *will invade the South (Egypt) again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before.***

**30. (Roman) *ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) will lose heart. Then he will turn back* (north) *and vent his fury against* (the Jews and their) *holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those* (heretical, Antiochene Jews) *who had forsaken the holy covenant.***

**Roman ships led by the Roman Senator Popillius Laenas) will appear at Alexandria during Antiochus IV's second invasion of Egypt, and will threaten him with war with Rome unless he immediately leaves Egypt. Antiochus IV Epiphanes will be intimidated and will leave Egypt and return home to Syria. But he was furious with pious Jews and will take military action against them and their Holy Covenant (i.e. the Old Testament) because he thinks that their revolt the year before cost him the conquest of Egypt in 170 BC. However, Antiochus IV Epiphanes will show favor to those Jews who forsake the Holy Covenant and who become citizens of his pagan Antiochene Republic.**

**31. *His* (Antiochus IV's) *armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation***

**His military power will prevail over the Jews, and his army and Antiochene Jews will in 168 BC pollute the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. He will end the daily sacrifices, and will set up the Abomination of Desolation in the Jewish Temple. His "Abomination of Desolation" was a pagan idol of the god Zeus which looked exactly like Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who claimed to be the god Zeus in the flesh. On some of his coins, Antiochus IV Epiphanes depicted himself looking exactly like the god Zeus. His nickname "Epiphanes" means "god manifested" in the flesh. Sacrifices, including pigs, were offered on the Jewish**

altar and religious prostitution was introduced into the Temple precinct.

**32. *With flattery, he (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) will corrupt those (Antiochene Jews) who have violated the covenant, but the people (the Hasmonean/ Maccabees, and their supporters) who know their God will firmly resist him.***

Using flattering words, Antiochus IV Epiphanies will convince many compromising Jews to adopt his pagan religion, and to act wickedly against the Holy Covenant. But pious Jews, under the Hasmonean priest Mattathias and his five sons, who know their God, will display strength and take action by making a very effective guerilla war against Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

**33. *Those (pious Jews) who are wise will instruct many, although for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered (by Antiochus IV Epiphanes).***

The pious Hasmonean Jews, who have spiritual insight, will instruct believing Jews and give them understanding that it is ok to fight on the Sabbath when they are attacked, but many believing Jews will be persecuted and killed by the sword for many days, and they will also suffer flames, captivity, and plunder.

**34. *When they fall, they will receive a little help (from Judas the Maccabee and his brothers), but (when they are victorious) many Jews who are not sincere will join them.***

**35. *Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.***

When the Jews are being attacked by Antiochus IV Epiphanies, faithful believing Jews will be granted a little help by Judas Maccabaeus and his brothers who are fighting against the armies of Antiochus IV

**Epiphanes. Antiochus IV Epiphanies will die in 164 BC, and Judas will retake Jerusalem that same year.**

**Judas will cleanse the Temple and reinstitute proper Jewish religious rituals; thus, celebrating the first Hanukkah festival. But the wars against the Seleucid Empire will continue, and Judas and two of his brothers will be killed in battle. Another brother will be treacherously slain by a later Seleucid king—a supposed friend—who was the nephew of Antiochus IV. Simon, the last brother of Judas the Maccabee, will be assassinated by his own wicked son-in-law who wanted to rule the Jews. Under Simon but mainly under his son John Hyrcanus, the Jews obtained their freedom from the Seleucid Empire.**

**The Jewish High Priest John Hyrcanus will attack the Edomites/ Idumeans in southern Israel in ca. 105 BC. The Edomites had earlier joined with the Seleucids in attacking and killing Jews. John Hyrcanus will defeat the Edomites/ Idumeans and begin to burn down all their cities in what-was-once southern Israel. The Edomites had seized southern Israel after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC to the Babylonians. When the Edomites beg for mercy, John Hyrcanus spares their lives but forces them to become Jews. Many former Antiochene citizens and insincere Idumean converts will eventually join themselves to the Hasmoneans. As a result, the great spirituality of the early Hasmoneans will be lost in later generations.**

**In 64 BC because of a civil war between two Hasmonean brothers, the Roman general Pompey the Great will take Jerusalem and make Israel into a Roman province.**

**THE FUTURE KING WHO WILL DO AS HE PLEASES**

**DANIEL 11:36-45**

**Daniel 11:36-45 deals with the Period of the End Times, and does not deal with the time period immediately after Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Hasmoneans/ Maccabees. “The King who does as he pleases” in 11:36 is unquestionably the future Antichrist, see Matt. 24:15. Hence there is a great gap in time between Daniel 11:35 and Daniel 11:36. Daniel 11:36-45 is all future prophecy which gives very detailed information about the great Antichrist who is yet to come.**

**Much like Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Antichrist will pollute a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem (see II Thes. 2:4 and Matt. 24:15) and will also try to kill all believing Jews who will not join his new idolatrous religion. His persecution of believing Jews (and also of believing Christian Gentiles) will be by far the greatest that God’s people have ever suffered.**

**The Antichrist will for a short time be very successful, but he and his followers will be destroyed by Christ at the end of the Great Tribulation. Contrary to preterist hermeneutics, there is nothing in Daniel 11: 36-40 which even comes close to matching the well-known history of the Jews in the period from the days of the Hasmoneans/ Maccabees until the appearance of Christ.**

***<sup>36</sup> The king who will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.***

***<sup>37</sup> He will show no regard for the gods of his ancestors or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all.***

***<sup>38</sup> Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his ancestors he will honor with gold and silver, and with precious stones and costly gifts.***

***<sup>39</sup> He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land to them as a reward.***

***<sup>40</sup> “At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood.***

***<sup>41</sup> He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand.***

***<sup>42</sup> He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape.***

***<sup>43</sup> He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and over all of the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Cushites in submission.***

***<sup>44</sup> But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many.***

***<sup>45</sup> He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.***