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MINISTRIES

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The Exiled Prophet, Part 13: Wars and Desolations (Daniel 11)

Welcome back to our study on the book of Daniel. In our last teaching, we covered Daniel chapter 10, where Daniel received a vision after three weeks of mourning. The angel who brought him the vision explained that he could not have done so without the aid of another angel, Michael. The vision took a hard physical toll on Daniel, and the angel strengthened him several times in order to get him through the experience. In this teaching, we’re going to cover Daniel chapter 11, which describes most of the vision that Daniel received. In chapter 11, Daniel learns about the new kingdom of Greece that is going to replace the kingdom of Persia. In particular, he learns much more about the Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes, and what he will do to Jerusalem.

Let’s start in verse 1:

Daniel 11:1

And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.

This first verse continues the train of thought from the end of chapter 10. In the last verse of chapter 10, the angel that appeared to Daniel said, *“there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince”* (Daniel 10:21). Here, at the beginning of chapter 11, this angel says that he had assisted Michael in the first year of Darius the Mede. This would have been two years earlier, which was when Persia conquered Babylon. The Persian king Cyrus released the Jews from captivity and allowed them to return to their land. Since Michael is the angel who protects Israel, it seems reasonable that Michael would have wanted Persia to conquer Babylon, so that they could set Israel free. It may be that these two angels had assisted the Persians in their conquest of Babylon.

While the Persians had initially been a great help to the Jews, at this point in Daniel’s life the Persians were actually preventing the Jews from building the temple. This is the time period described in Ezra chapter 4 (Ezra 4:1-5). So, while Michael may have fought with the Persians to help them conquer Babylon, now Michael is fighting against the Persians, because the Persians are now an obstacle for Israel.

With that being established, the angel explains that Israel will not always be fighting against Persia, but

they will have a new enemy in the future. The vision gives a long series of historical events that lead up to that new enemy. The first event is Persia attacking the kingdom of Greece:

Daniel 11:2

And now I will show you the truth. Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them. And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece.

We know from history that this “fourth king” was Xerxes I, who led a massive military campaign against the Greeks in 480 B.C. (Walvoord, John F., *Daniel*, edited by Charles H. Dyer & Philip E. Rawley (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012), p. 329). This campaign was a huge failure; even with all of their military might, the Persians could not successfully control the Greeks’ land. In the end, Xerxes was forced to retreat in disgrace, but the Greeks never forgot about how the Persians tried to conquer them.

From this point in verse 2, we jump forward about a hundred and fifty years to get to the events of the next verse:

Daniel 11:3-4

Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills. And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these.

These verses are referring to Alexander the Great, the Greek king who attacked and conquered the Persian empire. We talked about Alexander when we covered Daniel 8—he was described as a great horn on a goat that flew in from the west and trampled the Persians (Daniel 8:5-7, 20-21). Alexander did indeed “rule with great dominion” and “do as he wills.” However, in 323 B.C., not long after he conquered Persia, Alexander died. He was only in his early thirties, and he had no heir (Philip Freeman, *Alexander the Great* [New York: Simon & Schuster 2011] p. 267). Consequently, four of Alexander’s generals ended up dividing his kingdom among themselves (Philip Freeman, *Alexander the Great* [New York: Simon & Schuster 2011] p. 269). This division of the kingdom was also described in chapter 8—the goat’s “great horn” was broken, and four new horns grew in its place, representing these four Greek generals and the four kingdoms they established (Daniel 8:8). All of these features are described here in verses 3 and 4 as well. As soon as Alexander rose to power, his kingdom was broken. It did not go to his posterity, but was divided among four other people.

As we go into the next few verses, there is some additional history that we need to know. One of the four Greek kingdoms that arose after Alexander’s death was known as the Seleucid (pronounced “seh-LOO-kid”) kingdom. The Seleucids’ capital was the city of Antioch, which is located in modern day Syria, north of Israel. Another one of the four kingdoms became known as the Ptolemaic (pronounced “TALL-uh-may-ick”) kingdom. The Ptolemies were based in the city of Alexandria, which is in Egypt, south of Israel. Israel is the main focus of this vision, and so these nations are named according to where they were located relative to the land of Israel. Throughout the rest of this vision, the Seleucid kingdom will be called, “the north,” and the Ptolemaic kingdom will be called, “the south.”

After verse 4, the vision moves forward another seventy years, when the king of “the south” tries to make an alliance with the king of “the north.” However, this alliance does not go as planned:

Daniel 11:5-6

Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he and shall rule, and his authority shall be a great authority. After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement. But she shall not retain the strength of her arm, and he and his arm shall not endure, but she shall be given up, and her attendants, he who fathered her, and he who supported her in those times.

We know from history exactly who these kings were. The king of the south was king Ptolemy II. He gave his daughter to king Antiochus II of the Seleucid kingdom in hopes of making a lasting alliance between them. However, just like the vision says, this alliance did not last. Antiochus ended up divorcing Ptolemy's daughter, and eventually, both she and her only son were killed (Justinus, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* 27.1; Appian, *The Syrian Wars* 11.65). This is how the daughter of Ptolemy did not “[retain the strength of her arm](#).” So, this attempt to form an alliance between the north and the south was a complete failure.

What happened after that failure? The vision explains:

Daniel 11:7-9

[And from a branch from her roots one shall arise in his place. He shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall deal with them and shall prevail. He shall also carry off to Egypt their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold, and for some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north. Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return to his own land.](#)

After Ptolemy II died, he was succeeded by his son, Ptolemy III. He is called a “[branch from her roots](#),” because he was the brother of the woman who was married off to make the alliance with the north. Since the alliance involving his sister had failed, Ptolemy III attacked the Seleucid kingdom, and captured many people and precious vessels, which he took back to Egypt with him (Adoulis Inscription (OGIS 54); Justinus, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* 27.2). Again, everything transpired exactly as this vision says. After Ptolemy's victory, the conflict between the north and south subsided for a little while, but as the vision explains, these two kingdoms would go on to fight for generations:

Daniel 11:10-13

[His sons shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall keep coming and overflow and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress. Then the king of the south, moved with rage, shall come out and fight against the king of the north. And he shall raise a great multitude, but it shall be given into his hand. And when the multitude is taken away, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail. For the king of the north shall again raise a multitude, greater than the first. And after some years he shall come on with a great army and abundant supplies.](#)

There is a lot going on in these verses, but once again, it all lines up with history. The Seleucid king Antiochus III marched his army into the Ptolemies' territory and tried to intimidate them into giving him land and power (Polybius, *Histories* 5.66-68). This did move the Ptolemies with rage, and in 217 B.C., Ptolemy IV attacked Antiochus in Gaza and defeated him (Raphia Decree (TM 2985); Polybius, *Histories* 5.86). However, after Ptolemy IV died, Antiochus raised up another army and started to conquer territory for the Seleucids once again.

Let's pause for a moment and reflect on everything Daniel has seen in this vision so far. First, the Persians attack Greece; then, Greece conquers the Persians; then, Greece divides into four smaller kingdoms, including the "north" and the "south," and these kingdoms fight with each other for many years. We might ask: why is any of this important to Daniel? Remember, Daniel is concerned with his people, Israel, and their city, Jerusalem (Daniel 9:19). So far, neither Israel nor Jerusalem have been mentioned in this vision. However, they will be included in this vision very soon. Jerusalem was located directly between the kingdoms of the "north" and the "south," and it was only a matter of time before this conflict would involve Israel too. We're about to see how they got involved, and what happened to them as a result. Let's continue.

Daniel 11:14-16

In those times many shall rise against the king of the south, and the violent among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they shall fail. Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siegeworks and take a well-fortified city. And the forces of the south shall not stand, or even his best troops, for there shall be no strength to stand. But he who comes against him shall do as he wills, and none shall stand before him. And he shall stand in the glorious land, with destruction in his hand.

In 200 B.C., Antiochus III successfully captured the city of Sidon, which was renowned for being very well-fortified and difficult to capture. This was the "well-fortified city" mentioned in verse 15. After that, Antiochus soundly defeated the Ptolemies at the Battle of Panium, which granted him control over Gaza (Polybius, *Histories* 16.18). Gaza is part of the land of Canaan (Genesis 10:19; Judges 1:18), so Antiochus did indeed "stand in the glorious land," as it says in verse 16.

One thing that is a bit of a mystery is what it means in verse 14 when it says, "the violent among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision." It is not clear what vision is being spoken of here, or how these violent Jews were attempting to fulfill it. The historian Josephus records that the Jews welcomed Antiochus and supported his army with provisions while he was fighting against the Ptolemies (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 12.3.3), but there is no mention of these Jews being violent, or of them having a vision. Perhaps historical details will emerge at some point that will clarify this part of the prophecy. But, aside from that, we can find all of the details of verses 14-16 in the historical records that describe Antiochus III. Daniel's vision continues to detail the acts of this same man:

Daniel 11:17-19

He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them. He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom, but it shall not stand or be to his advantage. Afterward he shall turn his face to the coastlands and shall capture many of them, but a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him. Then he shall turn his face back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found.

This part sounds complicated, but the historical record makes it much more clear. In 197 B.C., Antiochus made a treaty by marrying his daughter to Ptolemy V (Appian, *The Syrian Wars* 5). This treaty temporarily ended the war in the south, so Antiochus moved his armies northwest and tried to conquer the coastland that we today know as the country of Greece (Appian, *The Syrian Wars* 6-7). However, the Roman commander Glabrio intervened and stopped him in his tracks, putting "an end to his insolence" (Appian, *The Syrian Wars* 17-20; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 19), as it says in verse 18. In 190 B.C., Rome defeated Antiochus at the battle of Magnesia, and after that Antiochus withdrew all

of his forces from the west (Appian, *The Syrian Wars* 28-39, 44; Polybius, *Histories* 21.16-17). Still desiring to conquer something, Antiochus attacked cities in the east, but he was killed attempting to rob a temple in the land of Elam (Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 29.15). This is how he stumbled and fell, and was not found, as it says in verse 19.

We now arrive at events that significantly affect Israel. Antiochus III had his conquest interrupted—the Ptolemies stopped him in the south, the Romans stopped him in the west, and he died at the hands of the Elamites in the east. However, he had managed to take control of the land of Judea. When his son, Seleucus IV took the throne, he tried to squeeze extra resources out of Israel, which we read about in the next few verses:

Daniel 11:20-21

Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute for the glory of the kingdom. But within a few days he shall be broken, neither in anger nor in battle. In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given. He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

Seleucus IV owed massive sums of money to Rome (see Polybius, *Histories* 21:17), and he attempted to pay that back by taking some of the treasures from the temple in Jerusalem (see 2 Maccabees 3:7). This is how he was an “exactor of tribute.” Seleucus was eventually assassinated, and the throne officially passed to his younger son, who was only a child at the time (Dov Gera, *Judaea and Mediterranean Politics: 219 to 161 B.C.E.* [Leiden: Brill 1998], p. 110). This child was himself assassinated not long afterward (Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* XXX 7.2). After these two assassinations, the throne just so happened to fall into the hands of Seleucus’s brother, Antiochus IV (2 Maccabees 4:7; Appian, *The Syrian Wars* 45). Antiochus IV was the youngest son of Antiochus III. He was the “contemptible person” with no “royal majesty” who obtained the kingdom “by flatteries”—that is to say, he wasn’t ever supposed to be the king. Antiochus gave himself the title “Epiphanes,” which means, “manifestation of God.” Once he gained power, this arrogant man lost no time in causing mayhem and destruction.

Daniel 11:22

Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, even the prince of the covenant.

The Hebrew word for “armies” here is *zeroa*, which literally means an “arm,” as in, the part of the body (cf. Numbers 6:19; Deuteronomy 18:3; Judges 15:14; 2 Samuel 1:10; 2 Kings 9:24). Metaphorically, this term frequently refers to strength (cf. Exodus 6:6; Job 22:8; Psalm 44:3; Jeremiah 17:5; Ezekiel 22:6). While armies are strong, the word *zeroa* almost never refers to an army, so it seems more likely that this passage is referring to “strengths,” or, “strong opponents of Antiochus” being utterly swept away and broken, rather than military forces. Historically, one of Antiochus’s strong opponents who was swept away and broken was a Judean, the high priest Onias (2 Maccabees 4:7-8). Antiochus wanted his whole kingdom to be Hellenized, which means to follow Greek customs and worship Greek gods. Onias, however, did not want the Jews to be Hellenized, because he was faithful to YHWH (cf. 2 Maccabees 3:1), and YHWH commands his people not to bow down to the gods of other nations (cf. Exodus 20:3-6; 23:23-24; Deuteronomy 4:19; Joshua 23:16). Onias was falsely accused and then banished from Israel by a group of corrupt priests who supported Antiochus, and he was eventually assassinated in 171 B.C. (2 Maccabees 4:34). Onias may well be the “prince of the covenant” mentioned in verse 22, because he led Israel in obedience to God’s covenant. Once Onias was gone, the people didn’t have a strong leader who could stand against the influence of the Greeks (see Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 12.5.1). After he was killed, things quickly deteriorated in Jerusalem. It was around that time that Antiochus resumed

his father's war against the Ptolemies and invaded Egypt, which is described in the next few verses:

Daniel 11:23-28

And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully, and he shall become strong with a small people. Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province, and he shall do what neither his fathers nor his fathers' fathers have done, scattering among them plunder, spoil, and goods. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time. And he shall stir up his power and his heart against the king of the south with a great army. And the king of the south shall wage war with an exceedingly great and mighty army, but he shall not stand, for plots shall be devised against him. Even those who eat his food shall break him. His army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. And as for the two kings, their hearts shall be bent on doing evil. They shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for the end is yet to be at the time appointed. And he shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. And he shall work his will and return to his own land.

There's a lot happening here, but once again, the historical record backs up every detail. In 169 B.C., Antiochus made a truce with the city of Pelusium, which was on the border of Egypt. However, the truce was a trick, and he attacked and conquered the city while their guard was down (Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 30.18). This was how he “act[ed] deceitfully” after he had made “an alliance.” His conquest was very successful—the armies of Ptolemy were simply no match for his (1 Maccabees 1:16-19). Antiochus scattered “plunder, spoil, and goods,” attempting to pay off many foreign leaders so that they would not try to recapture the parts of Egypt that he had just conquered (Polybius *Histories* 28.20, 22). These leaders accepted his money and agreed to his terms (Livy, *The Founding of the City* 44.19). Ptolemy VI also agreed to his terms, even though they were not good terms for him or his kingdom. Historians believe he was given bad counsel from his advisors, so that is how “even those who eat his food” managed to break him (Polybius *Histories* 28.21). Once he realized that he had gotten a bad deal, Ptolemy violated the terms he had agreed to just a few months later, so both kings were “speak[ing] lies at the same table” (Polybius *Histories* 29.23-25; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 20.25). Of course, Antiochus did not know that Ptolemy was going to back out of their truce, so before that happened, he had pulled his armies out of Egypt and went back home to the north, “return[ing] to his own land” (Polybius *Histories* 28.18-21; 1 Maccabees 1:24). On his way home, he stopped by Jerusalem. The Jews were overdue to pay their tribute to the Seleucids, so Antiochus intended to collect that tribute while he was in the area. The high priest at that time was highly corrupt, and he paid Antiochus with some of the golden temple vessels, so Antiochus did indeed “return to his land with great wealth,” and he also participated in violating “the holy covenant” (see 1 Maccabees 1:20-23; 2 Maccabees 4:27-32). Again, every detail of these verses lines up with the historical record.

Let's pause for a bit, and think about how the events of this vision are affecting Israel. The perpetual war between the Seleucids and Ptolemies put a lot of pressure on the Jews. When it looked like Antiochus was going to win, the leadership in Israel tried to curry favor with him (see 1 Maccabees 1:11-15). But in so doing, they threw away the things that make them God's special people. They turned away from the customs of their fathers, from the law of God. They started following foreign customs and serving foreign gods. They even removed the holy vessels from YHWH's temple and gave them away as tribute payments. At the rate they were going, Jerusalem would soon be nothing more than another Greek city. The Jews would be just another conquered people who served the Greek gods, not the treasured possession of YHWH like they were supposed to be. All of that is quite bad enough, but things are about to get even worse for them. When Antiochus found out that Ptolemy had broken their agreement, he returned to Egypt with yet another army (Polybius, *Histories* 29.26), but things didn't go quite as he had hoped:

Daniel 11:29-30

At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before. For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant.

In 168 B.C., before Antiochus could reach the Ptolemies' capital city, he was intercepted by a Roman commander, who had brought his army to Egypt on ships. These ships, on their way from Italy, would have passed by the island of Cyprus, which in Hebrew was called *Kittim* (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.6.1). The commander told Antiochus that he was not allowed to attack Egypt (Polybius, *Histories* 29.27). Antiochus did not want to pick a fight with the Romans, so he turned his army around, and on his way back home, he stopped by Jerusalem once again (1 Maccabees 1:29-30). This time, though, he was in a very bad mood because of how the Romans had humiliated him (see 2 Maccabees 5:11). When he saw Jews who refused to be Hellenized, he was filled with rage, and he defiled the temple and brutally persecuted everyone who honored YHWH:

Daniel 11:31

Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

These events are described, in even more horrible detail, in the book of 1 Maccabees. Here is what it says:

1 Maccabees 1:54-61

Now on the fifteenth day of Chislew, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege upon the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding cities of Judah, and burned incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. The books of the law which they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of any one, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death. They kept using violence against Israel, against those found month after month in the cities. And on the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar which was upon the altar of burnt offering. According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks.

1 Maccabees describes the many horrors that took place during this persecution, but Daniel's vision focuses primarily on what happened to the temple. Daniel's "[abomination that makes desolate](#)" is called a "desolating sacrilege" in 1 Maccabees. This sacrilege was an idol, probably a statue of the Greek god Zeus (2 Maccabees 6:1-2). This abomination defiled the temple, and the priests could not offer burnt offerings to YHWH there anymore. Daniel 8 mentions this same abomination:

Daniel 8:13-14

Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the [transgression that makes desolate](#), and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?" And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."

Here, we see the phrase "[transgression that makes desolate](#)," or in Hebrew, *hapesha' shomem*. This is slightly different from the wording in Daniel 11, which is, "[abomination that makes desolate](#)" or

hashiqqutz meshomem. In our teaching on chapter 8, we discussed all of the reasons that this passage in Daniel 8 was referring to the actions of Antiochus IV, so it seems clear that the “[abomination that makes desolate](#)” and the “[transgression that makes desolate](#)” are one and the same. Yet another phrase that describes this item is “desolating sacrilege,” the idol mentioned in 1 Maccabees. 1 Maccabees was written in Greek, and the Greek phrase translated “desolating sacrilege” is *bdelugma eremoseos*. This is the same Greek phrase used by Yeshua in Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:15-16

So when you see the **abomination of desolation** [*bdelugma tes eremoseos*] spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Again, the Greek phrase used here in Matthew is the same phrase used in 1 Maccabees 1:54, which itself refers to the “[abomination that makes desolate](#)” from Daniel 11:31 and the “[transgression that makes desolate](#)” from Daniel 8:13. All of these phrases are referring to the same thing: the idol that Antiochus set up in the temple. Of course, Christ’s words in Matthew warn his disciples of another idol that would come later, but that is a topic for another time.

Getting back to the vision in Daniel, after Antiochus set up the abomination of desolation, here’s what happened next:

Daniel 11:32-35

He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery, and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.

The phrase “[seduce with flattery](#)” here can be a bit misleading; the Hebrew word translated “flattery” here is most often associated with traitors, not flatterers (see Psalm 35:6; Jeremiah 23:12; 4Q169 fragment 3, line 2; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 13.13.5-13.14.1). As we read in 1 Maccabees, Antiochus relentlessly persecuted the Jews, forbidding them to practice any part of their religion. Some Jews obeyed Antiochus, even though this meant betraying God and their own people; these were the ones who were seduced with flattery, or perhaps more accurately, who turned traitor. Some Jews refused to compromise their faith and were killed; these were the ones who stumbled. One group of Jews, who came to be known as the Maccabees, fled into the hills and formed an armed resistance—these were the ones who stood “[firm and took action](#).” Even though they were vastly outnumbered and undersupplied, these rebels miraculously managed to defeat Antiochus’s army on several occasions. They eventually forced the Greeks to completely retreat from Judea.

While the righteous Jews were ultimately victorious, many of them died as they resisted the Greek persecution. As we mentioned, these are the ones who “[stumble\[d\] by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder](#).” The word for “stumble” here is the same word used to describe the death of Antiochus III back in verse 19, where it says, “[but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found](#).” So, some of those who are wise and stand firm will end up dying. However, the vision says that these wise ones who were killed would be “[refined, purified, and made white](#).” What does it mean by this?

Well, in the last part of Daniel’s vision, he is told about a coming resurrection of the dead. Here is how

that resurrection is described:

Daniel 12:2-3

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

In the resurrection, those who are “wise” will awake to everlasting life. These same wise ones are further described in verse 10:

Daniel 12:10

Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.

So, the “wise” who are resurrected to eternal life are the same ones who are purified, refined, and made white. These are the same as the wise ones who “stumbled” and were killed as they resisted the persecution and corruption of Antiochus in Daniel chapter 11. So, this vision is telling us that those Jews who were righteous and zealous for God’s law would be rewarded for their faithfulness. Even if they did not survive their fight against the Greeks, God would reward them in the resurrection. We see this hope of resurrection expressed in a passage from 2 Maccabees. These were the words of a Jewish mother to her son who was about to be put to death for his faith. She said:

2 Maccabees 7:29

Do not be afraid of this executioner, but be worthy of your brothers and accept death, so that in the time of mercy I may receive you again with your brothers.

While those who were persecuted and killed at this time did hope for resurrection, Daniel tells us that the resurrection would not happen right away; it “still awaits the appointed time.” We will discuss that time in much more detail when we cover the end of this vision in Daniel chapter 12. For now, let’s continue with the events of chapter 11.

Daniel 11:36-39

And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.

At this point, the vision stops describing events in chronological order, and starts giving a synopsis of the abhorrent things that Antiochus would do over the course of his life. It says that Antiochus would “magnify himself above all.” As we mentioned before, Antiochus called himself “Epiphanes,” meaning, “manifestation of God,” and he was the first Seleucid king to depict himself as a god on the coins that bore his image (Nicholas L. Wright, “Seleucid Royal Cult, Indigenous Religious Traditions, And Radiate Crowns: The Numismatic Evidence”, Mediterranean Archaeology Vol. 18 [2005], pp. 72-74). He certainly did “magnify himself above all,” especially above YHWH, whose temple he desecrated and

whose people he tried to destroy. He also performed some unprecedented and bizarre religious rituals, including holding a “wedding” in which he “married” a Persian goddess (Nicholas L. Wright, “Seleucid Royal Cult, Indigenous Religious Traditions, And Radiate Crowns: The Numismatic Evidence”, *Mediterranean Archaeology* Vol. 18 [2005], p. 77). This may be the way he honored a god with costly gifts that his fathers did not know. When it says he would “[divide the land for a price](#),” many people take this to mean that he sold off pieces of his kingdom, but actually he did the opposite: Antiochus paid others in order to solidify his control over the various divisions of his kingdom. Throughout this vision, Antiochus has been described as someone who buys influence and distributes wealth among his friends, and this is how he is known in other historical sources also (e.g., Polybius *Histories* 26; 28.20, 22; 1 Maccabees 3:30). Just like so much else in this vision, the details in these verses are corroborated by other sources of history.

Now we arrive at the most controversial part of the vision. Everything we have covered so far lines up with other historical sources almost to a “T.” But this next part contains details that some say do not line up with history. Let’s read through it and then discuss the supposed discrepancies.

Daniel 11:40-45

[At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through. He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train. But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.](#)

Critics say that there is no record of the Ptolemies attacking Antiochus IV after the persecution in Jerusalem, much less that there was a giant battle on land and sea that Antiochus won, as Daniel seems to describe here. Furthermore, we aren’t told in any other sources about any alliance between the Seleucids and the Libyans or the Cushites. Because of these supposed historical inconsistencies, some have argued that Daniel 11 gives a false prophecy. Others argue that this part of the vision must be referring to somebody other than Antiochus IV, maybe even somebody in the future. So, are these critics right? Is this part of the vision irreconcilable with the facts of history?

Well, let’s address the second idea first—the idea that this part of the vision is referring to someone other than Antiochus IV. It’s hard to imagine how that could be the case. Every detail of this vision from these verses has lined up perfectly with the life and actions of Antiochus Epiphanes. From the way he came to power, to his style of rulership, to his unprecedented religious policies, to the way his conquest of Egypt was halted by the Romans, to the way he defiled the temple in Jerusalem, every single detail from verses 20-39 has matched the historical sources that describe Antiochus IV. When we reach verse 40, we are still talking about this same king—the “king of the north.” There is no other Seleucid king who fits the description given here. Some say that this must be a description of a king still in our future, but that just doesn’t seem possible. The Seleucid kingdom was conquered by the Romans and is long gone. We shouldn’t ever see another Seleucid king again. The only person, past or future, who could reasonably fit into these verses is Antiochus IV.

So, that brings us back to the first idea, that this part of Daniel is simply wrong. Did this vision get every

single one of the details correct until just the last few? Do verses 40-45 give a false prediction?

Well, no, they don't. The details in these verses that seem to contradict history can actually be easily accounted for.

Let's first consider the alliance between the Seleucids and the Libyans and Cushites. While it's true that we don't have external attestation to such an alliance, it is entirely possible that such an alliance existed and it simply was not recorded by the other historical sources. Many things have happened that historians either didn't know about, or didn't think were worth writing down. So, it is not terribly concerning that this particular detail is not mentioned in other sources. That detail by itself doesn't discredit this part of Daniel at all. And, given how many other details this chapter of Daniel has gotten right, there is little reason to doubt the accuracy of this one.

Next, let's consider the other supposed discrepancy, the huge battle between the north and the south. That is a much bigger problem; it is not a "detail" that is so easily dismissed. The Roman historians wrote extensively about the military campaigns of the Seleucids and Ptolemies. They described the nature of the treaties that were made, the movements of their troops, and especially the locations and outcomes of their battles. It is these very records that give us confidence in the accuracy of so much of the rest of Daniel chapter 11. It's hard to imagine that these historians, who paid so much attention to the details of the battles, would neglect to mention a huge battle between these kingdoms in which tens of thousands were killed. That's not the kind of detail that they would be likely to miss. So, why does this vision seem to predict a battle that never happened?

Well, the answer is that the battle *did* happen, and we *do* have other historical records of it, but the problem is that people have misread this part of Daniel. Many people assume that the battle in verse 40 must occur *after* the defiling of the temple in verse 31. However, that is not what this part of Daniel is saying. Verses 40-45 are continuing the summary of Antiochus's life that began in verse 36. That is to say, verses 36-45 give a summary of the significant things that Antiochus would do, and most of those things happened *before* he defiled the temple. These verses repeat information that we have already been given in this vision. To be specific, the battle that is described in verses 40-43 is the same battle that was described in verses 25-28. When we take a closer look at these two passages, we can clearly see that they are describing the same event. Both passages say that the south attacked first, but that the north won the battle. Both passages say that the king of the north plundered Egypt and took their treasure back to his land. Both passages say that he stopped in the holy land on his way back home. All of these details are attested to by other historical sources also. Compare, for example, verses 40-43 with a passage from 1 Maccabees:

Daniel 11:40-43

At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through. He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train.

1 Maccabees 1:16-19

When Antiochus saw that his kingdom was established, he determined to become king of the land of Egypt, that he might reign over both kingdoms. So he invaded Egypt with a strong force,

with chariots and elephants and cavalry and with a large fleet. He engaged Ptolemy king of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned and fled before him, and many were wounded and fell. And they captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt, and he plundered the land of Egypt.

When we examine the passage in context, and consider the witness of history, it seems quite clear that Daniel 11:40-45 is describing the same events that were mentioned earlier in the chapter, along with a few additional details, such as where Antiochus was going to pitch his tents (verse 45). These verses do not conflict with history at all; in fact, they line up with history perfectly. We simply need to put them in the correct timeline, *before* the desecration of the temple.

Now, this presents a question: *why* is this information being repeated? Why would the vision tell Daniel about the same battle twice? Well, in short, the information from verses 36-45 was very important for the generation who actually encountered Antiochus. They needed to know to watch out once Antiochus IV became king, and especially once he conquered Egypt in a giant battle, because after that, it wasn't long until he came for Jerusalem. This information was repeated to emphasize the things that the people needed to watch out for.

So, let's quickly recap the history that is described here in Daniel chapter 11. Verse 2 describes the Persian king Xerxes attacking and angering the Greeks in 480 B.C. Verses 3-4 describe the Greek king Alexander, who attacked and conquered Persia, but who died in 323 B.C., leaving his kingdom to be split into four parts. Verses 5-6 describe the early days of two of those parts—the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. Around 252 B.C., kings Antiochus II and Ptolemy II attempted to make a treaty through marriage, but that treaty fell apart. Verses 7-9 describe how, because that treaty failed, Ptolemy III attacked the Seleucids and conquered a fair amount of territory. Verses 10-19 describe the rise of the Seleucid king Antiochus III, who between the years of 212-197 B.C., managed to avenge the losses of his father and take back land from the Ptolemies, including the land of Judea.

Verse 20 describes Antiochus's son, Seleucus IV, who took the throne in 187 B.C., attempted to take treasure from the temple in Jerusalem, and was later assassinated. Verse 21 describes how Seleucus's brother, Antiochus IV, came to the throne in 175 B.C. Verses 22-28 describe how Antiochus battled and defeated the Ptolemies, and got them to agree to a treaty, and then collected tribute from Jerusalem, including several vessels from the temple. Verses 29-35 describe how Antiochus would return to attack Egypt in 168 B.C., but would be stopped by the Roman army, and would take out his frustrations on Jerusalem, defiling the temple and persecuting the people. It also describes how a group of Jews, who we know as the Maccabees, would stand firm in their faith, resist the armies of Antiochus, and ultimately emerge victorious. Verses 36-39 give a summary of the kind of man Antiochus IV would be, how he would consider himself to be a god, and have no reverence for the religious standards of his fathers. Finally, verses 40-45 reiterate that Antiochus was going to fight and conquer the Ptolemies, and that this would happen shortly before he camped against Jerusalem. Verse 45 concludes by describing Antiochus's death in 164 B.C.

Lessons For Us

We're still not finished with this vision—it continues into chapter 12—but are there any lessons we can take away from what we've read so far? There are three that stand out to us.

First, this vision places great emphasis on the events of the Maccabean period—that is, the time that Antiochus IV attacked Jerusalem and defiled the temple. So, that must mean that God thought these

events were highly significant, and he wanted Daniel to know about them in advance. Chapter 11 is at least the second time, and possibly the third time, that God has revealed information to Daniel about this particular time period. Perhaps it is worthwhile for us to learn about this time period as well. The events of this time are described in the apocryphal books of 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees, and they are commemorated every year during the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. To be clear, the books of Maccabees are not part of Scripture, and Hanukkah is not a holy assembly—it is not a festival that the Bible requires us to keep. But the history behind these things is mentioned in Daniel, and it is worth remembering. This was a time that God intervened in a powerful way on behalf of his people, and if nothing else, that is certainly worth knowing about. We have a teaching, [Moedim: Hanukkah](#), that discusses this time period in a bit more detail if you are interested.

A second lesson we can take away is just how precisely God knows the future. God foretold every major political decision that the rulers of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies would make. He predicted where they were going to move their armies, and what the outcomes of the battles would be; he predicted when and how they would attempt diplomatic relations, and how successful those attempts would be. He predicted who would succeed in gaining power and who would lose it. He predicted exactly when certain men would die. So, either God knew in advance exactly what would happen, or he intervened in history to cause those exact things to happen. Either way, God's knowledge and power is truly astonishing. As it is written:

Psalm 147:5

[Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.](#)

Finally, this chapter of Daniel gives us hope and assurance for the future. In this chapter, God told Daniel about many horrific things that would happen, including deceptions, assassinations, wars, and desolations. As we just mentioned, every detail of this vision became reality, including the desolation of the temple and the killing of many of God's people. But God assures Daniel that, even though these disasters are coming and cannot be avoided, this does not mean that God's people are doomed. He tells Daniel that they will survive this catastrophe, and even those who die, as long as they are faithful, will be rewarded in the end. This sounds very similar to the assurances that Yeshua gave his disciples. Even when he was prophesying about terrible things to come, he still assured them that they would pull through, and that even if they died, it would not be in vain. Here are just a few examples:

John 16:33

[...In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.](#)

Matthew 24:9-13

[Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.](#)

Revelation 2:10

[Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.](#)

As followers of Christ, we have the same assurance that Daniel did. It's true that difficulties, even persecution and disaster, will come to us. They cannot be avoided. But, if we are God's people, if we are

faithful and steadfast, we will make it through, and even if we die, we will still have a crown of life.

We'll talk about resurrection from the dead much more in the next part of this series, when we cover Daniel 12. We hope to see you there.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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