

Daniel 11 - Ancient History and the Antichrist

February 24, 2012

Good morning! I am Pastor Kurt. I want to give a special greeting to those joining us through the Internet. It is good to have you. As a church, we are studying the Old Testament book of Daniel. We are almost done with this fascinating book. This morning, we are in Daniel 11. Take your Bibles and turn to that chapter. If you didn't bring a Bible, take one from the seat pocket in front of you. You will find Daniel 11 on page 748.

Daniel 10-12 is the last and the biggest vision given Daniel received from God. Last week, we looked at Daniel 10 which is the introduction to the vision. Daniel 10 showed us there is a great spiritual battle raging around us in the unseen spiritual realm between fallen spiritual powers called demons and God's spiritual powers called angels.

Daniel 11 tells us how this cosmic battle will unfold on earth. Daniel 11 is an amazing chapter because it contains some of the clearest and most precise prophecy in the Bible that is already fulfilled.

As I mentioned last week, most liberal scholars do not believe this chapter was originally part of the book. They doubt its authenticity because they don't believe God would give such a precise prophecy about the future. Their doubt of this chapter's authenticity is not based on historical evidence. There is also no grammatical evidence this chapter was stitched in at a later date. It is simply a doubt of God's absolute sovereignty of history.

As you consider this, you need to reflect on Daniel 2. If we believe God gave Nebuchadnezzar the exact dream he wanted him to have, if we believe God supernaturally revealed to Daniel the contents of that dream and the meaning of the dream, why should we have trouble believing God could reveal other details about the future to Daniel in this chapter? Don't let the preciseness of this chapter trick you into jettisoning its truth.

While the chapter is complex, it divides itself simply into three sections. The first is "wars between kings of Syria and Egypt." The middle of the chapter focuses on one particularly terrible King of Syria. We saw him in chapter 8. We will call this section "the terrifying reign of Antiochus Epiphanes." The last part of the chapter looks through Antiochus Epiphanes into the future reign of the one Antiochus Epiphanes prefigured. We will call that section "the dreaded final Antichrist."

Wars between kings of Syria and Egypt

Daniel was a teenager when Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians, conquered Jerusalem. Daniel was a POW taken back to Babylon. In Babylon, he rose to become a high-ranking official in the Babylonian court. When Daniel was an old man, the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon. Daniel's position of leadership was retained in the new government. The date at the beginning of Daniel 10 tells us this vision came to Daniel in the third year of Cyrus the new Persian ruler of Babylon.

"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." Daniel 11:2 (ESV)

What amazes me is the level of detail in this prophecy about the future. Three more kings ruled the Persian empire. The fourth king was King Xerxes. He was incredibly wealthy and built a large army which he used to attack Greece. Shockingly, the Greeks defeated him. He returned home and focused his attention on his amazing harem of women.

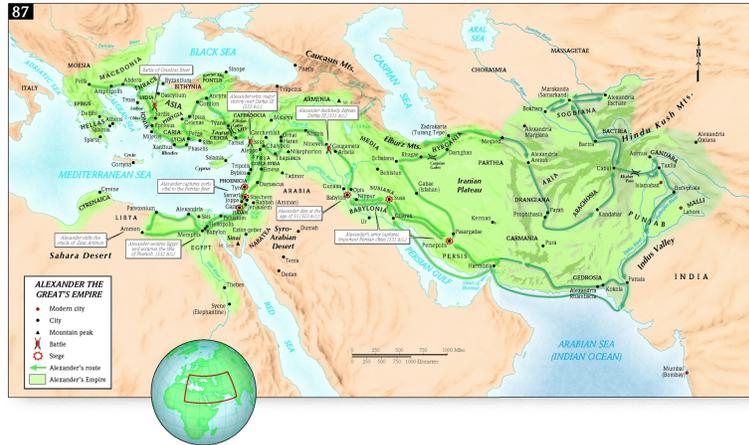
Incidentally, his Hebrew name is Ahasuerus. This is the king of Persia in the book of Esther. Esther was part of his harem. She was the young Jewish girl who rose to become Xerxes' queen. While there were additional kings of Persia after Xerxes, the prophecy stops there. Let me show you why.

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. Daniel 11:3–4 (ESV)

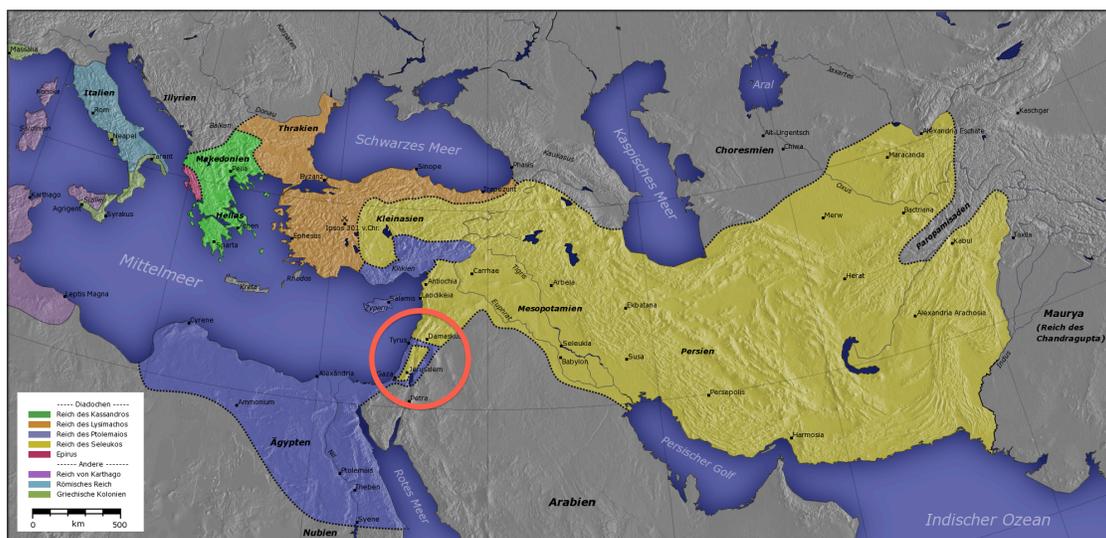
Who was the mighty king given great dominion? This was Alexander the Great of Greece. When Alexander the Great invaded Persia, he used King Xerxes' invasion of Greece, 150 years earlier, as the rationale for his conquering of their empire.

If you were here earlier in the series during our study of Daniel 8, you will remember what we learned about Alexander the Great. At age 20, he assumed the kingship of Macedon after his father's murder. His stated objective was to conquer the world. By the age of 32, only 12 years later, Alexander conquered a

piece of territory 11,000 miles wide. At age 32, at the peak of his power, while enjoying a beer drinking party in Babylon, the brilliant ruler of the world unexpectedly died.



He had two sons. They were both quickly assassinated by rivals to keep the kingdom from passing into their hands, just as the prophecy that was given more than a hundred years before this event told would happen. Alexander's empire was eventually divided into four smaller empires, between his four strongest generals, just as the prophecy told us would happen.



Now the prophecy begins to focus. Two of these four divisions were much larger than the others. The general named Ptolemy took over Egypt. The

general named Seleucis took over Syria. They, and their descendants, are called kings of the north and the south in this passage.

Why were they described in terms of geographical directions rather than their names? Right smack between them was Israel. These two kingdoms battled back and forth trying to gain territory. As they did, they kept moving through Israel in the middle. Let's look at a little of the history between these empires. The Bible gives us precise prophecy on the tug-of-war struggles that took place between these kingdoms.

“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. Daniel 11:5–6 (ESV)

What makes this amazing is the historical accuracy of what we read. The only reason we are not shocked is because we are a little rusty on our Seleucid and Ptolomaic history. Their history reads like a soap opera.

The marriage alliance in these verses describe when Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt sent his daughter, Berenice, to marry Antiochus II of the Syrian kingdom in the north. To make this marriage alliance work, Antiochus II divorced his wife, Laodice, to marry Berenice. Two years into the marriage, Ptolemy II of Egypt, Berenice's father, died. Antiochus II of Syria didn't see why he should limit himself to one wife so he remarried Laodice, his former wife, while keeping Berenice. Laodice was furious at the resulting love triangle. She poisoned Berenice, her two-timing husband, Antiochus, and Berenice's son. She

bumped everybody off leaving only herself and her son to rule Syria. This is exactly what these verses said would happen. This was God giving details of history almost like he was writing a newspaper article of historical events before they transpired! God is large and in charge of all things. The saga continued.

“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.” Daniel 11:7–8 (ESV)

After Ptolemy of Egypt died, and Laodice murdered Berenice, Antiochus and everybody else she could get her hands on, in the southern Ptolemaic kingdom, the brother of the murdered Berenice rose to the throne. What do you think became the ambition of his life? His dream was to attack the northern Syrian kingdom to avenge his sister’s death. That is exactly what he did. He attacked Syria and killed Laodice for murdering his sister. He then robbed Syria of a record amount of its treasures. He carried back 2,320,000 pounds of silver and more than 2,500 idols made of precious metals. This is exactly the way the Bible said it would unfold, and it was written hundreds of years before it happened.

There is much more to this story and it is all told with amazing detail in the verses that follow. This reminds us of the amazingly precise control God has of history. God is large and in charge of all things. When God says he will use everything we face for our ultimate good and for Christ’s glory, we can rest assured he will keep his promise.

I want to jump to verse 20. In that verse, this chapter begins to focus on a particular king of the northern Syrian kingdom. We will remember him from chapter 8. His name is Antiochus Epiphanies. The reason the chapter focuses on him is because he was a particularly evil king, that is, a prototype of the antichrist, and unlike other rulers of Syria, he focused his attention not on conquering the southern Ptolemaic kingdom but on destroying Israel.

The terrifying reign of Antiochus Epiphanies

“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.” Daniel 11:20–21 (ESV)

The story picks up with Seleucus Philopator who was reigning king of the Seleucid dynasty. Shortly after taking office, he sent his tax collector, Heliodorus, to replenish his bank account by robbing the treasures from the temple in Jerusalem. Heliodorus refused. That put his job, and his life, in a very precarious position. Shortly after this event, Seleucus Philopater mysteriously disappeared. He just didn't show up for work one day, and there was no body. The historical rumor is Heliodorus, his tax collector, poisoned him to bump him off.

The next ruler of the Seleucid empire was Antiochus Epiphanies. He is described as a contemptible person. Royal majesty was not given to him.

A young man named Demetrius was scheduled to become king. Antiochus talked people into letting him act as Demetrius' power of attorney until he was old enough to rule. Antiochus took the throne and never gave it back. He obtained his power by flattery.



Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, even the prince of the covenant. Daniel 11:22 (ESV)

At the beginning of Antiochus' reign, keeping in step with his predecessors, as a Seleucid king of the northern Syrian kingdom, he attacked the Ptolemaic kingdom that ruled Egypt. He was very successful even though he had an inferior army. During that campaign, he entered Jerusalem and deposed the high priest, Onias, by force. The high priest is the prince of the covenant in this verse. Onias was replaced by his brother, Jason, who was much friendlier to Greek customs.

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. Daniel 11:24 (ESV)

Antiochus had an interesting leadership style. As a flatterer by nature, he typically gained others' trust then used it against them. To build his public support, he robbed from temples in his kingdom. Temples were the ancient version of banks. Rather than spending the money on himself, he gave most of it away to the people. When the government is giving you money instead of taking your money, the leader have a meteoric rise in popularity. Remember, this is prophecy written hundreds of years before history transpired.

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. Daniel 11:25–26 (ESV)

Antiochus again attacked the Ptolemies in Egypt. Both had huge armies. Antiochus won but he didn't win by pure military force. Using flattery, he convinced a number of Egyptian generals to become traitors and betray their king. This is exactly what Scripture told us would happen hundreds of years in advance.

“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. Daniel 11:29–30 (ESV)

Antiochus attacked Egypt a third time. Instead of beating them up and stealing their stuff, this time things unfolded differently. The Roman Senate decided to stop Antiochus. They sent a Roman general, Pompilius Laenas, with a fleet of ships to Egypt's defense at Alexandria. These were the ships of Kittim. When Antiochus met Pompilius, he tried to use flattery to talk his way out of the conflict. This was one man he did not trick. In a famous moment of ancient history, Pompilius drew a circle around Antiochus telling him to surrender and leave Egypt before he left the circle or face the full fury and wrath of Rome. For the first time in his life, Antiochus was defeated and humiliated. Returning from that defeat he vented his anger on Israel. This was the attack against the Jews that took on legendary significance. Some accounts recall more than 100,000 Jews massacred in this attack.

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. Daniel 11:31 (ESV)

Antiochus ordered his general, Apollonius, to occupy Jerusalem with Syrian troops. Their mission was to stamp out Judaism off the face of the earth. He decreed an edict that all religions were fused into one. The only deities that could be worshipped were Greek. The daily temple sacrifices were stopped. Syrian soldiers brought whores to the temple, using it as a brothel. Pigs were sacrificed to Greek gods on the altar in the holy of holies. Jews were forced to become drunk and take part in orgies to Bacchus, the Greek goddess of wine. If they sacrificed to the true God, they were killed without questions asked. If they circumcised their male children, those children were strangled on a string in their front yard. If the Jews observed the Sabbath or any holidays, they were killed on the spot. All copies of the Scriptures they found were destroyed. The temple was rededicated to the Greek god Zeus. This was the abomination of desolation spoken of in these verses.

We don't have time to get into this but the Jews fought back. The story of the Maccabees is told in the apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees. Eventually, Antiochus Epiphanies mysteriously died. When he did, the Jews re-dedicated the temple and re-established sacrifices.

As you can see, Antiochus Epiphanies was one of the greatest nightmares of Jewish history to walk the face of the earth. While he wanted to be called Antiochus Epiphanies, which means God manifest amongst us, many intentionally mispronounced his name as Antiochus Epimenades, which means

Antiochus the mad man. Other texts in Scripture, lead us to believe Antiochus was demonically influenced, or demon-possessed.

Then something strange happened. Daniel 10:35 continues talking about Antiochus Epiphanies but it starts describing things that Antiochus Epiphanies never did. The tight connection between ancient prophecy and fulfilled history is disconnected.

What happens in Daniel 10:35, and the verses that follow, is the prophecy begins talking not about Antiochus Epiphanies, the lesser antichrist of history, but about the one great final antichrist of history. Antiochus Epiphanies was only a prototype of the great final antichrist. 1 John 2:18 reminds us that many smaller antichrists will walk across the pages of time before the final antichrist appears.

The dreaded final antichrist

“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.” Daniel 11:36–37 (ESV)

Antiochus never did this. He exalted and magnified himself but he saw himself as one of the Greek deities, not as replacement for all deities. The final antichrist will go beyond Antiochus. He will try to replace all worship with worship of himself. If we take what we learned earlier from the book of Daniel, the antichrist will rise to power. He will produce one world government. He will appear to solve the Middle East conflict. Once he has worldwide popularity, he will try to mold all the religions of the world into one and set himself up as the one God to be worshipped in the world. His tactics and brutality will be similar to

Antiochus Epiphanies but on a global scale. Paul talks about this in 2 Thessalonians.

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4 (ESV)

Why do you think he wants to be worshipped? In Daniel 10, we learned powerful demons and angels are battling around us. Satan assigns powerful demons to influence nations and their rulers. Who do you think will be the demonic force behind the antichrist that will lead and empower him?

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders... 2 Thessalonians 2:9 (ESV)

He will be powered directly by Satan.

He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these... Daniel 11:38 (ESV)

The antichrist will love war. He will love death, carnage and destruction. He will worship himself by acts of war.

Now it gets very difficult.

“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. Daniel 11:40–41 (ESV)

When we get to Daniel 10:40, it talks about the antichrist and his battles in terms of the wars between the northern and southern kingdoms, like we saw earlier with the Egyptians and the Syrians. Just like the Antiochus of history sought to butcher God’s people in the land of Palestine, so will the final antichrist.

This section is hard to understand. I don't know if this is a literal, reconstituted war between Egypt and Syria or not. The Edomites, Moabites and the Ammonites escape the antichrist's wrath. This is hard to understand. These nations were wiped out many years ago. The Edomites, Moabites and the Ammonites were the traditional enemies of Israel. Some people consider the Arabs to be their descendants. This may be saying the antichrist will focus his wrath exclusively on Israel and the people of God. He will butcher God's people by the tens of thousands but leave the arabs untouched. I don't know how all this will be fulfilled, I just know it will be bad and that no matter how bad it looks, God is still large and in charge of it all. Let's jump to the end.

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. Daniel 11:45 (ESV)

Let me give you a little historical summary. The antichrist will set himself up in the restored temple of Jerusalem declaring himself to be the object of worldwide worship. Just like Antiochus Epiphanies, the lesser antichrist of history, defiled the temple and sought to change worship to only the gods of the Greeks, the great final antichrist of the future will do the same thing, except he will set himself up as the object of worship for one great, worldwide religion. The rebuilt temple in Jerusalem is where he will set himself in the holy of holies and claim to be God. That is the abomination of desolation spoken throughout Scripture.

In Daniel 7 we learned the earth is ruled from God's throne room. When God the Father gives a thumbs down to the mighty rulers of history, they are

snuffed out like a candle. We saw how God snuffed out Babylon; he snuffed out Alexander the Great at the peak of his power. He snuffed out Antiochus Epiphanies and many others. All of them mysteriously died while in the prime of their rules. Guess what happens to the antichrist at this moment in history. What will bring an end to the antichrist's rule of the world in a way that nobody on earth can help him?

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (ESV)

God the Father will give him a thumbs down from the throne room of heaven. Christ will return and exercise the power he won on the cross over all the fallen spiritual powers in the universe. He will bring the antichrist to nothing. The strongest and most powerful demonically-inspired man in the world will be left whimpering in the corner when faced with the presence of Jesus, who only needs to speak a word to destroy him.

There is much more to this complex picture. Some of the details on how world history wraps up are revealed in Daniel 12, the final chapter of this exciting book. We will get to that chapter in two weeks. Next week, I will be out of town. I asked the mission team if they could lead a special missions Sunday where we can get an update on the unreached people group in India we are supporting as a church. You won't want to miss the exciting details of the great final battle and the return of Jesus in that final amazing chapter.

Application

1. **God is large and in charge.** While the rest of Daniel reminds us God is sovereign over history and our lives, this chapter takes our understanding of God's control over history to a new level. We just scratched the surface on the historical struggles between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria which are described in this chapter in extreme detail hundreds of years before they transpire. This is amazing. This reminds us that absolutely nothing happens by chance. We may not understand the reasons God has for allowing adversity into our lives but we know God is good. We know he loves us so enough to send his own son to die in our places for our sins. We know that someday in heaven, when we look back upon how God orchestrated our lives, we will acknowledge his plan was good.
2. **Since the Bible was precise in what it said about the past, we can trust it is precise in what it says about the future.** Since the Bible was precise about the way history would unfold from the time of Daniel through the time of Antiochus Epiphanies, a forerunner of the antichrist, we can trust it will also be precise about the way the future will unfold. There is a real antichrist coming. Like Antiochus Epiphanies, he will be a man of flattery and oratory skills. He will seek one world government and one world religion. He will make himself the object of worldwide worship. There are tough times coming for the followers of Christ. The good news is when it seems all hope is lost, Christ will return and wipe out the antichrist with nothing. All he needs to do it is a word from his mouth. He already disarmed all the fallen spiritual

authorities on the cross. Christ has all the power. He only needs to exercise it.

3. **God is still in charge, even when it doesn't look like he is there.** In this chapter, it appears the strong kings of the day were one ruling the world. The Ptolemies, the Seleucids or the antichrist skate across the pages of history. From an earthly perspective, God is absent from the picture. It looks as if life is out of control because God is silent. This chapter reminds us God is present in each of our lives. He is sovereign over everything. He may not be speaking all the time, but he is large and in charge. He knows what adversity will hit his people, and he has a reason for allowing it.



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