

In the first 20 verses of Daniel 11, we are given a prophetic road map of Middle-Eastern history with particular attention to the Medo-Persian and Greek empires. In the left column below, the biblical text is listed by verses. The right column provides a description of relevant historical events that align with the content of each Bible verse.

By comparing the material in both columns, we observe that the prophecies revealed to Daniel 11:1-20 “get it right” in 60 particulars spanning 360 years! There is no explanation for this other than God. He is eternal; He dwells outside of and is not constrained by time. Further, He is omniscient; He knows all things, past, present, and future. Compare what is found in the two columns below and prepare to be awed at our God Who is the ultimate source of this information.

**1** And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him.

**1** Two years previous, this “warrior angel” provided assistance to Michael at a critical juncture in Israel’s history, the transition from Babylonian to Medo-Persian supremacy.

### **From Cyrus to Alexander**

**2** And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece.

**2** Cyrus (539-529 BC) was followed by Cambyses (529-522 BC), Pseudo Smerdis (522-521 BC), and Darius Hystaspes (521-486 BC). Then came Xerxes (486-465 BC). Through the conquest of Lydia, Babylonia, and Egypt (by his predecessors) and a severe taxation program by Darius Hystaspes, Xerxes amassed considerable wealth. (See Esther 1:1-12 for an account of the 180 day feast of Xerxes!) After four years of preparation and considerable PR to strengthen the resolve of his nation, he mounted a campaign against Greece to avenge a previous defeat by his father. He only succeeded, however, in giving Greece a score to settle.

**3** And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases.

**3** Alexander the Great (336-323 BC) was the one to settle the score. He retaliated and seized Persia for Greece. He demonstrated amazing strength and ability by his swift conquest of the then known world in a single campaign. His leadership has scarcely been equaled in history – he maintained an army in the field 1,000 miles from home for a period that lasted years!

**4** But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of

**4** On the cusp of complete world domination, Alexander died at the age of 32. After several years of contention, four of Alexander’s generals gained

the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded; for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.

### **From Alexander to Antiochus**

**5** Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed.

**6** And after some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in, and the one who sired her, as well as he who supported her in those times.

**7** But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength.

positions of dominance as three potential heirs were all subsequently murdered. The four generals were able (after a prolonged struggle) to each carve from Alexander's empire a domain for themselves although none commanded the level of respect given to Alexander.

**5** The Syrian division (north of Palestine) and the Egyptian division (to the south) were of greatest significance for Israel, and therefore, come up for close inspection. Clearly (according to verse 8), "Egypt" is the South. Ptolemy Soter was a very capable general under Alexander who was made satrap of Egypt upon Alexander's death. He proclaimed himself King of Egypt in 304 BC and ruled until 283 BC. Seleucus Nicator served Ptolemy Soter until a window of opportunity presented itself allowing him to relocate and proclaim himself king (in 304 BC) of the largest section of Alexander's empire which included Babylonia, Syria, and Media.

**6** About 250 BC (54 years after Ptolemy's and Seleucus's declarations in 304 BC), the progeny of these original kings (Ptolemy II Philadelphus, son of Ptolemy I, and Antiochus II Theos, grandson of Seleucus) sought to end their bitter fighting by the establishment of an alliance. Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II, was given in marriage to Antiochus II, who was 23 years younger than Ptolemy II, to seal this alliance. However, when Ptolemy II died (two years later), Antiochus II put Berenice away and took back his former wife, Laodice. Laodice, fearing further fickleness, poisoned Antiochus II, had Berenice, her attendants, and her son (by Antiochus) killed, and proclaimed her own son, Seleucus II Callinicus (246-227 BC), as king.

**7** Berenice had a brother in Egypt who became king, taking the name Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 BC). He marched on Syria to avenge the death of his sister. He penetrated as far as the Tigris River and moved where he wished unopposed. The young Seleucus II Callinicus escaped death by staying in the interior of Asia Minor.

**8** And also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years.

**9** Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land.

**10** And his sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress.

**11** And the king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former.

**12** When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail.

**13** For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment.

**8** The extent of an ancient king's victory is often measured by his ability to plunder the defeated people. Jerome reports that Ptolemy brought home "40,000 talents of silver and 2,500 precious vessels and images of the gods." Ptolemy did not follow up his conquest with an assimilation plan, although Palestine was retained under his rule.

**9** In about 240 BC, Seleucus Callinicus attempted a return attack but was unsuccessful.

**10** Seleucus Callinicus had two sons, Seleucus III Ceraunus (227-223 BC) and Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BC). The first was killed in a campaign in Asia Minor which concluded his short reign. His younger brother became king at the age of 18. This second son, whose realm was somewhat impoverished from the humiliations suffered at the hands of Ptolemy III, was determined to turn the tables. He moved with a large force and succeeded in extending control as far as the Egyptian frontier post of Raphia, where a major battle with Egypt took place.

**11** Ptolemy IV Philopater (221-204 BC), son of Ptolemy Eurgetes, was something of a party boy and lay-about. But when Antiochus took Raphia, Ptolemy roused himself and assembled a grand army (70,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, 73 elephants) and secured a decisive victory over Antiochus (who had assembled his own equally impressive army).

**12** Ptolemy killed 10,000 infantry, 300 cavalry, and 5 elephants in the army of Antiochus. His natural predisposition to pride and indolence were displayed in boasting matched by an absence of follow-through, although Palestine was returned to his sovereignty.

**13** After his defeat at Raphia, Antiochus turned his attention to the east between 212 and 204 BC. When Ptolemy Philopater died and was succeeded by Ptolemy V Epiphanes (age 4), Antiochus discerned a window of opportunity to return to the West. So 14 years after his defeat at the hands of Ptolemy Philopater, Antiochus attacked with a battle hardened

army even larger than the one from his first engagement with Egypt.

**14** Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down.

**15** Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege mound, and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand.

**16** But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand.

**17** And he will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side.

**14** Antiochus found an ally in Philip V of Macedonia who seized Egyptian overseas holdings. Even some among the Jews, who had languished under Egyptian domination while having the battle front traverse their land, sought to provide aid to Antiochus by provisioning his army and elephants. Their initiative seems to have failed to accomplish its objective, whatever it was, even though Palestine did come under the rule of Antiochus. Peace would prove elusive, despite the fact that under Antiochus III Egypt lost sovereignty over Palestine.

**15** In the campaign of 203 BC, Antiochus successfully raised siege works against Sidon. By 199 BC, he held most of Palestine. Scopas, one of Egypt's ablest generals, was eventually forced to seek refuge in Sidon. Three crack Egyptian generals were dispatched to lift the siege, but to no avail.

**16** When Sidon fell, it marked the end of Egyptian domination of Palestine. Antiochus proved unstoppable, secured Palestine for himself, and established his absolute sovereignty over it.

**17** From this position of power, Antiochus proposed a "peace treaty" with Ptolemy Epiphanes that he presented as "perfectly equitable." Under the terms of this arrangement, he gave his daughter, the "first daughter," Cleopatra, to Ptolemy in 197 BC. The marriage did not take place until Ptolemy was 14 in 193 BC. Antiochus thought this scheme would reinforce a stability in his relations with Egypt which would allow him to turn his attention toward Rome. His plan was foiled for the fact that Cleopatra became a proper wife. Eventually Egypt actually allied itself with Rome against Antiochus!

**18** Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn.

**19** So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more.

**20** Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though neither in anger nor in battle.

### **Antiochus Closely Considered**

**21** And in his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue.

**18** Once the treaty was signed in 197 BC, Antiochus turned his desire northwards. He met with initial success seizing numerous islands of the Aegean along with substantial portions of Asia Minor and Greece. When Antiochus began to nibble away at Greece, Rome commissioned the general, Scipio, to deal with this eastern upstart's contempt for Rome. The humiliation intended for Rome was turned into humiliation for Antiochus when he was forced to abandon Asia Minor through the peace of Apamea established in 188 BC.

**19** He returned to his homeland having been frustrated in his exploits, his grandiose plans now utter failures. He died one year later in 187 BC.

**20** His son, Seleucus IV Philopater (187-176 BC) inherited a sizeable land and an empty treasury. He dispatched leaders who could compel the payment of taxes. Heliodorus was the prime minister sent to seize the funds of the Temple treasury in Jerusalem. But when Seleucus died prematurely and under suspicious circumstances (possibly having been poisoned by Heliodorus) the crisis for Israel now abated somewhat.

**21** The son of Seleucus IV, Demetrius Soter, was the rightful heir to the throne. But, he had been taken hostage to Rome prior to the death of Seleucus. So when Antiochus Epiphanes, a schemer without a conscience and younger brother of Seleucus, heard of it in Athens, he rushed to Antioch in Syria to have himself declared as king.

At verse 21, we are introduced to a historical figure who closely resembles the antichrist. By studying this man and his influence, we are expected to learn something of what to expect in the time of the end. The successes and failure of God's people as predicted in Daniel 11:21-35 provide insight into how God's people can prevail in the future. In verse 36, we jump forward to the antichrist himself! The specificity of the previous prophetic material (in the left column above) and the precision of its corresponding historical fulfillment (in the right column above) argues for careful consideration of the description outlined from verse 36 on. Daniel 11:36ff provides a glimpse of things which have not yet happened but which will happen precisely as detailed at some future date. God's people should use these details to guide their preparation for what is coming.

**21** “And in his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue.

**22,23** And the overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. And after an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people.

**24** In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty, and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but only for a time.

**21** The son of Seleucus IV, Demetrius Soter, was the rightful heir to the throne. But, he had been taken hostage to Rome prior to the death of Seleucus. So when Antiochus Epiphanes, a schemer without a conscience and younger brother of Seleucus, heard of it in Athens, he rushed to Antioch in Syria to have himself declared as king (175-164 BC). He used flattery to win the support of key figures, even succeeding in securing assistance from Rome!

**22,23** Those who sought to overwhelm Syria were overwhelmed, notably Egypt. “Prince of the covenant” could refer to Ptolemy Epiphanes, more likely to high priest in Jerusalem, Onias III, killed through treachery in Antiochus’s 4<sup>th</sup> year. Antiochus’s sister, Cleopatra, is now Queen Mother in Egypt (since the death of her husband in 181 BC) and friendly relations were maintained between Egypt and Syria while Antiochus reiterated his father’s dowry promise of Palestine to Egypt. Five years after establishing himself, Antiochus rescinded his promises, marching through Palestine and reasserting control over it. His empire was much smaller than it was before Rome came into power, yet despite its comparatively smaller size, he did “come up in the world” by a successful strategy involving the use of power blended with well-timed use of deception.

**24** He relied on the surprise attack as a key component of his planning. He actually did what is without precedent: He “raided” his own richer districts and redistributed wealth to the poorer districts (which would be the majority) as a means of building favor with the populace. He also sought to weaken any community where opposition might galvanize. He raided districts where opposition might gain strength. This strategy was successful for



a time, although Antiochus died an untimely death after a reign of only 12 years.

**25** And he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him.

**25** One of Cleopatra's sons, Ptolemy Philometor, became king of Egypt (181-145 BC). (This means he was Antiochus's nephew!) After establishing a strong home base, Antiochus prepared to invade Egypt with a large army. Ptolemy fielded an even larger army. The main battle was fought at Pelusium, just east of the Nile delta. Ptolemy was defeated.

**26, 27** And those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain. As for both kings, their hearts will be intent on evil, and they will speak lies to each other at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still to come at the appointed time.

**26, 27** Despite overwhelming force in Ptolemy's favor, treachery from his advisors contributed to his defeat and the loss of many. Then something quite unusual ensued: The captured nephew sat at his conquering uncle's table, and each pretended friendship making much of their blood relationship. All the while, they were maneuvering for an advantage. Neither of their intentions were realized. Antiochus wanted Egypt, Ptolemy wanted to reclaim all of Egypt (he lost half to Ptolemy VII Euergetes who ruled from Alexandria). To the Oriental mind, to speak lies at the table is deception of the lowest kind. They did not realize their goals, although, by the way, God did and on His own time-table!

**28** Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take action and then return to his own land.

**28** Antiochus returned to Syria by way of Palestine with much booty as consolation for his frustrated plans. He took it out on the Jews, whom he had come to dislike and who were conveniently located on his route home

**29, 30** At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before. For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened, and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.

**29, 30** A second campaign against Egypt was waged two years later, in 168 BC. This, too, was a time of God's appointment. The outcome was different: Some success in the former was followed by no success in this campaign. Antiochus never even had a chance to fight. He was intercepted en route to Egypt by a Roman fleet and emissary, Popilius Laenas, who handed him a letter from the

Roman Senate forbidding him to make war against Egypt. Not wanting to risk a war with Rome, he reluctantly complied. He passed through Palestine once more, this time with a grand army capable of allowing him to do as he pleased and full of rage fueled by his foiled plans. He sought to stamp out every practice finding its roots in the Law of Moses, and cultivated relationships with the religious “sell-outs” to aid him in this pursuit.

**31, 32a** And forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. And by smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant,

**32b, 33** but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder, for many days.

**34, 35** Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. And some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge, and make them pure, until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time” (Dan. 11:21-35).

**31, 32a** He declared Mosaic observances illegal and those who sought to follow them were subject to death. Antiochus wanted to replace worship of God with a decidedly Greek religion, even erecting a statue of Zeus in the Temple precincts. He praised and made attractive promises to those who cooperated with his plan to establish an alternative, “more enlightened,” religion.

**32b, 33** Those who understood who God is had the strength to defy the tide of public opinion. Those with theological and religious understanding became a prime resource for those who did not, but they were subject to reprisal for their efforts.

**34, 35** Their example of stalwart faith prompted others to join them, albeit not all from sincere motives (which is what happened with the Maccabees). The “reign of terror” at the hands of Antiochus did have a positive effect among the people of God. It produced a refined faith which was devoid of compromising influences. This principle (“persecution produces purity”) will continue in operation until the end of this era, an endpoint which will be established according to God’s time-table.