

Kings And Kingdoms

Daniel 11:1-11

Introduction

The Lord's angel gives a detailed description of the near and far future. Only God can see the future in such specifics. The Lord will give a sweeping panorama of Israel's future from about the 5th century B.C. to the 1st Century B.C. Most Bible scholars call these years the silent years. But God by His Spirit gives us a rather detailed explanation of what Israel can expect. The Lord's plans for kingdoms and nations and individuals are unshakable (see note *Life Application Study Bible; NIV; ;p.1498-11:2*).

The events of this chapter are long over except for the closing verses at the end of the chapter (see vv.40-45). The Persian, Greek, and Syrian and Egyptian rulers will for the most part be unknown, obscure or unfamiliar to some of you. The Prophet Daniel learns from the angel that four Persian kings must arise (vv.1-2). Then will come a mighty king from Greece (vv.3-4). This mighty king will forge a vast empire in a short time. The empire will not pass to his posterity. The empire will be divided and fragmented into four parts. Two of those kingdoms will play a pivotal role in Israel's future. The angel refers to them as the kings of the South and the North (vv.5-11). What follows is a detailed description of the conflicts and battles and strife between these two kings. The kingdoms are South and North of the Glorious Land or Beautiful Land (v.16).

Why is Daniel given such specifics, details of these kings and kingdoms, both near and far? The answer in part must be that God's promises for Israel and Israel's future must be fulfilled. The Messiah must come (chapter 9). Israel's future will be marked by constant battle and intrigue. There are powerful forces both natural and supernatural with mixed motives. Angelic Beings were warring over Israel's future. Supernatural forces were at work to keep them away from the land and force them to return to the land. The chapter contains at least 38 fulfilled prophecies. The prophecies unfold quickly; four Persian kings (v.2); the war of the fourth king with the king of Greece (v.2); the rise and fall of Alexander the Great (vv.3-4); the division of his empire into fourths (v.4); the eventual alliance between the kings of the North and the South (v.6); the Egyptian plunder of Syria (v.8); the unsuccessful retaliation of Syria (v.9); the civil war in Egypt (v.14); the Syrian occupation of the Glorious or Beautiful Land (Palestine v.16); the Temple desecration by a Syrian king (vv.31-32); the Maccabean revolt (v.32).

The Four Persian Kings (vv.1-2)

Daniel 11:1-11 (NKJV) 1 "Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him.)

2 And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece.

Kings And Kingdoms

Daniel 11:1-11

Most Bible scholars place verse 1 with the last with the angel's comment in chapter 10:20. There we learned the heavenly war was first directed against Persia and then Greece. Each of these nations would exercise a certain degree of power and control over the people of Israel.

Apparently there were strong supernatural forces at work making every effort that God's people will not be able to accomplish God's will. Does that sound familiar to you?

The first year of Darius the Mede coincides with the first year of the Cyrus decree to free the Jews and restore and rebuild Jerusalem (insert date). **This angel is tasked with the job to confirm and strengthen the king in his decision to let the Jews go.** In other words God was at work when Daniel prayed for the repentance and restoration of his people (9:22-27).

It may be that the Persian powers were waffling in allowing God's people to return to their land. No wonder the angel tells Daniel "I stood up to confirm and strengthen him (Darius the Mede). The word strengthen translates the Hebrew word *chazaq* (*primitive root—to fasten upon to seize or cure or repair or support*). And so it means to be strong or courageous—it was used of human strength to overpower one another but it was also used of the kind of supernatural enabling that allowed Sampson (Judges 16:28) to overcome enemies; and the instruction that God gives to Joshua "Be strong and of good courage" (Joshua 1:6-7;9).

We are given a glimpse of how angels intervene and strengthen in helping human beings do God's will.

The angel reminds Daniel "now I will tell you the truth" (v.2). And where can we go to find truth? The angel has already mentioned the mysterious "Scripture of Truth" (10:21).

The revelation takes place during the reign of Cyrus (Darius the Mede). But there are thirteen Persian kings from the time of Cyrus to the fall of Persia. How do we resolve what appears to be a contradiction? Some suggest that the number four represents the totality of the rulers; but much more likely it represents Cyrus and his three immediate successors:

Cambyeses	(530-522 B.C.)
Pseudo-Smerdis	(522 B.C.)
Darius I Hystaspes	(522-486 B.C.)

"A fourth far richer shall arise"

Xerxes	(486-465 B.C.)
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The defeat of Xerxes at Salamis sets up the Greek-Persian conflict that ends some 150 years later with Alexander the Great (see e.g. Miller; *Daniel*; Longman considers this view "perhaps the best guess" (*Daniel p.273*).

Kings And Kingdoms

Daniel 11:1-11

We are told “by his strength and through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece” (v.2). This king will use his power and wealth and authority to wage war against the Kingdom of Greece. In history his name is Ahasuerus (Esther) or Xerxes. Xerxes launched a “great campaign against Greece from 481-479 B.C. with an army of 200,000 men and a navy of many hundreds of ships gathered from all over his vast empire”. John Whitcomb explains that “Xerxes desperately sought to avenge the humiliating defeat by his father Darius I, at the hands of the Greeks during the battle of Marathon (490 B.C.). But his army was defeated north of Athens at Plataea (479 B.C.); just after his navy was smashed at Salamis, to the west of Athens”. “This king was quite willing to sell to Haman the lives of the Jews in his realm for 10,000 talents of silver. He was a king of unbridled sensuality, ambition, and pride paved the way for the downfall of the Persian Empire. For years this king kept Asia in turmoil as he stirred his vast realm against Greece” (John Philips p.170). No king after Xerxes was strong enough to successfully invade Greece.

The Mighty King Of Greece (vv.3-4)

3Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.

4And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.

This is Alexander The Great (336-323 B.C.) Alexander conquers with unequalled skill and in record time. In less than a decade Alexander conquers and controls lands that stretch from Macedonia through Greece to the Anatolian peninsula (modern Turkey); Syria, Egypt, Babylonia, Persia and parts of India. He defeats Darius III in a series of battles between 334-331 B.C.). He dies in Babylon (323 B.C.). Scholars have offered a number of reasons for his death.

The exact cause of Alexander's death is unknown. Historians have debated the issue for centuries, attributing it to poison, malaria, typhoid fever or other maladies. What is agreed upon is that the Macedonian king died in early June 323 BC while suffering a high fever that had lasted ten days. His empire was carved up by his generals and soon disintegrated.

(“The Death of Alexander the Great, 323 BC” EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2008).)

Alexander is given great dominion and does according to his own will. This reprises the prophecy given in Daniel 8:5-8; the vision of the goat with the notable horn which broke into four more notable horns. Alexander’s birth is prophesied (v.3) and rule and dominion and will. In this passage we see the mysterious blend of God’s sovereignty and human will. It would seem self-will is real, powerful, volatile and consequential. Lucifer exercises free will and becomes Satan (see Isaiah 14:13-14). Adam and Eve disobey God. Both Adam and angels suffer

Kings And Kingdoms

Daniel 11:1-11

judgment because of disobedience. The Bible's repeated testimony is that human beings are vulnerable to self-will; self-importance (Galatians 6:5); self-righteousness (Luke 18:9); self-pity (Psalm 37); self-seeking (Acts 7:51).

And what was Alexander's will? He wanted to invade Persia for all the sorrow Persia had perpetuated earlier from the time of Xerxes (486-465 B.C.).

Alexander was a shooting star. Like all dictators there is a rise and a fall (v.4). His kingdom is broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven (v.4). The prophecy indicates his posterity (blood relatives) will not play a significant role in the future kingdoms.

The only known son of Alexander was killed in a plot. He had an illegitimate son named Hercules who was not recognized by the *Diodochi* (*the successors*). Those successors included:

Cassander	Macedonia and Greece
Lysimachus	Thrace and Asia Minor
Seleucus	Syria and Babylon
Ptolemy	Levant and Egypt

None of these successors were blood relatives. Hercules was murdered by Polyserichon along with his mother Barsine (Alexander's former mistress). Alexander's mother was murdered, his sister Cleopatra of Epirus was murdered—within 15 years of his death—none of his immediate family remained alive; another fulfillment of Scripture (literally).

Gleason Archer: "The infant son of Alexander III (the Great) was Alexander IV, born of the Persian princess Roxana. Kept under Cassander's custody, he was removed by murder in 310 B.C. His uncle Philip Arrhidaeus, who was the illegitimate brother of Alexander III and mentally deranged, had already been assassinated in 317. Thus there were no descendants. . .to succeed Alexander himself, and the prediction "not to go to his descendants" found fulfillment. The four ruthless and powerful generals named above became the *Diodochi* (*successors*) who engineered the partition of the Macedonian Empire into four realms".

The Kings Of Egypt And Syria (vv.5-11)

5"Also the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion. His dominion shall be a great dominion.

6And at the end of some years they shall join forces, for the daughter of the king of the South shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand; but she shall be given up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in those times.

Kings And Kingdoms

Daniel 11:1-11

Before Dynasty, Dallas, Knots Landing and Peyton Place—there were the Kings of Egypt and Syria.

The Bible does not conceal the broken nature of humanity or its kings and rulers. In this passage the angel will lay out a brief but detailed account of the future kings of Egypt and Syria (vv. 5-44).

The angel describes a future alliance between Egypt and Syria (vv.5-6). The alliance will disintegrate and the two kings will war among themselves (vv.7-20).

Why does the Bible and this prophecy focus on these events? Because of Israel. The king of the South and the king of North are the kingdoms directly north and south of the Glorious Land or the Beautiful Country (v.16).

Can we be given any clue to the present hostility and animosity towards Israel by looking at the hostility and animosity of the nations in the past? Are the events of Israel's past and future somehow connected?

The dead body of Alexander was encased in Bee's Wax and carried to Egypt by Ptolemy. Ptolemy will claim supremacy and jurisdiction over the land of Egypt and Palestine. He will become the father of the Ptolemaic Dynasty. Ptolemy carves out the city of Alexandria; builds a splendid tomb to Alexander and Alexandria will soon become the most important City port in the ancient world.

The notable kings are Ptolemy I Soter (Savior) and Seleucus Nicator.

Seleucus Nicator is appointed vice-regent of Babylon. He was driven out of office by the ambitious general Antigonus. Seleucus fled to Egypt and went to work for Ptolemy. In the Battle of Ipsus he was one of Ptolemy's commanders and effectively engineered the victory over Antigonus (301 B.C.). Seleucus was handsomely rewarded by Ptolemy and was given control over the regions of Cappadocia, part of Phrygia, Upper Syria, Mesopotamia and the Euphrates Valley. He reigned from the Hellespont to the Indus River—in an Empire that was second only to Alexander. The king of the South become strong (Ptolemy) and well as one of his princes (Seleucus).

The next prophecy has as its focus a princess (v.6). The prophetic stage is now occupied by the children of these two kings (south and north). Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.); king of the South and Antiochus II Theos (261-246 B.C.), king of the north.

The king's daughter of the south was named Bernice. There was a temporary peace under Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Seleucus Nicator. Eventually Ptolemy I abdicated the throne—gave the throne to Philadelphus the son of his second wife Bernice (I) and Ptolemy II Philadelphus married a girl named Arsinoe. They gave birth and named their daughter Bernice II.

Kings And Kingdoms

Daniel 11:1-11

Not long after Antiochus I Soter (281-261 B.C.) became the Syrian king war broke out between Syria and Egypt. Let me try to make this Peyton Place (tela novella) as simple as possible. Bernice II; the daughter of Egypt's king Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.) would be given in marriage to the Syrian king Antiochus II Theos (261-246 B.C.).

The problem: Antiochus II Theos was already married to a girl named Laodice. And Laodice was not just any girl. She was the daughter Seleucus Nicator I. He would have to divorce and banish wife number one; and marry wife number two. The progeny from that union (between Antiochus II Theos; and Bernice II) would rule the Syrian kingdom. That's the agreement (v.6).

Another problem: Laodice was not cool with the arrangement. Antiochus II and Laodice already had a son—one Seleucus II Callinicus (meaning: *gloriously triumphant*) (246-226 B.C.).

Laodice decided she would kill her ex-husband his new wife and their new child. "*but she shall not retain the power of her authority*" (v.6). Scholars are divided on whether Laodice had her husband and new wife and child killed for revenge; jealousy; to prevent a Syrian civil war to make sure her son rules—but the net effect was outrage by Ptolemy III over the treatment of his sister and nephew.

Ptolemy III Eurgetes (246-221 B.C.) was the son of Ptolemy II (246-221 B.C.) and sister to Bernice II.

7But from a branch of her roots one shall arise in his place, who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail.

Who is the branch of her roots? Ptolemy III Eurgetes (246-221 B.C.). Bernice II and Ptolemy III are brother and sister. Ptolemy III raises an army and attacks and conquers Syria to avenge his sister's death. Ptolemy III successfully conquers the Syrian capitols of Antioch (on the Orontes River) and Seleucia (this is Seleucia Pieria in Syria).

How will Ptolemy III deal with them and prevail? He will capture Laodice and have her killed. Her son Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226 B.C.) will be left holding the bag. Meaning he will have to answer for his mother's crimes.

8And he shall also carry their gods captive to Egypt, with their princes and their precious articles of silver and gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the North.

Ptolemy III would plunder the wealth of Syria which included gold statues and representations of their gods and goddesses. The prophecy implies the acquisition of substantial wealth. This is exactly what happened. He captured most of the Syrian Empire. His armies took Babylon and they marched east to India. The armies amassed 4,000 talents of gold and 40,000 thousand

Kings And Kingdoms

Daniel 11:1-11

talents of silver; 2500 molten idols and more sacred vessels. In that ancient culture pagans made off with each others deities as a sign of humiliation and submission.

Ptolemy III signed a truce with Seleucus II Callinicus; the truce would last ten years.

9“Also the king of the North shall come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land.

The foolish Syrian king elected to invade Egypt to avenge the humiliation and defeat. He raised an army. He built a navy. His fleet was destroyed in a freak storm. His armies were defeated and he was forced to flee back to Syria. The prophecy literally came true.

10However his sons shall stir up strife, and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one shall certainly come and overwhelm and pass through; then he shall return to his fortress and stir up strife.

Seleucus II Callinicus died of injuries sustained in war (he fell off his horse). In history the sons of Seleucus II were Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-223 B.C.) and Antiochus III Magus (the Great) (223-187 B.C.). They would continue their father’s plans of revenge and conquest. They would attack Phoenicia (under Egyptian control); Palestine (under Egyptian control) and Egypt’s fortress. The sons were determined to restore the glory of Syria and avenge their father’s defeat by Ptolemy. The fortified city of Seleucia was only 16 miles from Antioch. The city was still in the hands of an Egyptian garrison. In order to have some idea what that meant to the Syrians; imagine Mexico with a garrison at the Alamo. Imagine a British garrison in New Orleans. Imagine a Saudi garrison in New Jersey. Unthinkable. Unacceptable.

11“And the king of the South shall be moved with rage, and go out and fight with him, with the king of the North, who shall muster a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into the hand of his enemy.

The king of Egypt at this point is Ptolemy IV. He will muster an army and go and fight with Antiochus III of Syria. Antiochus III or the Great was known to have waged at least two campaigns against Egypt. **In the first he was defeated and was forced to cede much of Palestine to Egypt. But some years later he launched a second successful attack against Egypt.** The city of Jerusalem was deeply divided. In the city there were pro-Syrian and pro-Egyptian factions.

Ptolemy will defeat the king of Syria. The prophecy will be fulfilled literally.

Conclusion

Kings And Kingdoms

Daniel 11:1-11

The continued rise and eventual fall of Antiochus III will be continued in vv.15-20 where he captures a well fortified Egyptian city and eventually gains control over all Palestine. No one will be able to stand against him. He will be free to do as he pleases—that is until he concocts a plan to overthrow the entire Ptolemaic Kingdom. Another marriage. He will give his daughter Cleopatra to marry Ptolemy V expecting her to bring down the dynasty of his enemy! Instead Cleopatra will betray her father and encourage Ptolemy to establish an alliance with Rome against him.

And you thought the Bible was boring!