

## **The Evil Syrian King**

### **Daniel 11:21-35**

#### **Introduction**

The Prophet Daniel gives Israel a sneak peek at a coming prince.

We are given a glimpse of one of history's mysterious rulers. His name: Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.). The name Epiphanes means *illustrious, glorious manifestation or glorious one*. The Jews in a play on words called him *epimanes*—"madman".

By choosing this name he claims to be a glorious manifestation of the gods he worshiped. Antiochus IV impressed his image on his coins and included the word for god (*theous*) with Zeus holding Nike (victory) in his hand.

Liberal critics of Daniel believe the book was written by some unknown person who identified himself as Daniel the Seer in 164 B.C.). I am convinced that the Book of Daniel was written by Daniel the Prophet (identified by Jesus Himself) at the times he himself recorded. I am also convinced that chapter 11 was written by Daniel as pure predictive prophecy.

The events listed in verses 21-35 take place over about ten years.

The passage prophesies the rise to power of a sinister and satanic king (vv.21-24). This king will attempt to invade Egypt (vv.25-27). The prophecy details his attempt to recover the lands of the Galilee and Samaria and Judea. The prophecy includes details of a treaty that will be broken (v. 27). The prophecy includes the persecution of the Jewish people (vv.28-35). What is important about this prophecy is the revelation of Satan's plan to destroy the worship of God's people, in God's Temple, in order to sabotage God's plan of salvation both for the Jews and the world.

We have every reason to believe Satan will reprise his plan. Destroy worship. Pollute the Temple. Sabotage God's plan for salvation.

#### **The King's Craftiness (vv.21-23)**

*Daniel 11:21-23 (NKJV)* 21 And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue.

The text predicts a vile person would rise to power. The person will not be an immediate heir to the throne but will come in what looks like peace but will secure the kingdom through intrigue. The death of Antiochus III brought to the throne his second son Seleucus IV. Seleucus IV had a son named Demetrius I Soter. He was the rightful heir to the Seleucid throne.

Seleucus IV had his brother Antiochus IV released from Roman custody and instead sent his son Demetrius (the crown prince) to fulfill the terms of the losses incurred by Antiochus III.

## **The Evil Syrian King**

### **Daniel 11:21-35**

Seleucus IV is murdered; Antiochus IV marries his brother's widow and becomes the ward or regent of his nephew Demetrius I Soter.

The time Antiochus IV spent in Rome must have had some effect on him.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes is a type or shadow of the future man of sin; the Antichrist. Both have no legitimate right to rule. Both came in the name of peace and both seized power by intrigue.

I believe the reference *seize the kingdom by intrigue* is a reference to his plans for Jerusalem.

His plan was to convert Jerusalem to a Greek City State. After the death of his brother (Seleucus IV) he marries his brother's widow and secures custody of his nephew Demetrius.

Antiochus IV believes the Jews in Jerusalem should finally make the transition and adopt the language and culture and values and religion of the Greek Empire.

Much could be said of the many intrigues that Antiochus used to come to power and stay in power. But certainly the most important intrigue involves Jerusalem and the leadership of the Jews in Jerusalem.

Both are vile or despicable, distain; contempt (*bazah*).

Historians are split over what caused Antiochus IV to act out in the course of his reign. All agree his acts are crimes against God and humanity.

*22 With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant.*

The armies of Antiochus IV will secure control of Jerusalem. The city had in the past been controlled by Egypt and Egypt's successor kings. The armies of Antiochus will like a flood sweep away the armies of Ptolemy.

Who is this prince of the covenant? It seems to be a reference to the High Priest in Jerusalem; Onias III. He will be killed by his plotting brother Menelaus in 170 B.C. who will secure the office of the High Priest for himself. Menelaus bought the office of High Priest by offering Antiochus the most money.

Onias III will eventually be succeeded by his brother Joshua (who changes his name to Jason). Jason promotes the Greek values and attempts to integrate Greek culture values and ideas.

*23 And after the league is made with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people.*

## **The Evil Syrian King**

### **Daniel 11:21-35**

Two brothers in Egypt were posturing and vying for power. Antiochus IV will form a league (covenant—treaty) with Ptolemy VI Philometer against his rival Ptolemy VII Euergetes II.

Antiochus attempts to gain power and control over Egypt. He was able to secure control and establish garrisons at the border of Egypt and Memphis and just outside Alexandria.

### **The King's Conquests (v.24)**

*24He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers: he shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but only for a time.*

What did Antiochus IV do differently than his predecessors? Instead of spoiling the strongholds to increase his own wealth and power he will use the wealth and power to secure the obedience and loyalty of those in his kingdom.

### **The King's Confrontations (vv.25-30)**

*25“He shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the South with a great army. And the king of the South shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand, for they shall devise plans against him.*

Who is the king of the South at this point? Ptolemy VI Philometer (181-146 B.C.). Antiochus will launch two attacks against Egypt in between 170-168 B.C. Egypt has a powerful well equipped army but it will not be strong enough to defeat the armies of Antiochus IV.

Antiochus IV will execute a series of plots as trusted supporters double cross the king of Egypt.

*26Yes, those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain.*

Not everyone gets to eat at the king's table. Only his most trusted advisors. They will conspire against the king ensuring his defeat.

*27Both these kings' hearts shall be bent on evil, and they shall speak lies at the same table; but it shall not prosper, for the end will still be at the appointed time.*

What is happening in our text? Both kings sit at the same table. The victor (Antiochus IV) and the vanquished (Ptolemy VI Philometer). Why are they at the same table? The pretense of peace. They both claim they are looking to live together in peace. But both are bent on securing their own advantages. Both are deceptive. Ptolemy VI Philometer was working to make sure he

## **The Evil Syrian King**

### **Daniel 11:21-35**

was reinstated on the throne of Egypt. Antiochus IV Epiphanes sought control of all of Egypt; it's vast wealth and what seemed like an unlimited supply of grain. Since both bargained from bad faith and in perpetual deceit neither achieved a satisfying outcome. Neither had any idea they were fulfilling prophecy! The Egyptian king was in the weaker position and was faced with the prospect of sharing power with his brother.

Does this sound familiar to you?

*28 While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land.*

What happens? Antiochus IV leaves the bargaining table with great wealth. But note: "his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land".

What happened in the heart of Antiochus and in Jerusalem that set the stage for such an awful confrontation?

*29 "At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter.*

*30 For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. "So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.*

### **The King's Cruelty (vv.31-35)**

*31 And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.*

We are not sure if Antiochus IV himself had anything directly to do with the events surrounding the desecration or if the events were done by proxy.

This is the moment in history where Antiochus IV allows the Temple proper to be entered by Greek loyalists. According to the book of Maccabees, an individual by the name of Geron was sent by Antiochus to dismantle the Jewish religious practices.

In December of 167 B.C. a system of eliminating Jewish religious practices and exercising Greek religious practices began in earnest. The Jewish sacrificial system was halted. The Sabbath observances and the Festival observances were suspended. Worship sites were set up in the immediate vicinities of Judea and Samaria and the Galilee. Circumcision was strictly forbidden.

## **The Evil Syrian King**

### **Daniel 11:21-35**

The temple was consecrated to Zeus and was to incorporate all the rites and rituals that accompany normal Greek worship practices (which included polytheism and sacred temple prostitution).

*32Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.*

*33And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering.*

*34Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue.*

*35And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.*

In broad categories we see two groups; “those who do wickedly against the covenant” (v.32) “*and some of those of understanding*” or “some of the wise shall stumble” (NIV). Daniel describes a time of trial and persecution even for those who do what’s right or seek to honor and glorify God.

### **Conclusion**

**Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that they should all become one people, and everyone should give up his particular practices And the king sent word to Judah to follow practices foreign to the country and put a stop to whole burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings at the sanctuary, and to break the sabbaths and profane the feasts and pollute sanctuary and sanctified. • .and anyone who did not obey the command of the king should die.**

**Eleazar who was glad to undergo torture rather than eat pork. In another instance a mother and her seven sons suffered the most cruel tortures "rather than transgress the laws of our forefathers" and were finally fried in a great pan, one at a time.**

**Whatever the historical accuracy of these narratives, they do at least reflect an abiding faithfulness to their laws and a heroic willingness to suffer torture rather than forsake a meticulous observance of them.**

**The Evil Syrian King**  
**Daniel 11:21-35**