

God's Faithfulness Through Intense History

Daniel 11:1-35

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Habakkuk 2:13

Introduction: Rebellion is built into the fiber of all of us. As a child we love the word "no" and "mine", as young adults we believe we clearly know better than our parents, and as adults we don't like anyone telling us what we have to do. God created us to worship and submit to Him, making much of Him in worship and finding joy in obedience. However, when sin entered the world which meant we are ALL BORN SINFUL, our DNA is that which not only naturally rejects authority in general, but we reject God's authority over us. This is not relegated only to individuals, but nations, civilizations, and countries. Nations rage under the hand of God, trying their best to be independent and believing that they have the secret to solve what every other civilization has failed to do. This is why Scripture says:

*"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot **in vain?***

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed." Psalm 2:1-2 (cf. Ps. 46:6)

*"Behold, **the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales...All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.**"*

Isaiah 40:15,17

*Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that people labor merely for fire, and **nations weary themselves for nothing.**"*

Habakkuk 2:13

In other words, nations themselves inevitably will kick against the authority and sovereignty of God and will find their end when God has accomplished His will through them (Dan. 2:20-21). We see this in a focused way in the **book of Daniel**, not only as we've looked at kingdoms of the world during and after Daniel (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome), but particularly in the **nation of Israel**, or the Jewish people. In order to understand the visions of Daniel, we **must understand how the nation of Israel fits in, since they are clearly an emphasis of the OT as well as time to come.**

Why is Israel so significant? God did not choose Israel because they were significant, but they are significant because God chose them. Listen to what **Deuteronomy 7:6-8** says:

*6 "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. **The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.** 7 **It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples,** 8 **but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.***

Israel was strong, united, and world dominant for an extremely short amount of time, relative to other world dynasties (fewer than 200 years). We can point to a number of more impressive people groups, culture builders, and power brokers. However, God chose to use

Israel as a means of showing all nations about His distinctive nature (Isa. 45:4-6), with Her warts and all. Now, we remember that God calls His followers today in the same way: we do not offer our intellect, gifts, or works as means of Him accepting us, but He saves us IN SPITE of these things, because He LOVES US and GAVE CHRIST TO DIE in our place (see 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5).

Why is it important to understand this about Israel? The vision of **Daniel 11-12** is centered around how a segment of history affected them, especially a small strip of land on the Mediterranean Sea called the Promised or Glorious Land. What we will see is what God predicted in **Deut. 4:25-31**, that if Israel went after **idols and did what was evil, God would be angry with them**. They would perish from the land, would be scattered among the peoples, and would serve other gods in the land they ended up. However, they would eventually **seek the Lord their God, would find Him, would return to God and obey, and God would be merciful, not forgetting the covenant He swore to them**. Daniel thought this would be a **70 year process in Babylon**, and he was partially correct. But the 70 years were just the beginning. God has put Israel through a time of punishment, refining, pruning, revealing, and preparing. Daniel 11 tells of what was future for Daniel but what happened to Israel in the hundreds of years following Daniel, and what is still to come for Israel and Promised land in the future. Daniel 11:1-35 contains **135 specific, verifiable, historic events that have already happened**, which have caused some scholars to question the truthfulness of Daniel's authorship. **F.W Farrar, a liberal critic said,**

*"If this chapter were indeed the utterance of the prophet in the Babylonian Exile, nearly 400 years before the events ---- events of which many are of small comparative importance in the world's history --- which are here so enigmatically and yet minutely depicted, the revelation would be the most unique and perplexing in the whole of Scriptures."*¹

The Bible is **trustworthy**, for faith, godliness, history, and prophecy. What we have here in Daniel 11 is distinct detail, but NOT every detail, and it all centers around the effect on Israel, so certain things are not given as much attention as could be (i.e. Alexander the Great). We will try our best to summarize and draw out the emphasis of each section. We have provided **two charts that explain the names, dates, and locations** so that you can review this on your own since we will not simply repeat all of it.

The breakdown is simple: Prophecies given about Persia (v. 2), Greece (v. 3-4), Egypt and Syria (5-20) and finally about **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** (21-35). For sake of clarity we'll break it down into **two main sections: The raging futility of nations (2-20) and The raging insanity of history(21-35)**.

THE RAGING FUTILITY OF THE NATIONS (11:2-20)

The first year of Cyrus would have put the date at 539 B.C. and would lay out history from Persia through the coming of Antichrist (11:36-45) fulfilling what Dan. 10:14 said, explaining what would happen to the people of Israel **in the latter days. For the vision is for the days yet to come**.

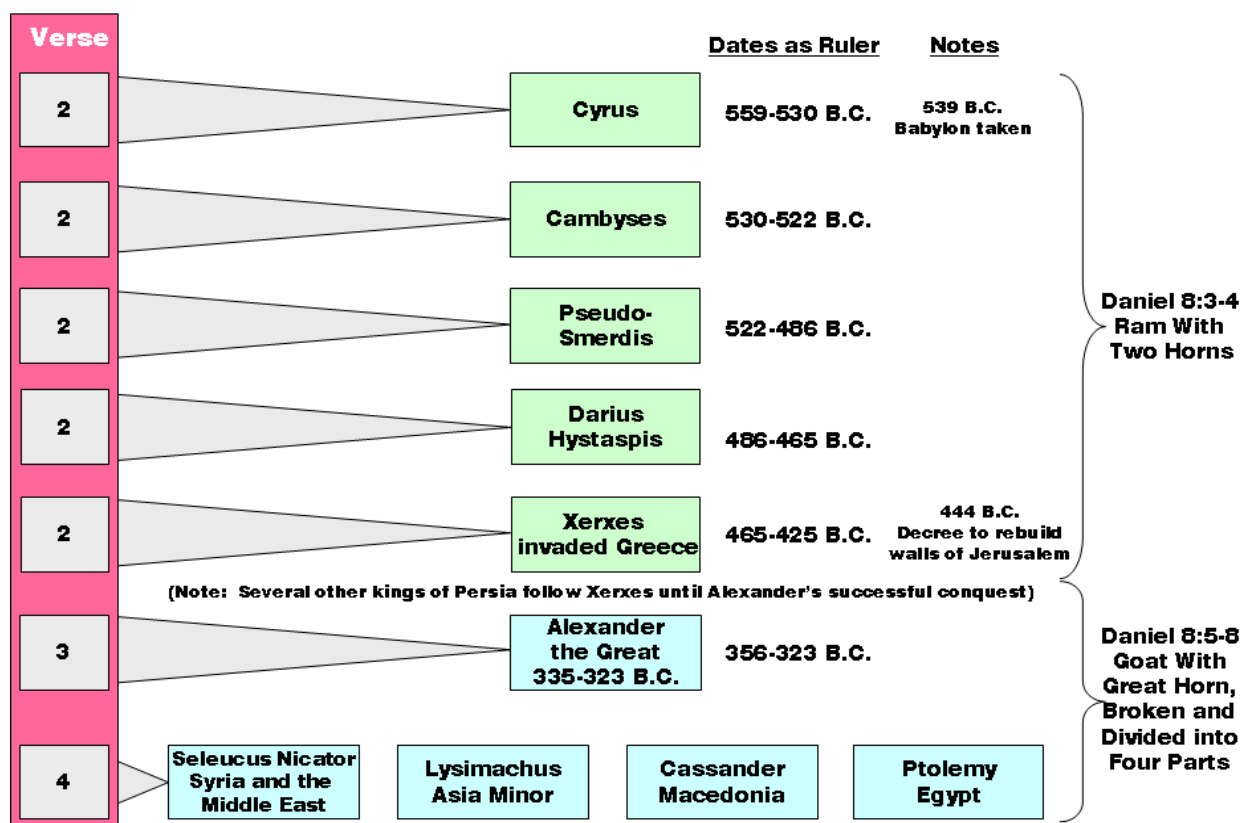
If you reference the chart on the next page, you'll see the brevity and succinct way the angel summarized many years of history. A few things to highlight. 1) The fourth Persian king highlighted was **Xerxes, or as we know him, Ahasuerus of the book of Esther**. He attacked Greece in the **battle of Salamis** (480 BC), and though he had a numeric advantage, was handed a terrible defeat, but also lead to a massive military campaign by Greece in a

¹ John F. Walvoord, *Daniel*, p. 320.

counterattack by Alexander. 2) **Alexander the Great** is mentioned in verse 3 (336 - 323 B.C), and is characterized by **might and dominion**, but not much ink is given to his massive accomplishments, since what happened AFTER his rule is of particular interest to Israel. 3) After Alexander's untimely death (most likely by poisoning or illness), the extraordinary kingdom was DIVIDED into 4 parts. Alexander's own sons (Alexander IV and Herakles) were both murdered, so no part of his empire went to "his descendants". Nothing to follow would come close to rival the height of Alexander's kingdom.

From here, the text focuses on **two particular dynasties: the Ptolemies of Egypt and Seleucids of Syria**. The lens of focus is on these two since **between these two warring factions** was a band of Israel who were back in the sliver of land.

Timeline of the Persian Rulers, Daniel Chapter 11



Daniel 11:5-12 map out primarily a time of Ptolemaic (Egyptian) domination. Sometime around 250 B.C., Ptolemy II tried to strengthen his rule and gave his daughter **Berenice in marriage to Antiochus II** with the hope that their offspring would rule on the Seleucid throne. It looked good on paper, but has disastrous consequences (and let's be honest, as do all politically arranged marriages). Antiochus had to divorce his wife Laodice to make it all work, but when Ptolemy II died two years later, Antiochus divorced Berenice and brought back his wife. But she was not happy. She apparently **poisoned Antiochus and killed Berenice and her child**, and put Seleucus II on the throne (DO NOT MESS WITH LAODICE). However, this led to much bloodletting. Berenice's brother was Ptolemy III (v. 7), who attacked the North, executed Laodice, and had much victory over Seleucid land (v. 7-8). Around 242 BC Seleucus II made an unsuccessful attack against Egypt (9).

This opened the stage for **Antiochus III** (the "Great" - 223 - 187 B.C - and father of Antiochus Epiphanes) to do battle with Ptolemy IV. In Dan. 11:11b, we learn that the king of the north will be great but given into the hand of the king of the south. This happened in **217 B.C. at Raphia**, where A. the Great was soundly defeated and lost 17,000 troops, with Egypt losing only 2,200.

But 13 years later A. the Great made a comeback. (Dan. 11:13-17). During this time the land of Israel was passed into Seleucid control (16). Antiochus tried the same tactic and gave his daughter **Cleopatra** (v. 17) to try to influence Egypt, but the plan backfired as Cleo was more pro-Egyptian than loyal to her dad. After losing badly to the Romans, Antiochus tried to rob temples to pay for his war campaigns, but ended up being killed by a mob of Zeus Zealots in Elymas in 187 BC (v. 19). After his death, Seleucus IV (187-175) attempted to steal from the Temple treasury in Jerusalem, but had a terrifying dream of attacking angels and stopped. Later, Heliodorus, Seleucus IV high priest poisoned him, and so he was *broken, neither in anger nor in battle* (Dan 11:20b).

Timeline of Alexander's Divided Kingdom, Daniel Chapter 11

Verse	Northern Kingdom	Western Kingdoms		Southern Kingdom
4	Seleucus Nicator Syria and the Middle East	Lysimachus Asia Minor	Cassander Macedonia	Ptolemy Egypt
5	Seleucus Nicator	A General (southern kingdom) will rule his own kingdom (north) and become stronger		Ptolemy
6	Antiochus II Theos	An alliance by marriage Berenice (southern kingdom) to Antiochus (north)		Ptolemy II Philadelphus
7-9	Seleucus II Callinicus	Ptolemy Euergetes, brother of Berenice will conquer the northern kingdom		Ptolemy III Euergetes
10-14	Seleucus III Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great	Continual warfare between the kings of the north and south, with Israel in the middle, and suffering		Ptolemy IV Philpator
15-16	Antiochus the Great	Defeats Egypt, and will overtake the land of Israel		Ptolemy Epiphanes
17	Antiochus the Great	Antiochus gives Cleopatra in marriage for an alliance with Egypt		Ptolemy Epiphanes
18-19	Antiochus the Great	Antiochus will war on the western kingdom, but will be turned back by the rise of the Roman Empire		
20	Seleucus IV Philopator	He will impose taxes on Israel, but in a few days he will be destroyed		
21 - 35	Antiochus IV Epiphanes	Rise of the "little horn," who will war on the southern kingdom, but will be turned back by the rise of the Roman Empire and will turn on Israel		

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It's good to stop here and ask a "so what" question. We are given a snapshot of history that set the stage for one of the greatest persecutors of Israel in the world, but we also see the **futility of the nations**. Kingdoms are broken and divided (v. 4), brokered marriages that lead to horrible murder (6b), military defeats (9), evaporating power (12b), disloyal daughters (17b), the fall of arrogant leaders (18-19), and backstabbing insurrections (20b). **Iain Duguid** said this in his commentary on Daniel:

*"On one level, it is the continual story of wars and rumors of wars, as one human ruler and empire after another seeks to gain power by **cunning or force**. Yet though the tide in the affairs of men come in and goes out in the end it **accomplishes precisely nothing**. The balance of power in earthly politics may shift but it never comes to permanent rest. On the other hand, therefore, Daniel 11 shows us the fallen world pursuing the wind and finding it elusive. **What do power and politics gain for their toil?**"²*

This actually brought me much comfort this week in observing and contemplating our own place in history. We can feel very much like we are caught in the gears of insidious plans by corrupt officials, where policies shift, inconsistencies are rampant, leaving choices we may have to make for conscience sake. How do we deal with this? Where do we find comfort? Not only in the fact that God is ultimately in control, but also **"that our Lord brings judgment not only at the climax of history but also WITHIN history as He injects futility into the designs of the self-exalting, saint ignoring rulers of the world, so that their schemes end in shambles."**³ No political entity in rebellion against God wins in the end, and though we may feel the brunt of the pain along the way in terms of loss and suffering (see Heb. 11:32-40), we not only hold onto the fact that we look forward to something better, but also that judgment will come to the raging nations.

THE RAGING INSANITY OF HISTORY (11:21-35)

These next 15 verses cover 12 years of time (as opposed to 355 years in 19 verses before this), from **175 - 163 BC**, and all if it is focused on one man, **Antiochus IV**, who self titled as **Epiphanes**. He is described as "a *contemptible person*" (v. 21), and he exemplifies what Antichrist will be to come (vv. 36-45). He would do much by way of evil and destruction to the people in Jerusalem, but all of his actions would only be *"for a time"* (24), *"for the end is yet to be at the time appointed"* (27), he'll return *"at the time appointed"* (29), and we are still awaiting *"the appointed time"* to come (35). In other words, Antiochus was terrible, but he only could work in the midst of God's timing and appointments.

First, Antiochus came to the throne though **flatteries** (21) as he seized power after Dementrius, the son of Seleucus IV, was held hostage in Rome and another nephew, who was an infant, was conveniently murdered 5 years later. The main driver for Antiochus and his central role with Israel came in verse 29, where he tried a second attack into Egypt. Verse 30 explains that Roman ships (or ships of *Kittim*) *would* greet him with the Roman general, Popilius Laenas, who promptly informed Antiochus to cease and desist his designs on Egypt or be considered an enemy of Rome. In an epic story, Poillius demanded an answer, and when Antiochus said, "I'll get back to you", the general drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus' feet and said, **"you must decide before you step outside that."** Antiochus had no choice but to submit, but this lead to a **frustrated, maniacal fury against Israel**. Verses 31-35 recount the atrocities Antiochus perpetrated against Israel and Jerusalem. In **167 BC**, he instituted a religious rampage against God's covenant people.

As we saw in Daniel 8, Antiochus profaned the Temple, cutting off all religious practices such as *circumcision, possessing the Scriptures, sacrifices, and observing feasts*, with the consequence of death to any who would dare defy him. He performed the ultimate slander, the abomination, when he sacrificed a pig on the altar (1 Macc. 1:47, 2 Macc. 6:4-5), and forced priests to eat the defiled meat. He forced the issue with the inhabitants of Jerusalem, where the options were to **live as a pagan or die as a true follower of YHWH...and though many died, many also caved.**

² IM Duguid, "Reformed Expository Commentary", p. 200

³ Dale Ralph Davis, "The Message of Daniel", p. 152.

Daniel 11:34-35 gives us the reason behind all of this, and has implications for us today.

When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery, 35 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.

1) This was all for the **refinement and purification of the people** - God refines our faith because it is precious to Him (1 Peter 1:6-8). Though Israel had failed to live up to the covenant realities of their commitment to God, God was doing all of this to draw them back, to refine them with fire, and make them pure. We know that since Christ has already done the work to make us white as snow positionally, God will continue to turn up the heat circumstantially so that we will yield to Him completely. We often are not forced to come to grips with what we TRULY believe until we have been stripped of all control, pride, and any other crutch we've been leaning on.

2) This was the great **separator** or revealer of the faithful - Antiochus' reign of terror revealed to the people who were true followers of God and who were simply pragmatists trying to survive. As our country continues on a path *away* from liberty or freedom and more governmental control, we will be forced into more and more choices of who we will serve, where our loyalties lie, and what we are willing to give up. We need much prayer, grace, and unity to face these challenges, as we desire to be faithful to our God above all else.

3) This was to **encourage** the people - Remember, Daniel received this hundreds of years BEFORE it happened, so that the people of Israel could prepare for it. But they also knew that this would only last for a time and no longer. God would only let this reign of terror continue for as long as His purposes were met. Antiochus, and all world leaders/despots only operate within the *appointed times*.

Dale Davis reminded me of the time I drove a rental truck from the Bay Area down to Santa Clarita right before Erin and I got married, bringing a mattress, piano, and kitchen table. The truck was large, rode high, and though it was powerful, it had one hindrance: *it wouldn't go over 58 mph!* No matter how hard I dug my foot into the floor, it would accelerate and then level off, making it impossible to go faster than the settings on the engine. That is the point of "the appointed time". We remember that all that went on with Israel was governed, and all that we are facing now is FOR A TIME, and no longer. God is **refining us, revealing in us, and encouraging us to hold fast, to trust Him, to stand firm, and rest in Him until the end, since the end is coming and the end is sure.**