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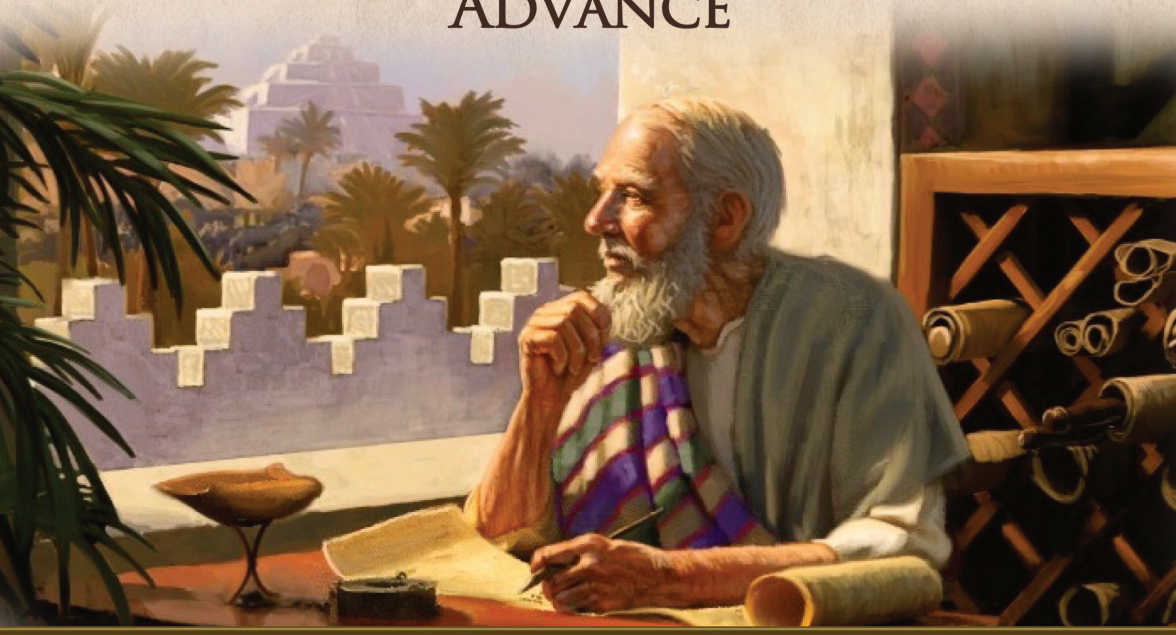
The Daniel 11 Prophecy

History From The 5th – 1st Centuries BC, Detailed In Advance



MICHAEL FILIPEK

THE DANIEL 11 PROPHECY

HISTORY FROM THE 5TH-1ST CENTURIES BC,
DETAILED IN ADVANCE

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LetUsReason
PUBLISHING

The Daniel 11 Prophecy: History from the 5th-1st Centuries BC, Detailed in Advance
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Daniel 11 contains the longest and most detailed continuous prophecy in the Bible concerning events that have already been fulfilled in history.[1] In one extraordinary revelation given to Daniel, the chapter traces centuries of history in advance, describing the rise and fall of rulers, wars between competing kingdoms, political alliances, betrayals, royal marriages, invasions, persecution, the desecration of the Temple, and the changing powers that would control or directly affect the Jewish people. These events can be compared in remarkable detail with the historical record preserved from the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods.

This characteristic gives Daniel 11 an importance that reaches far beyond the study of ancient history. The Bible makes a habit of detailing history in advance. Again and again, Scripture announces events before they occur and later history records the people, kingdoms, conflicts, and circumstances that correspond to what was written. Daniel 11 stands as one of the greatest examples because its predictions are not confined to a single ruler or isolated event. The prophecy follows an extended historical sequence across generations, moving from one ruler and kingdom to another while preserving the

political relationships, conflicts, alliances, and consequences that connect them. What emerges is a consistent demonstration of detailed knowledge of history before that history unfolds.

Scripture presents this ability to declare future events as something belonging uniquely to God. He Himself points to it as evidence of His unique nature and sovereign authority:

> **9** Remember the former things of old: for **I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done**, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:
>
> -Isaiah 46:9-10

That is why fulfilled prophecy provides such powerful proof of the divine authorship of Scripture. Once a prophecy can be shown to have been written before the events it describes, its detailed fulfillment cannot be explained by ordinary human foresight. A single prediction might be dismissed as coincidence, especially if it is vague or lacks specific detail. But a long sequence of specific predictions corresponding with successive historical events presents an entirely different kind of evidence. When Scripture repeatedly demonstrates knowledge of history before that history occurs, we are confronted with undeniable evidence of an Author whose knowledge transcends the normal dimensions in which human beings experience time. In this way, prophecy authenticates God's message as truly coming from Him because it bears a characteristic that belongs uniquely to Him – the ability to declare history before it unfolds. The prophetic character of the Bible therefore provides undeniable evidence of its extra-dimensional origin and divine authorship.

The extraordinary detail of Daniel 11 is one of the main reasons critics have challenged the traditional date of the book. Their argument begins with the assumption that genuine supernatural prophecy cannot occur, so the possibility that Daniel accurately described events

centuries before they happened is excluded before the evidence is considered. Because supernatural prophecy has already been ruled out, the extraordinary correspondence between Daniel 11 and later history is reinterpreted to fit a naturalistic explanation. The remarkable accuracy of the prophecy is then turned into an argument for a later date: if Daniel could not have known these events in advance, the book must have been written after they had already occurred. Critical scholars therefore place the composition of Daniel during the Maccabean crisis, usually between 167 and 164 BC, and argue that an unknown Judean writer recorded recent history and presented it as prophecy spoken centuries earlier by Daniel.[2]

Yet this Maccabean theory does not withstand the full body of evidence surrounding the Book of Daniel. Its late date is driven by the prior rejection of supernatural prophecy, while the manuscript evidence, ancient Jewish testimony, historical accuracy, linguistic evidence, and other features of the book point toward a much earlier origin. We have examined that evidence in detail and demonstrated the serious weaknesses of the Maccabean theory in the companion study, *Establishing the Prophetic Validity of the Book of Daniel*.[3] Rather than repeat that entire case here, our present purpose is to examine Daniel 11 itself and place its predictions directly alongside the historical record.

While the historical detail can become specific and nuanced, especially as Daniel 11 moves through generations of Seleucid and Ptolemaic rulers with similar names, the central question will remain straightforward throughout this study: does the historical record correspond to what Daniel wrote? We will answer that question by allowing the prophecy and the historical evidence to stand beside one another, verse by verse and event by event. As that comparison unfolds, Daniel 11 will stand as one of Scripture's strongest demonstrations of divine authorship, revealing detailed knowledge of history before that history occurred.

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1. John F. Walvoord, *Daniel*, rev. and ed. Charles H. Dyer and Philip E. Rawley, Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012, p. 315.
2. John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993, pp. 24-38.
3. Michael Filipek, *Establishing the Prophetic Validity of the Book of Daniel*, Springfield, NJ: LetUsReason Publishing, 2026.

CHAPTER 2

ESTABLISHING OUR PROPHETIC PERSPECTIVE

Before looking directly at Daniel 11, it is important to orient ourselves to the setting and context of the prophecy so we understand when the revelation was given, whom it concerns, and the perspective from which its events unfold.

The Setting and Focus of the Revelation

Daniel received the revelation recorded in Daniel 10-12 during the third year of Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, approximately 536 BC.[1] Cyrus had recently conquered Babylon, ending Babylonian rule and bringing the region under the Persian Empire.[2] The prophecy begins from this historical setting and looks forward to events that would affect Daniel's people for centuries to come.

> **In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel**, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.
>
> -Daniel 10:1

A few verses later, the angel explains whom the prophecy concerns:

> Now I am come to make thee understand **what shall befall thy people** in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.
> -Daniel 10:14

Daniel 10:14 gives us one of the most important keys to understanding the prophecy: its central concern is Daniel's people, the Jewish people. Daniel 11 is not intended to give a general history of the great empires that followed Persia. It follows those kingdoms, rulers, and conflicts specifically where they intersect with Israel and affect the Jewish people. Israel is therefore the central point of reference throughout the prophecy. This also explains the repeated titles "king of the north" and "king of the south" that we will encounter in the chapter. They are geographic designations viewed from the land of Israel. The Seleucid kingdom lay to the north, while the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt lay to the south. Israel stood between these two competing powers, and their armies repeatedly fought over or passed through its territory.[3] Understanding Israel as the center of the prophecy helps explain why Daniel gives extensive attention to some rulers and events while passing quickly over others: the focus remains on what would happen to Daniel's people.

From there, Daniel 11 moves forward through the rise of Greece under Alexander the Great, the division of his empire after his death, and the succession of rulers and conflicts that followed. A large portion of the prophecy concerns the centuries of struggle that eventually lead to Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Maccabean crisis, but the prophecy does not stop there. It continues into the period of Roman dominance, describing events that we will identify with Herod the Great and the conflict involving Octavian, Mark Antony, and Cleopatra, before returning to the closing years of Herod's reign. The revelation then continues directly into Daniel 12, where its horizon reaches the end times, the future deliverance of Israel, and resurrection. Daniel 11 therefore spans far more than a single ruler or period. Much of its detailed historical content falls within the centuries between the

Old and New Testaments, often called the "silent years," while the prophecy ultimately reaches beyond that period altogether.

Daniel 11 and the "Silent Years"

The approximately four centuries between the Old and New Testaments are often called the "silent years." The expression is understandable because no new books of the Old Testament were being given during this period. But it can also be misleading, because Daniel 11 had already revealed in remarkable detail many of the events that would unfold during those centuries.

The so-called "silent years" came after Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity and formed the centuries leading to the coming of the Messiah. Israel had already experienced severe judgment for covenant disobedience and had been restored to the land. These centuries should have been a time of renewed faithfulness, careful attention to the Scriptures, and preparation for the promised Messiah. Daniel 9:25 had even given the nation a prophetic countdown pointing to the exact year of His arrival.[4]

Instead, Jewish religious life changed substantially during these centuries. The Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and other religious authorities became increasingly influential, while human traditions and outward observance assumed a prominent place alongside genuine zeal for the Law.[5] When Jesus began His ministry, He confronted a religious system that had been shaped by these developments. Human traditions were sometimes elevated above God's Word, outward righteousness could mask inward corruption, and meticulous attention to religious detail could coexist with neglect of the weightier matters of the Law (Matthew 15:1-9; 23:23-28). These developments form an important backdrop to many of the conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders recorded throughout the Gospels.

The result was tragic. Israel had returned from Babylon, possessed the Scriptures, and had been given centuries to prepare for Messiah, yet when He came the nation as a whole failed to recognize Him. Jesus specifically connected the judgment coming upon Jerusalem with this

failure, declaring that the city would be destroyed "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:44). Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD,[6] and Jesus had already foretold that the Jewish people would be "led away captive into all nations" (Luke 21:24). While the Babylonian captivity had been followed by a return to the land, the rejection of Messiah would bring a far more extensive judgment. Instead of being exiled to one nation for seventy years, the Jewish people would be scattered throughout the nations of the world for nearly two millennia.

Daniel 11 therefore connects Israel's return from exile with the world into which Christ was eventually born. It traces in advance the centuries of Gentile rule and upheaval that shaped the nation between those two points, giving the so-called "silent years" a defined place within the continuing biblical history of Israel.

Patterns of Prophetic Fulfillment

Biblical prophecy does not always move from prediction to fulfillment in a single step. Some prophecies contain a real near-term fulfillment that also establishes a pattern for a greater far-term fulfillment. Prophecy can also move directly from one period of history to another without revealing the length of time between them. Both features become important in understanding Daniel 11 and its continuation into Daniel 12.

The first is typological fulfillment. In this pattern, a real historical person or event also serves as a pattern that points forward to something greater. A familiar example is Jonah. Jesus said, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Jonah's experience actually happened in history, but Jesus revealed that it also anticipated His own burial and resurrection. In the same way, a historical event can have significance within its own setting while also foreshadowing a greater fulfillment still to come.

This same pattern appears in Daniel 11 with the "abomination that

maketh desolate" associated with Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Antiochus historically desecrated the Temple and brought an end to its sacrifices, fulfilling the prophecy within the events of his own time.[7] Yet long after Antiochus had died, Jesus referred to "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet" as an event still future (Matthew 24:15). Antiochus therefore provides the near-term historical fulfillment while also establishing a pattern that will be repeated in a greater way by the future Antichrist. The same kind of typological relationship becomes important later in Daniel 11 as other historical rulers display characteristics that also anticipate this final ruler.

The second principle is prophetic foreshortening. This occurs when prophecy places events from different periods together without describing the interval between them, moving directly from one event to another even when a long span of time separates their fulfillments. A familiar example is Zechariah 9:9-10. Verse 9 foretells Christ's Triumphal Entry at His First Coming, declaring, "thy King cometh unto thee" and describing Him as "lowly, and riding upon an ass." Yet the very next verse jumps forward to His future worldwide reign, when "his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." The prophecy moves directly from the First Coming to the Second Coming, passing over the intervening millennia without mentioning them. This is the pattern we find as Daniel 11 gives way to Daniel 12.

The historical sequence of Daniel 11 reaches its conclusion in verse 45, and Daniel 12 immediately shifts to the end times, describing Israel's future time of unparalleled trouble, deliverance, and resurrection. The prophecy passes over the intervening millennia entirely, moving from the historical events of Daniel 11 to the end-time events of Daniel 12 without explaining the gap between them. Although many conservative commentators place this jump to the end times at Daniel 11:36,[8] we will show that the historical sequence continues through verse 45 and that the chronological jump actually occurs between Daniel 11:45 and Daniel 12:1.

These two patterns help explain how Daniel 11 can remain firmly rooted in identifiable historical events while also carrying a greater

prophetic significance. Its near-term fulfillments establish patterns that point forward to the end times, while its final transition into Daniel 12 carries the prophecy directly from ancient history to its ultimate future horizon.

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1. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, rev. ed., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, p. 254.
2. A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, Texts from Cuneiform Sources, Vol. 5, Locust Valley, NY: J.J. Augustin, 1975, pp. 109-110, Column III, lines 5-20.
3. David A. deSilva, *Judea under Greek and Roman Rule*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2024, p. 1.
4. Michael Filipek, *The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy: An Exact Timeline for the Arrival of the Messiah*, Springfield, NJ: LetUsReason Publishing, 2026, pp. 91-98.
5. deSilva, pp. 70-75.
6. Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, in *Josephus, The Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998, VI.4.5-8.
7. Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, XII.5.4.
8. Andrew E. Steinmann, "Is the Antichrist in Daniel 11?" in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 162, No. 646, April-June 2005, pp. 195-196.

CHAPTER 3

DANIEL 11:1-20 – PERSIA, ALEXANDER, AND THE KINGS OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH

We will begin by reading Daniel 11 in its entirety. Afterward, we will go through the prophecy verse by verse and identify the corresponding historical fulfillments.

1 Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him.

2 And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.

3 And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.

4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.

5 And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.

6 And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for

the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times.

7 But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail:

8 And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north.

9 So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land.

10 But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress.

11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand.

12 And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it.

13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.

14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall.

15 So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand.

16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own

will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed.

17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.

18 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him.

19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.

21 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant.

23 And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.

24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time.

25 And 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 forecast devices against him.

26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.

27 And both of these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they

shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.

28 Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.

29 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.

30 For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.

31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.

32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.

33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.

34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.

35 And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.

36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.

37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.

38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.

39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.

40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.

41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.

42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.

43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.

44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.

45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

-Daniel 11

Before beginning the verse-by-verse examination, it will be helpful to become familiar with the overall structure of the prophecy. The following outline provides a guide to the major historical periods, rulers, and transitions that appear as Daniel 11 unfolds.

Historical Outline of Daniel 11:1-12:3

1. Introduction – verse 1
2. Persian Rule – verse 2
3. Greek Rule – verses 3-35
    a. Alexander the Great – verses 3-4

   b. Seleucids and Ptolemies – verses 5-20
   c. Antiochus Epiphanes – verses 21-35
   d. Maccabees/Hasmoneans – verses 32-35
4. Roman Rule – verses 36-45
   a. Herod the Great – verses 36-39
   b. Octavian/Rome – verses 40-43
   c. Herod the Great – verses 44-45
5. End-Time Events – Daniel 12:1-3

With that overall structure in mind, we can begin working through the prophecy verse by verse. As we proceed, we will compare Daniel's wording with the historical record and follow the sequence of rulers and events as the prophecy presents them.

Daniel 11:1-2

> **1** Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. **2** And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.
>
> -Daniel 11:1-2

As we begin, it is helpful to briefly recall the setting from Daniel 10. Daniel received this revelation in the third year of Cyrus, around 536 BC.[1] The angel had come to explain what would happen to Daniel's people in the years ahead, and Daniel 11 continues that explanation.

Verse 1 looks back to "the first year of Darius the Mede." While his precise historical identity remains uncertain, he was likely an appointed local ruler under Cyrus who governed the Babylonian portion of the empire. Daniel 9:1 says that he "was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans," which fits the idea that he was given authority over Babylon rather than ruling the entire Persian Empire.

We examine the possible identity of Darius the Mede in greater detail in our companion study, *Establishing the Prophetic Validity of the Book of Daniel*.[2]

Verse 2 then moves forward from Cyrus and tells Daniel that three more Persian kings would arise, followed by a fourth king who would be much richer than those before him and would use his wealth and power to launch a massive campaign against Greece. The four rulers are commonly identified as:

1. Cambyses II, the son of Cyrus the Great, who ruled from 530-522 BC.[3]
2. Gaumata, also known as the pseudo-Smerdis, who briefly held the throne in 522 BC.[4]
3. Darius I, also known as Darius Hystaspes, who ruled from 522-486 BC.[5]
4. Xerxes I, the son of Darius, who ruled from 486-465 BC and is identified with the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther.[6]

Daniel gives special attention to the fourth king, Xerxes, because he would be "far richer than they all" and would "stir up all against the realm of Grecia." Herodotus gives us a striking historical confirmation of the first part of the prophecy. He records that Pythius, a wealthy Lydian, was considered the richest man known after Xerxes. Pythius offered nearly his entire fortune to help finance the Persian campaign against Greece, but Xerxes refused the offer and instead gave him another seven thousand gold coins from his own treasury so that Pythius' fortune would total an even four million.[7]

Xerxes also fits the second part of the prophecy. The conflict between Persia and Greece had already intensified during the reign of his father, Darius I. The Ionian Revolt began in 499 BC, and after the Persians crushed the rebellion, Darius sent forces against Greece. That campaign ended in Persian defeat at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC. Darius then began preparing a much larger campaign, but he died in 486 BC before it could be carried out.[8]

Xerxes continued these preparations on an enormous scale. Beginning around 483 BC, the Persians built bridges across the Hellespont and cut a canal through the peninsula at Mount Athos to help move Xerxes' forces into Greece.[9] These preparations required the resources of the vast Persian Empire and fit remarkably well with Daniel's statement that the king would "by his strength through his riches ... stir up all against the realm of Grecia."

In 480 BC, Xerxes led his forces into Greece. The Persians broke through the Greek defense at Thermopylae and advanced into Athens, but the Persian fleet then suffered a major defeat at the Battle of Salamis. Xerxes returned to Asia, leaving part of his army in Greece under his commander Mardonius. The following year, the remaining Persian forces were defeated at the Battle of Plataea, bringing Xerxes' invasion to an end.[10]

After Xerxes, several later Persian kings ruled, but they play no major role in the prophetic sequence Daniel is tracing. The prophecy moves directly from Xerxes to the next ruler important to the historical sequence. Verse 3 introduces "a mighty king" who would arise and rule with great power. This ruler was Alexander the Great.

Daniel 11:3

> And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.
>
> -Daniel 11:3

Verse 3 now turns from Persia to the rise of Greece. Daniel had already been shown this transition in his vision of the ram and the male goat in Chapter 8. There, the angel identifies the ram as "the kings of Media and Persia" and the goat that defeats it as "the king of Grecia." The great horn on the goat is then identified as "the first king" (Daniel 8:20-21). Historically, that first great Greek king was Alexander the Great. Daniel 11:3 now returns to this same ruler, describing him as "a mighty king" who would "rule with great dominion, and do according to his will."

Alexander became king of Macedonia in 336 BC at the age of twenty. Two years later, in 334 BC, he crossed into Asia and began his campaign against the Persian Empire.[11] He defeated Darius III at the Battle of Issus in 333 BC and again at the Battle of Gaugamela in 331 BC. The victory at Gaugamela broke the main military power of the Persian Empire and opened the way for Alexander to take control of Babylon, Susa, Persepolis, and the other major centers of Persian rule.[12]

Alexander then continued his conquests eastward through Central Asia and into India. In little more than a decade, his rule extended from Macedonia and Greece through Egypt and the former Persian Empire and as far east as the Indus River Valley.[13] His rapid conquests and vast dominion fit Daniel's description of a king who would "rule with great dominion, and do according to his will."

Alexander's empire, however, would not remain intact. He died in Babylon in 323 BC at only thirty-two years of age, and the very next verse describes what would happen to his kingdom after his death.[14]

Daniel 11:4

> And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.
>
> -Daniel 11:4

Having described Alexander's rise and great dominion in verse 3, the prophecy now turns to what would happen once he had fully established his power. The phrase "when he shall stand up" points to Alexander at the height of his rule, yet Daniel says that his kingdom would then be "broken." That is exactly what happened. Alexander died in Babylon in 323 BC at only thirty-two years of age, while still at the height of his power and without an adult heir capable of succeeding him.[15]

Daniel becomes even more specific when he says that the kingdom

would be divided, but "not to his posterity." Alexander's son Alexander IV was born after his father's death and was recognized as king together with Alexander's half-brother Philip III. But this would not last, and they never truly had the power. The actual control of the empire rested with Alexander's generals and regents. Philip III was killed in 317 BC, and Alexander IV and his mother Roxana were later killed around 310 BC on the orders of Cassander, the son of Alexander's general Antipater who had taken control of Macedonia.[16] Heracles, who was regarded as Alexander's illegitimate son, was also killed soon afterward.[17] In this way, the empire was divided among other rulers rather than passing to Alexander's own descendants, exactly as Daniel had said.

Daniel then says that Alexander's kingdom would be divided "toward the four winds of heaven," with the resulting kingdoms possessing far less power and dominion than Alexander himself had exercised ("not according to his dominion which he ruled"). Daniel had already been shown the same development in Chapter 8. After the great horn representing Greece's first king is broken, four horns arise in its place, and the angel explains that "four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power" (Daniel 8:22). Daniel 8 and Daniel 11 therefore describe the same sequence: Alexander's great kingdom is broken, four kingdoms arise from it, but none of them would possess the power or dominion of Alexander's former unified empire.

The division took shape through more than two decades of warfare among Alexander's successors. The Battle of Ipsus in 301 BC ended the attempt of Antigonus I, one of Alexander's most powerful generals and successors, to bring the empire back under a single ruler. By this time, four other leading successors – Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus I Nicator, and Ptolemy I Soter – had emerged as rulers over the principal regions of Alexander's former empire.[18] These four major realms correspond to the fourfold division Daniel had described:

1. Cassander controlled Macedonia.

2. Lysimachus controlled Thrace and substantial territory in Asia Minor.
3. Seleucus I Nicator controlled Babylonia, Persia, and much of the eastern empire, later extending his rule into Syria and other western territories.
4. Ptolemy I Soter controlled Egypt and territory along the southern Levant, including the land of Israel.[19]

In sum, the historical sequence fulfills each part of Daniel's prophecy. Alexander's death brought the unified empire he had created to an end at the height of his power. His descendants failed to inherit it, and the empire was divided among four major successor kingdoms extending in four different directions, each ruling only a portion of the dominion Alexander had once controlled. Daniel's wording captures that sequence with remarkable precision: the kingdom was "broken," divided "toward the four winds of heaven," given "not to his posterity," and ruled "not according to his dominion which he ruled." From this point forward, the prophecy narrows its attention to two of these kingdoms because of their relationship to Israel: the Ptolemaic kingdom to the south and the Seleucid kingdom to the north.

Daniel 11:5

> And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.
>
> -Daniel 11:5

The wording of this verse in the King James Version is somewhat difficult to follow, so it is helpful to compare how the English Standard Version renders it:

> 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.
>
> -Daniel 11:5 (ESV)

With that wording in view, the verse introduces the two kingdoms that will dominate the next part of the prophecy. From Israel's perspective, Egypt lay to the south, so the "king of the south" refers to Ptolemy I Soter. After Alexander's death, Ptolemy gained control of Egypt and eventually assumed the title of king in 305 BC. His rule extended beyond Egypt into neighboring territories, making the Ptolemaic kingdom one of the strongest of Alexander's successor kingdoms.[20]

The second ruler was Seleucus I Nicator. After being driven from Babylonia by Antigonus, Seleucus fled to Ptolemy in Egypt, where he served as one of his commanders. Following Ptolemy's victory over Antigonus' forces at Gaza in 312 BC, Seleucus returned to Babylonia with a small force and recovered his former territory. From there, his power expanded dramatically across the eastern portions of Alexander's former empire.[21]

Daniel then says that this second ruler would become "strong above him" and that "his dominion shall be a great dominion." Seleucus fulfilled both descriptions. His kingdom eventually extended from Syria and Asia Minor across Mesopotamia and Persia toward India, giving him a far greater territorial dominion than Ptolemy possessed.[22]

With this, verse 5 establishes the two powers that now become central to Daniel's prophecy. Ptolemy founded the strong kingdom to the south, while Seleucus rose from his association with Ptolemy to become even more powerful and rule over a much greater dominion. From this point forward, Daniel follows the long struggle between their successor dynasties – the Ptolemies in the south and the Seleucids in the north – with the land of Israel situated between them.

Daniel 11:6

> And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times.
>
> -Daniel 11:6

After years of conflict between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the king of the South, and Antiochus II Theos, the king of the North, reached a peace agreement ending the Second Syrian War. As part of that agreement, around 252 BC Ptolemy II gave his daughter Berenice in marriage to Antiochus II. Antiochus had previously been married to Laodice and had two sons by her, but the new marriage placed Berenice and any son she bore at the center of the Seleucid succession.[23]

This corresponds directly to Daniel's statement that "the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement." Berenice was literally the daughter of the Ptolemaic king in the south, and her marriage to the Seleucid king in the north was arranged as part of a political agreement between the two kingdoms.

The alliance soon collapsed. Ptolemy II died in 246 BC, removing Berenice's strongest political supporter. Antiochus II also died later that same year, and the struggle over the Seleucid succession intensified between Berenice and Laodice. Laodice's son Seleucus II was proclaimed king, while Berenice sought to secure the throne for her own young son by Antiochus. Berenice and her son were then killed by supporters of Laodice before Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III, could reach them.[24]

The marriage that was intended to establish peace therefore ended in exactly the kind of collapse Daniel described. Berenice did not retain her position or power, Antiochus II did not remain, her father Ptolemy II was gone, and Berenice herself was ultimately "given up" together with her young son. The attempted alliance between the two

kingdoms failed and instead helped bring about another war between them.

Daniel 11:7

> But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail:
>
> -Daniel 11:7

The collapse of the marriage alliance described in verse 6 led directly to the events of verse 7. The "branch of her roots" was Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes, who succeeded their father Ptolemy II as king of Egypt in 246 BC. During the struggle over Berenice and her son, Ptolemy marched north with his army to aid his sister. Berenice was killed before he could reach her, but Ptolemy continued the campaign against Seleucus II. Justin, a Roman historian, records that cities throughout the Seleucid realm went over to Ptolemy and that his successes were so extensive that, had unrest in Egypt not forced him to return, he might have taken all of Seleucus' dominions.[25]

Ptolemy's campaign corresponds directly to Daniel's statement that this ruler would "come with an army" and "prevail" against the king of the North. He captured Seleucia in Pieria, the important port serving Antioch, then took Antioch itself and advanced deep into Seleucid territory as far as Babylonia.[26] A contemporary Babylonian chronicle independently confirms that Ptolemaic forces reached Babylonia and fought around Babylon in 246/245 BC.[27]

In this way, Ptolemy III's campaign unfolded just as Daniel had described: the "branch of her roots" arose from Berenice's own family, came against the king of the North with an army, penetrated deep into his kingdom, and prevailed.

Daniel 11:8

> And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north.
>
> -Daniel 11:8

Verse 8 continues the same campaign described in verse 7. After Ptolemy III's victories in Seleucid territory, he returned to Egypt carrying sacred objects and other treasure with him. An inscription commemorating his campaign states that he recovered sacred objects that had previously been carried out of Egypt by the Persians and brought them back to Egypt together with treasure from the regions he had conquered.[28] The Canopus Decree, issued in 238 BC during Ptolemy's reign, likewise records that he recovered sacred images taken from Egypt by the Persians and restored them to their temples.[29]

Jerome, the 4th- and 5th-century Christian scholar whose *Commentary on Daniel* became one of the standard and most influential treatments of the book for later interpreters, also reports that Ptolemy carried away enormous quantities of silver together with precious vessels and images of the gods.[30]

The final statement of the verse, "he shall continue more years than the king of the north," was also fulfilled. Seleucus II ruled until 225 BC, while Ptolemy III continued to reign until 221 BC, outliving the king of the North by about four years.[31]

Daniel 11:9

> So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land.
>
> -Daniel 11:9

With Ptolemy III back in Egypt after his victorious campaign, the conflict now shifts to Seleucus II and his attempt to strike back. The wording of this verse in the King James Version makes the identity of

the ruler somewhat difficult to follow, so it is helpful to compare how the New King James Version renders it:

> Also the king of the North shall come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land.
>
> -Daniel 11:9 (NKJV)

The "king of the North" was Seleucus II. After Ptolemy III returned to Egypt, Seleucus began recovering territory that had been lost during Ptolemy's invasion and prepared a large fleet for a campaign against him, but much of it was destroyed by a storm. He later renewed the war, but his forces were defeated and he was forced to flee back to Antioch. Thus, Daniel's words that he would "come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land" were precisely fulfilled.[32]

Daniel 11:10

> But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress.
>
> -Daniel 11:10

The failed counterattack of Seleucus II described in verse 9 did not end the conflict between the two kingdoms. After his death, the prophecy turns directly to his sons: "his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces." Seleucus II was succeeded by his two sons, Seleucus III Ceraunus and Antiochus III, later known as Antiochus the Great. Seleucus III crossed the Taurus Mountains with a large army in an effort to recover Seleucid territory in Asia Minor, but he was assassinated during the campaign. His younger brother Antiochus III then succeeded him and continued the effort to restore the power and territories their father had lost.[33]

The prophecy then shifts from the two sons to one ruler: "and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through." This was

fulfilled by Antiochus III in 219 BC when he recovered Seleucia in Pieria from Ptolemaic control and then advanced into Coele-Syria, a Hellenistic term for the region of southern Syria and Phoenicia, taking Tyre and Ptolemais.[34] After a temporary pause, he renewed the campaign and continued south through Coele-Syria and Judea, capturing cities and strongholds along the way.

Daniel then says, "then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress." In 217 BC Antiochus again advanced south, reaching Raphia, the fortified Ptolemaic position near the Egyptian frontier.[35] There the king of the South, Ptolemy IV, would come out to meet him in battle, exactly as the prophecy continues in the next verse.

Daniel 11:11

> And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand.
>
> -Daniel 11:11

While Antiochus III was rebuilding Seleucid power in the North, the throne of Egypt had also passed to the next generation. Ptolemy III, the king of the South in the preceding verses, died in 221 BC and was succeeded by his son, Ptolemy IV Philopator.[36] It was this new king of the South who would now confront Antiochus III.

The prophecy says that "the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north." In 217 BC, Ptolemy IV personally marched out from Egypt to meet Antiochus III at Raphia near the Egyptian frontier. Ptolemy brought an army of about 70,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, and 73 elephants, while Antiochus confronted him with about 62,000 infantry, 6,000 cavalry, and 102 elephants.[37]

Daniel then says that the king of the North "shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand." That prophecy was fulfilled when Ptolemy IV defeated Antiochus III's much

larger force of war elephants and his army at Raphia. Polybius, the 2nd-century BC Greek historian whose *Histories* are one of the principal surviving ancient sources for this period, records that Antiochus lost nearly 10,000 infantry and more than 300 cavalry, while more than 4,000 of his men were taken prisoner. Antiochus withdrew to Gaza and then returned north to his own kingdom.[38] The "great multitude" brought by the king of the North had been "given into" the hand of the king of the South, just as Daniel had foretold.

Daniel 11:12

> And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it.
>
> -Daniel 11:12

Verse 12 continues directly from Ptolemy IV's victory at Raphia in verse 11. Daniel begins, "when he hath taken away the multitude," referring to the great army of Antiochus III that had just been "given into his hand." The victory was decisive. Polybius records that nearly 10,000 of Antiochus' infantry and more than 300 cavalry were killed, while more than 4,000 additional soldiers were taken prisoner. Antiochus then withdrew with the remains of his army.[39]

The victory also fulfilled Daniel's statement that Ptolemy "shall cast down many ten thousands." Antiochus had brought an army numbering nearly 70,000 men into the battle, and Ptolemy defeated that much larger force and drove Antiochus' army from the battlefield. Daniel then says that Ptolemy's "heart shall be lifted up." Polybius describes Ptolemy as delighted by his unexpected success and by the recovery of Coele-Syria, while Justin records that the victory was so complete that Ptolemy might have removed Antiochus from the throne if he had continued pressing his advantage.[40]

Yet the prophecy immediately adds, "but he shall not be strengthened by it." Ptolemy failed to turn his victory into lasting supremacy over the Seleucid kingdom. Rather than continue the

campaign against the weakened Antiochus, he accepted peace after recovering the territories he had lost. Justin specifically states that Ptolemy was content with recovering his cities, made peace, and returned to his former way of life.[41] His great victory at Raphia had brought down the army of the king of the North, but it did not produce the lasting increase in power that Ptolemy could have gained from it.

Daniel 11:13

> For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.
>
> -Daniel 11:13

Ptolemy IV's victory at Raphia did not end Antiochus III's ambitions. After his defeat in 217 BC, Antiochus spent the following years campaigning in the eastern parts of his kingdom and restoring Seleucid control over territories that had broken away. Daniel had said that the king of the North would later "set forth a multitude greater than the former" and come "with a great army and with much riches." Polybius records that by the end of these campaigns Antiochus had increased his force of war elephants to 150, secured treasure from the Indian king Sophagasenus, and brought the upper regions of his kingdom back under his authority.[42] Thus, Antiochus emerged from these campaigns with greatly increased military resources and wealth, fulfilling Daniel's description of his return with greater strength and riches.

Meanwhile, the throne of Egypt had passed to another generation. Ptolemy IV died and was succeeded by his young son, Ptolemy V Epiphanes.[43] With Egypt now ruled by a child, Antiochus saw an opportunity to renew his campaign against the kingdom of the South. Around 202 BC, about fifteen years after his defeat at Raphia, he again invaded Coele-Syria and began driving the Ptolemaic forces south.[44] His renewed invasion after this long interval fulfilled Daniel's words

that the king of the North would "return" and would "come after certain years."

Daniel 11:14

> And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall.
>
> -Daniel 11:14

The weakness of Egypt under the young Ptolemy V described in the previous verse soon drew other enemies against him. Daniel says that "in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south." Antiochus III joined with Philip V of Macedon in an agreement to divide the young king's possessions between them, while Egypt itself was shaken by a violent struggle over who would control the child king and his government.[45]

The prophecy then turns to Daniel's own people: "also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall." The expression "robbers of thy people" refers to violent or rebellious men among the Jews. During this struggle, a Jewish faction supported Antiochus against Ptolemaic rule. When the Egyptian commander Scopas counterattacked, he recovered Judea and, according to Polybius' account preserved by Josephus, "overthrew the nation of the Jews."[46] Their resistance to Ptolemaic rule was temporarily broken, fulfilling Daniel's words that "they shall fall."

Antiochus would soon return and defeat Scopas. Josephus records that the Jews of Jerusalem then willingly sided with Antiochus, welcomed him into the city, supplied provisions for his army and elephants, and helped him drive the Egyptian garrison from the citadel.[47] Their actions helped "establish the vision" by advancing the transfer of Judea from Ptolemaic to Seleucid control, setting the stage for the events Daniel describes in the verses that follow.

Daniel 11:15

> So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand.
>
> -Daniel 11:15

The conflict described in verse 14 now reaches a decisive point as Antiochus III moves against the Ptolemaic forces under Scopas. The KJV phrase "his chosen people" can sound as though it refers to a particular nation, but the NKJV renders it more naturally as "his choice troops," referring to the select forces of the king of the South.

Around 200 BC, Antiochus met Scopas near Panium, close to the sources of the Jordan River, and defeated his army.[48] Scopas retreated with about ten thousand men to the fortified city of Sidon, where Antiochus surrounded and besieged him. Daniel had said that the king of the North would "cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities." The expression "cast up a mount" refers to building a siege mound or ramp against a fortified city, the kind of siege operation carried out against Scopas at Sidon. Ptolemy sent three of his commanders, Eropus, Menocles, and Damoxenus, to break the siege, but they were unable to do so. With his supplies exhausted, Scopas was eventually forced to surrender.[49]

The failure of both Scopas and the forces sent to rescue him also fulfilled the remainder of the verse: "the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand." Even the chosen forces specifically sent to relieve Scopas could not stop Antiochus, leaving the Ptolemaic position in the region broken.

Daniel 11:16

> But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed.
>
> -Daniel 11:16

With Scopas defeated and forced to surrender at Sidon, Ptolemaic resistance in the region collapsed. Antiochus III was now able to do "according to his own will," with "none" able to "stand before him." His victories brought Coele-Syria firmly under Seleucid control and ended Ptolemaic rule over Judea.

Daniel then says that Antiochus would "stand in the glorious land," referring to Judea, the land of Israel. Josephus records that after Antiochus defeated the Ptolemaic forces, "he seized upon Judea."[50] The land that had long stood between the kingdoms of the North and South had now passed from Ptolemaic to Seleucid control.

The final words, "which by his hand shall be consumed," describe the destructive power now in Antiochus' hand over the land. Josephus records that during the wars between Antiochus and the Ptolemies, the Jews and the inhabitants of Coele-Syria "suffered greatly" and that their land was "sorely harassed."[51] As a buffer state, Judea had endured repeated warfare as the two kingdoms fought for control of the region, and it now stood under the power of Antiochus III.

Daniel 11:17

> He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.
>
> -Daniel 11:17

Having secured Judea and Coele-Syria, Antiochus III now turned his attention toward Egypt itself. Daniel says that he would "set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom." While the KJV phrase "upright ones with him" can be difficult to understand, the NKJV more clearly renders it as "bring equitable terms," indicating that Antiochus would now pursue an agreement with the king of the South.

Antiochus did reach such an agreement with the young Ptolemy V and arranged for him to marry his daughter, Cleopatra I. Daniel had

said that the king of the North would "give him the daughter of women," and in 193 BC Antiochus gave Cleopatra in marriage to Ptolemy. Appian records that Antiochus was forming marriage alliances with neighboring kings and that his arrangement with Ptolemy was intended to keep the young Egyptian king quiet while Antiochus prepared for war with Rome.[52]

The political marriage also precisely fulfilled Daniel's words "corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him." Antiochus hoped to use the marriage to extend his influence into Egypt through his daughter, but the plan failed. Porphyry's account, preserved by Jerome, records that Cleopatra was loyal to her husband rather than her father.[53] Thus, the daughter Antiochus had given to the king of the South ultimately did not "stand on his side" or remain "for him."

Daniel 11:18

> After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him.
>
> -Daniel 11:18

The wording of the second half of the verse in the KJV can be difficult to follow, so the ESV helps clarify its meaning:

> Afterward he shall turn his face to the coastlands and shall capture many of them, but a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him.
>
> -Daniel 11:18 (ESV)

After arranging the marriage between Cleopatra I and Ptolemy V, Antiochus III turned his attention westward toward the Aegean and Greece. The KJV "isles" is rendered "coastlands" in the ESV and refers here to the coastal and island regions around the Aegean Sea. In 192 BC, Antiochus crossed into Greece with 10,000 men and occupied

Euboea, a large Greek island just off the eastern coast of the mainland, fulfilling Daniel's words that he would "turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many."[54]

This westward expansion brought Antiochus into direct conflict with Rome, which by this time was rapidly emerging as the dominant power in the Mediterranean. Rome had already defeated Carthage in the Second Punic War and had recently defeated Philip V of Macedon at Cynoscephalae in 197 BC, greatly increasing its power and influence in the Greek world.[55] Antiochus had entered Greece at the invitation of the Aetolian League, a confederation of Greek states centered in central Greece that had become hostile to Rome and sought his help against Roman influence. By accepting their invitation and bringing his army into Greece, Antiochus placed himself in direct conflict with the rising Roman power.[56]

The second half of the verse says that "a prince" would bring Antiochus' "reproach" to an end. The ESV makes the meaning easier to understand: "a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him." In other words, Antiochus' aggressive westward expansion and defiance of Rome would be stopped, and the humiliation he had tried to impose on others would fall back upon him. Rome placed Lucius Cornelius Scipio in command of the campaign against Antiochus, and in 190 BC his forces decisively defeated the Seleucid king at the Battle of Magnesia.[57]

The peace settlement that followed forced Antiochus to give up his territories in Asia Minor beyond the Taurus Mountains, surrender his war elephants, drastically reduce his navy, provide twenty hostages, and pay Rome a total indemnity of 15,000 talents.[58] His attempt to extend Seleucid power into the Greek world ended with his own defeat and humiliation, fulfilling Daniel's words that his reproach would be brought to an end and turned back upon him.

Daniel 11:19

> Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

-Daniel 11:19

Antiochus III's defeat by Rome leads directly into the next stage of the prophecy. After being forced to give up his territories in Asia Minor beyond the Taurus Mountains, Daniel says that he would "turn his face toward the fort of his own land." The KJV "fort" refers to the fortified places or strongholds of his own kingdom. This was fulfilled as Antiochus withdrew from his western expansion and returned to Syria and the territories that remained under Seleucid control.[59]

Daniel then says that "he shall stumble and fall, and not be found." In 187 BC, Antiochus went to Elymais, a region in what is now southwestern Iran, where he attempted to seize the wealth of a temple of Bel. Diodorus records that Antiochus was short of money and knew that the temple contained large amounts of silver and gold.[60] Justin adds that Antiochus was burdened by the heavy tribute imposed by Rome. When his attack on the temple became known, the local inhabitants rose against him and killed him.[61] Thus, Antiochus' reign came to an abrupt end in the eastern reaches of his own kingdom, fulfilling Daniel's words that he would "stumble and fall, and not be found."

Daniel 11:20

Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.

-Daniel 11:20

After the death of Antiochus III in 187 BC, his son Seleucus IV Philopator succeeded him as king of the North. Seleucus inherited the heavy financial burden of the peace settlement with Rome, including the large payments his father had been required to make after his defeat.[62] During his reign, Seleucus' minister Heliodorus was sent to Jerusalem after reports reached the king that large sums of money were being held in the Temple treasury. Second Maccabees records that Heliodorus was ordered to bring the money under the control of

the royal treasury.[63] This attempt to obtain funds from the Temple fits Daniel's description of Seleucus as "a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom."

Daniel then says that "within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle." Seleucus' reign came to an abrupt end in 175 BC through an internal court conspiracy rather than in open warfare. Appian records that Seleucus was assassinated through a plot led by Heliodorus, one of his own court officials.[64] His death fulfilled Daniel's description of a ruler who would be "destroyed," yet neither through popular revolt nor on the battlefield.

Before Seleucus' death, another development had already prepared the way for the ruler who would follow. His younger brother Antiochus, the future Antiochus IV Epiphanes, had been held in Rome as a hostage under the settlement imposed upon their father. Seleucus sent his own son Demetrius to Rome as a hostage in Antiochus' place, allowing Antiochus to leave Rome. Appian records that Antiochus had reached Athens on his return toward the Seleucid kingdom when Seleucus was assassinated.[65] With Demetrius still being held in Rome, Antiochus was now free to return and position himself for the Seleucid throne.

With the death of Seleucus IV, our examination of Daniel 11:1-20 comes to a close. Daniel has carried the historical sequence from Persia through Alexander the Great and then through generations of Seleucid and Ptolemaic rulers whose conflicts repeatedly affected the land of Israel. The next ruler introduced in the prophecy would bring that conflict into a far more direct confrontation with the Jewish people, their Law, and the Temple in Jerusalem. Daniel 11:21 now turns to the notorious ruler who would become known as Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

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CHAPTER 4

DANIEL 11:21-35 – ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES AND THE MACCABEAN CRISIS

Daniel 11:21

> And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.
>
> -Daniel 11:21

The assassination of Seleucus IV in 175 BC brings his younger brother Antiochus IV directly into the prophecy. Antiochus had spent years in Rome as a hostage under the settlement imposed upon their father, but Seleucus later sent his own son Demetrius to Rome in his place, allowing Antiochus to leave. Appian records that Antiochus had reached Athens on his return toward the Seleucid kingdom when Seleucus was assassinated.[1] The ruler who now enters Daniel's prophecy would later take the royal title *Theos Epiphanes*, meaning "God Manifest," and become known to history as Antiochus IV Epiphanes.[2]

Daniel describes Antiochus IV as one "to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom." When Seleucus died, his young son, who was also named Antiochus and was only about five years old, formally

succeeded him. The boy's mother, Laodice IV, briefly governed on his behalf, but Antiochus IV soon married her and took control of the government while the young king remained on the throne.[3] This corresponds with Daniel's statement that the "honour of the kingdom" would not be given to Antiochus IV directly.

Daniel then says that Antiochus IV would "come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries." The NKJV captures the sense of the final phrase well with "seize the kingdom by intrigue." After Seleucus IV was assassinated, Heliodorus attempted to seize control of the government. Appian records that Eumenes II, king of Pergamum in western Asia Minor, and his brother Attalus backed Antiochus IV, drove Heliodorus from power and helped secure Antiochus' control of the government, hoping to gain his goodwill.[4] His rise to power therefore came through political support, alliances, and maneuvering rather than a major battle for the throne, corresponding with Daniel's words that he would "come in peaceably" and obtain the kingdom through intrigue.

Daniel also introduces Antiochus IV as a "vile person." The reasons for that description become increasingly evident as the prophecy continues, tracing the deceit, warfare, persecution of the Jewish people, and desecration of the Temple that would characterize his reign.

Daniel 11:22

> And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant.
>
> -Daniel 11:22

Having gained control of the kingdom, Antiochus IV quickly overcame the opposition that stood against him. Daniel says that "with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken." The expression pictures opposing military forces being swept away like a flood. The precise forces intended are difficult to identify with certainty, but the immediate context most naturally points to

domestic or other enemies who opposed Antiochus' rise to power.[5] His successful consolidation of power corresponds with Daniel's description of opposing forces being "overflown from before him" and "broken."

Daniel then adds, "yea, also the prince of the covenant." The most likely identification is Onias III, the Jewish high priest. Soon after Antiochus came to power, Onias' brother Jason offered the king a large payment in exchange for the high priesthood. Antiochus accepted the arrangement, and Jason replaced Onias as high priest.[6] Three years later, Menelaus outbid Jason for the office and became high priest himself. After Onias publicly condemned Menelaus for taking sacred vessels from the Temple, Menelaus persuaded the royal official Andronicus to have Onias killed while Antiochus was away. When Antiochus returned and learned what had happened, he had Andronicus executed.[7]

As the high priest of Israel, Onias stood at the head of the nation's covenant worship, making him the most likely identification for Daniel's "prince of the covenant." His removal from office and eventual murder correspond with Daniel's statement that this prince would also be "broken."

Daniel 11:23

> And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.
>
> -Daniel 11:23

Daniel says that "after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully." The most natural historical setting is Antiochus IV's dealings with his young nephew Ptolemy VI Philometor, king of Egypt. Antiochus professed friendship toward Ptolemy while using that relationship to advance his own position in Egypt.[8] Polybius records that after Antiochus had occupied part of Egypt, he claimed that he had "long ago come to terms" with Ptolemy and called him his friend, even while he continued occupying Egyptian territory and advancing

toward Alexandria.[9] This combination of professed friendship and military aggression corresponds with Daniel's statement that after the league "he shall work deceitfully."

The final words, "he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people," are easier to understand in several modern translations. The NKJV reads "a small number of people," while the NIV says that "with only a few people he will rise to power." These renderings point to a comparatively small group of supporters through whom Antiochus strengthened his position. As described in verse 21, he had gained control of the Seleucid kingdom with the backing of a limited number of powerful allies. Daniel's words that he would "become strong with a small people" correspond with his rise to power through this comparatively small circle of supporters.[10]

Daniel 11:24

> He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time.
>
> -Daniel 11:24

Daniel continues by saying that Antiochus would "enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province." The NKJV renders "fattest places" more naturally as "the richest places of the province." The expression describes his entry into prosperous regions during a time of security, although the precise historical episode intended by these words is uncertain.[11]

The prophecy then gives a much more distinctive detail: Antiochus would "do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers" and would "scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches." First Maccabees records that he gave gifts more lavishly than the kings who preceded him.[12] Polybius likewise describes Antiochus giving money and unexpected presents to people he encountered and

says that in his gifts to cities and honors to the gods he surpassed his predecessors.[13] The Roman historian Livy gives concrete examples of this generosity, recording that Antiochus financed a wall at Megalopolis, began a marble theater at Tegea, gave gold vessels at Cyzicus, supplied gifts to Rhodes, and spent lavishly on temples and other public works.[14] The later Greek writer Athenaeus also preserves an earlier account attributed to Ptolemy VIII stating that Antiochus would stand in public streets and scatter money among the people.[15]

Daniel then says that Antiochus would "forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time." First Maccabees records that when Antiochus turned against Egypt, he invaded with a strong force, defeated Ptolemy's forces, captured fortified cities, and plundered the land.[16] This historical sequence fits Daniel's reference to plans directed against strongholds and leads directly into verse 25, where Antiochus' war against the king of the South is described in greater detail. The closing words, "even for a time," indicate that the period in which these plans succeeded would be limited.[17]

Daniel 11:25

> And 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 forecast devices against him.
>
> -Daniel 11:25

The plans described in the previous verse now developed into what became known as the Sixth Syrian War. In 170 BC, the rulers directing the government of the young Ptolemy VI prepared an Egyptian campaign against Coele-Syria. Antiochus IV moved first, met the Ptolemaic army before it could advance into Seleucid territory, and defeated it. He then gained control of Pelusium, the fortified gateway into Egypt, and continued his advance toward Memphis.[18]

First Maccabees describes the scale of Antiochus' invasion, recording that he entered Egypt with a strong force that included char-

iots, elephants, cavalry, and a large fleet. Ptolemy was defeated and fled, many of his soldiers were killed, and fortified cities throughout Egypt were captured.[19] This corresponds with Daniel's description of Antiochus stirring up "his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army," while the king of the South also mobilized for battle but "shall not stand."

The verse closes by explaining that Ptolemy's defeat involved more than military force: "for they shall forecast devices against him." This is an archaic way of saying that men would plot against or betray him, a point Daniel develops further in the next verse when the threat comes from those closest to the king.

Daniel 11:26

> Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.
>
> -Daniel 11:26

Daniel now explains why the king of the South would fail despite the large army described in the previous verse. The phrase "they that feed of the portion of his meat" refers to those close to the king – members of his court who lived from the royal provisions. Diodorus identifies Eulaeus and Lenaeus as the leading ministers of the young Ptolemy VI and describes them as inexperienced in warfare and lacking capable military leadership. He places much of the responsibility for the disaster that followed on their management of the kingdom and specifically blames Eulaeus for influencing Ptolemy to flee.[20] Their disastrous counsel fulfills Daniel's statement that those closest to the king would "destroy him," bringing about his defeat.

Daniel then says that "his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain." The NKJV renders the first phrase more naturally as "his army shall be swept away." First Maccabees records that Ptolemy fled before Antiochus and that many of his soldiers were wounded and killed.[21] The large Egyptian force described in verse 25 was unable to withstand Antiochus, and its defeat fulfilled Daniel's prediction that

the king of the South would fall through failures within his own court while many of his soldiers died in battle.

Daniel 11:27

> And both of these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.
>
> -Daniel 11:27

After Antiochus IV gained control of most of Egypt, the Ptolemaic kingdom became divided. Ptolemy VI remained at Memphis under the influence of his uncle Antiochus, while the government at Alexandria, Egypt's capital, recognized his younger brother, Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, as king. Antiochus presented himself as Ptolemy VI's protector and claimed that his purpose was to restore his nephew to the Egyptian throne. Livy records, however, that Antiochus' claimed purpose of restoring Ptolemy was only a cover for his own plans to dominate Egypt. After failing to take Alexandria, Antiochus left Ptolemy VI at Memphis, withdrew his army into Syria, and kept a strong garrison at Pelusium, the strategic gateway into Egypt. His plan was to let the two brothers struggle against one another and then attack whichever one emerged victorious.[22] In this way, Antiochus hoped to keep Egypt divided and weakened so that he could continue controlling its affairs.

Ptolemy VI also concealed his true intentions from Antiochus. He recognized that his uncle was using him and that the Seleucid garrison at Pelusium gave Antiochus a foothold for another invasion. Rather than remain dependent on Antiochus, Ptolemy VI negotiated with his sister Cleopatra II and his younger brother Ptolemy VIII in Alexandria. The brothers reconciled and agreed to rule Egypt jointly from Alexandria, ending the division Antiochus had hoped to exploit.[23]

Thus, the two kings were outwardly acting as allies while each pursued his own plans against the other, fulfilling Daniel's words that "both of these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief" and that "they

shall speak lies at one table." Neither king ultimately accomplished what he intended through this deceptive arrangement, fulfilling Daniel's further statement that "it shall not prosper."[24] The prophecy then explains why: "for yet the end shall be at the time appointed." The struggle between the two kingdoms had not yet reached its appointed conclusion, and the events that followed would continue to unfold according to the time established by God.

Daniel 11:28

> Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.
>
> -Daniel 11:28

After his campaign in Egypt, Antiochus IV began his return north with the wealth he had acquired there. First Maccabees records that he took spoils from Egypt and then, in 169 BC, turned toward Jerusalem.[25] This fulfills the opening words of the verse that he would "return into his land with great riches."

As Antiochus was leaving Egypt, events in Jerusalem gave him a reason to turn his attention against the Jewish people. A false report had spread that Antiochus was dead, prompting Jason, the former high priest who had earlier been removed from office and replaced by Menelaus, to gather about a thousand men and attack Jerusalem in an attempt to regain the high priesthood. Jason's forces entered the city, while Menelaus, the high priest then in office, fled into the citadel. When Antiochus learned what had happened, he interpreted the disorder as a revolt against his rule and returned from Egypt to attack Jerusalem.[26] His response fulfills Daniel's statement that "his heart shall be against the holy covenant," as his hostility now turned directly against the Jewish people and their covenant worship.

Antiochus took Jerusalem by force and carried out a brutal slaughter within the city. Second Maccabees records that within three days 40,000 people were killed and approximately another

40,000 were captured and sold into slavery.[27] He then entered the Temple with Menelaus as his guide and seized its sacred vessels and treasures.[28] First Maccabees specifically records that he took the golden altar, the lampstand, the table of the showbread, the vessels used in the Temple service, and the silver, gold, and other treasures he found there.[29] After plundering Jerusalem and the Temple, Antiochus returned to his own land.[30] These actions fulfill Daniel's words that "he shall do exploits, and return to his own land," while marking the beginning of the open assault upon the Jewish covenant and worship that becomes increasingly severe in the verses that follow.

Daniel 11:29

> At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.
>
> -Daniel 11:29

The words "at the time appointed" connect directly with the closing statement of verse 27. In the spring of 168 BC, after Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy VIII had reconciled and joined together against him, Antiochus IV again marched south toward Egypt. Livy records that Antiochus was angered by the brothers' reconciliation, sent his fleet against Cyprus, and advanced by land through Coele-Syria toward Egypt. When Egyptian representatives met him near the border, Antiochus demanded the surrender of Cyprus, Pelusium, and the territory surrounding the eastern mouth of the Nile.[31]

Daniel adds that this campaign "shall not be as the former, or as the latter." Antiochus again advanced through Egypt and reached the area near Alexandria, but this invasion would end very differently from his earlier success.[32] The reason for that sudden reversal appears in the very next verse, when a new power intervenes and forces Antiochus to abandon his plans for Egypt.

Daniel 11:30

> For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.
>
> -Daniel 11:30

The reason Antiochus' campaign ended so differently now appears. Daniel says that "the ships of Chittim shall come against him." The name Chittim originally referred to Cyprus but came to be used more broadly for lands and peoples to the west. In this passage, the "ships of Chittim" refer to the intervention of Rome.[33] Polybius records that when the Roman Senate learned that Antiochus had nearly gained control of Alexandria, it sent Gaius Popillius Laenas, an envoy of the Roman Senate, to bring the war to an end.[34] Popillius met Antiochus and handed him the Senate's demand that he immediately end his war against Egypt. When Antiochus asked for time to consult with his advisers, Popillius famously drew a circle around him with a stick and demanded an answer before he stepped outside it. Antiochus hesitated but agreed to Rome's demands and withdrew his army from Egypt. Polybius records that he returned toward Syria deeply hurt by the humiliation,[35] corresponding closely with Daniel's words that "he shall be grieved, and return."

Daniel then says that Antiochus would "have indignation against the holy covenant" and would "have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." The KJV phrase "have intelligence with" carries the sense of giving attention or regard to them.[36] First Maccabees describes a group among the Jews who sought permission from Antiochus to adopt Gentile customs, built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, concealed their circumcision, and "forsook the holy covenant."[37] Antiochus would increasingly work with this Hellenizing faction while directing his hostility against faithful Jews and their worship. The consequences of that alliance become the focus of the verses that follow.

Daniel 11:31

> And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.
>
> -Daniel 11:31

The hostility against the covenant described in the previous verse now developed into a direct assault upon Jewish worship. Daniel says that "arms shall stand on his part," referring to forces acting on behalf of Antiochus IV. First Maccabees records that Antiochus sent a strong force against Jerusalem, which attacked the city, killed many of its inhabitants, plundered and burned it, tore down its walls, and established a fortified position in the City of David, the ancient fortified core of Jerusalem just south of the Temple Mount.[38]

Daniel then says that they would "pollute the sanctuary of strength" and "take away the daily sacrifice." The "sanctuary of strength" refers to the Temple in Jerusalem. Antiochus issued decrees forbidding the sacrifices and offerings commanded by the Law, profaning the Sabbaths and feast days, defiling the sanctuary, forbidding circumcision, and requiring the Jews to abandon their covenant practices. Those who refused were threatened with death.[39] Second Maccabees likewise records that the Temple was profaned and dedicated to Zeus, while Jewish worship and the observance of the Sabbath and Levitical feasts were forbidden.[40]

The final part of the verse gives the most distinctive description: "they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." First Maccabees records that on the fifteenth day of Kislev in 167 BC,[41] an idolatrous altar was erected upon the altar of burnt offering in the Temple. Ten days later, pagan sacrifices were offered upon it.[42] Josephus adds that swine were sacrificed upon the altar and that the Jews were compelled to abandon the worship of God and participate in pagan worship.[43] These events directly fulfilled Daniel's prophecy: the sanctuary was polluted, the daily sacrifice was removed, and the abomination was established.

The desecration would eventually lead to the Maccabean revolt and the recovery of the Temple. Three years later, in 164 BC, after Jewish

forces regained control of the sanctuary, the Temple was cleansed and the altar rededicated on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, the Jewish month corresponding roughly to November-December.[44] That rededication became the basis of the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah, which is later mentioned in John 10:22.

Daniel 11:31 also provides an important example of the typological fulfillment discussed earlier in this study. Antiochus' desecration was a real historical fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, but it also served as a pattern pointing forward to a greater fulfillment still to come. Nearly two centuries after Antiochus had died and the Temple had been rededicated, Jesus spoke of "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet" as an event that was still to come:

> When ye therefore shall see **the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet**, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)
>
> -Matthew 24:15

Jesus' words confirm that the pattern established under Antiochus extends beyond its historical fulfillment. Antiochus had desecrated the Temple, stopped its sacrifices, and imposed idolatrous worship within the sanctuary. Yet in Matthew 24 Jesus placed another "abomination of desolation" in "the holy place" within His description of the end times and the events leading directly to His return. Antiochus therefore provides the near-term historical fulfillment of Daniel 11:31 while also establishing the pattern that will be repeated in a greater way by the future Antichrist, the ultimate end-time ruler who will persecute Israel during the Tribulation.

Other prophetic passages develop this future pattern further. Daniel 9:27 describes a coming ruler who causes "the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" in connection with an abomination that brings desolation. In the New Testament, Paul likewise describes the future defiling actions of the coming "man of sin," who will sit in the Temple, exalt himself above every object of worship, and present himself as God:

> Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.
>
> -2 Thessalonians 2:4

Revelation 13:14-15 adds another part of this end-time picture by describing the image of the beast and the enforcement of its worship under threat of death. These passages follow the same essential pattern first displayed historically under Antiochus: Jewish worship is taking place, a hostile ruler brings it to an end, the sanctuary is defiled, and idolatrous worship is imposed in its place. The historical fulfillment of Daniel 11:31 therefore gives us a prophetic pattern of one of the central events of the Tribulation, when the future Antichrist will carry out a greater and ultimate desecration.

Daniel 11:32

> And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.
>
> -Daniel 11:32

Daniel now contrasts two groups among the Jewish people. The first were those who abandoned the covenant and submitted to Antiochus IV. First Maccabees records that many among Israel accepted the king's religion, sacrificed to idols, profaned the Sabbath, and joined in enforcing his decrees.[45] Daniel says that Antiochus would corrupt such people "by flatteries," referring to the honors, rewards, and privileges used to gain their cooperation. This can be seen especially in what happened to Mattathias, a Jewish priest living in the town of Modein. When Antiochus' officers came there to enforce the king's religious decrees, they singled Mattathias out because of his standing in the community. They praised him as an honored and influential leader and promised that he and his sons would become Friends

of the king and receive silver, gold, and other gifts if he would obey the royal command.[46]

Mattathias refused. Even if the other peoples of the kingdom obeyed Antiochus and abandoned their ancestral religion, he declared that he, his sons, and his brothers would continue to follow the covenant of their fathers.[47] What happened immediately afterward became the spark that ignited the Maccabean revolt. As Mattathias finished speaking, a Jewish man came forward in public to offer the pagan sacrifice required by the king. Mattathias was overcome with zeal, rushed forward, and killed the man upon the altar. He then killed the royal officer who was forcing the people to sacrifice and tore down the pagan altar itself. Mattathias then cried out for everyone who was zealous for the Law and remained faithful to the covenant to follow him, and he and his sons fled into the wilderness, leaving their possessions behind.[48]

The resistance quickly grew beyond Mattathias and his immediate family. Other Jews who had fled Antiochus' persecution joined them, along with a group known as the Hasideans, described in First Maccabees as mighty warriors devoted to the Law. Together they organized an armed resistance, destroyed pagan altars, and fought against those enforcing Antiochus' decrees.[49]

Not long afterward, Mattathias died. Before his death, he gathered his sons, urged them to remain zealous for the Law and faithful to the covenant, and appointed one of them, Judas Maccabeus, to lead the resistance in battle.[50] The surname Maccabeus would become so closely associated with Judas and the revolt that his family and followers came to be widely known as the Maccabees. The exact origin of the name is uncertain, but it has traditionally been connected with a word meaning "hammer," giving Judas the familiar designation "the Hammer."[51]

Judas soon demonstrated why that description became so fitting. His first recorded victory came against Apollonius, a Seleucid commander who gathered a large force from Samaria and advanced against the resistance. Judas defeated his army, killed Apollonius

himself, and took his sword, which First Maccabees says he continued to use in battle.[52] Soon afterward, another Seleucid commander named Seron advanced against Judas with a larger force. Judas' own men were troubled by how few of them there were, but Judas answered that victory did not depend upon the size of an army and that strength came from Heaven. His small force then attacked Seron's army near Beth-horon and routed it, with First Maccabees reporting that about eight hundred of Seron's men were killed and the remainder fled.[53]

The conflict soon grew much larger. Antiochus placed Lysias, one of his leading officials, in charge of the western part of the kingdom while he campaigned in the east and ordered him to crush the Jewish resistance. Lysias sent a major Seleucid force into Judea under several royal commanders. First Maccabees reports an army of forty thousand infantry and seven thousand cavalry, while Judas had gathered only about three thousand men, many of whom were poorly armed and lacked adequate armor.[54] One of the Seleucid commanders, Gorgias, then took five thousand infantry and one thousand cavalry during the night in an attempt to surprise Judas' camp. Judas learned of the plan, moved his men before Gorgias arrived, and instead attacked the main Seleucid camp near Emmaus. The larger army was routed and its camp burned. When Gorgias returned and saw the smoke rising from the camp and Judas' forces drawn up for battle, his men fled.[55]

The following year brought another confrontation with an even larger force. First Maccabees reports that Lysias personally advanced with sixty thousand infantry and five thousand cavalry, while Judas met him with only ten thousand men. Judas again prayed for God's help before the battle. His forces attacked, killed about five thousand of Lysias' men, and forced the Seleucid army to withdraw.[56] These victories eventually opened the way for Judas and his followers to recover Jerusalem and restore Jewish worship at the Temple. Thus, through such incredible triumphs, Daniel's words that "the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" were directly fulfilled in dramatic fashion.

Daniel's words may also have a broader historical fulfillment. The resistance begun by Mattathias and led by Judas eventually gave rise to

the Hasmonean ruling house, through which their family held political and priestly authority in Judea for more than a century. Josephus states that the Hasmonean government continued for 126 years before finally coming to an end with the rise of Herod.[57] In this broader sense, the words "shall be strong, and do exploits" may encompass not only the extraordinary victories of the Maccabean revolt, but also the remarkable rise of Mattathias' family from a persecuted priestly household to the rulers of Judea.

Daniel 11:33

> And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.
>
> -Daniel 11:33

Daniel now turns from the military victories of the Maccabean resistance to the faithful Jews who strengthened others during the persecution. He says that "they that understand among the people shall instruct many." Second Maccabees gives a powerful example in Eleazar, an elderly Jewish scribe who was ordered to eat food forbidden by the Law. His persecutors offered him a way to pretend that he had obeyed so that his life could be spared, but Eleazar refused because younger Jews might believe that he had abandoned the faith and follow his example. He chose death instead, determined to leave the younger generation an example of faithfulness to God's Law. Second Maccabees says that his death became an example of courage not only to the young but to the wider Jewish nation.[58] In this way, faithful Jews who understood the covenant continued to instruct and strengthen others even when doing so could cost them their lives.

Daniel then says that they would "fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil." Each of these forms of persecution appears in the historical record. Second Maccabees records the widespread slaughter that accompanied Antiochus' assault upon Jerusalem.[59] It also describes the horrific martyrdom of seven brothers, including one

who was mutilated and then burned alive while his mother and brothers watched and encouraged one another to remain faithful.[60] First Maccabees records that Jerusalem was plundered and burned, while women and children were taken captive and the possessions of the city were carried away as spoil.[61]

The persecution continued beyond these individual acts. First Maccabees records that copies of the Law were torn apart and burned, anyone found possessing the covenant book was condemned to death, and women who had their sons circumcised were executed. Yet many Jews remained determined not to defile themselves and chose death rather than abandon the covenant.[62] This sustained campaign of execution, torture, captivity, and plunder fulfilled Daniel's warning that the faithful would suffer these things "many days."

Daniel 11:34

> Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.
>
> -Daniel 11:34

The persecution described in the previous verse did not leave the faithful Jews without help. Daniel says that "when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help." The older English word "holpen" simply means "helped," and the NKJV renders the phrase, "they shall be aided with a little help." That help came through the Maccabean resistance begun by Mattathias and continued under his sons. What began with a relatively small group of Jews fleeing persecution and defending the covenant developed into an organized resistance capable of defeating much larger Seleucid forces.[63] It was "a little help" in comparison with the power of the Seleucid kingdom, yet it was enough to preserve the resistance and eventually recover Jerusalem.

Daniel then adds that "many shall cleave to them with flatteries." The idea is that not everyone who joined the resistance did so from sincere devotion to God and the covenant. As the victories of Judas and his brothers became widely known, their success attracted others

whose motives were more self-serving. First Maccabees gives an example in Joseph and Azariah, commanders who heard of the military successes of Judas and his brothers and decided to launch their own campaign in order to "make a name" for themselves. Their effort ended disastrously.[64]

The "little help" nevertheless produced an extraordinary result. After defeating the Seleucid forces, Judas and his men returned to Jerusalem and found the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, the gates burned, and the Temple courts overgrown. They cleansed the sanctuary, removed the defiled altar stones, built a new altar, restored the Temple furnishings, and on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev in 164 BC offered sacrifices upon the restored altar. The dedication was celebrated for eight days, and Judas and the assembly of Israel decreed that the celebration should be observed annually.[65] This became the Feast of Dedication, later known as Hanukkah, which Jews continue to celebrate today. The small resistance that began under Mattathias had now succeeded in restoring the worship that Antiochus had attempted to destroy.

Daniel 11:35

> And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.
>
> -Daniel 11:35

The victories of the Maccabees did not bring an immediate end to the suffering of those who remained faithful. Daniel says that "some of them of understanding shall fall." After the Temple had been restored, the struggle continued under later Seleucid rulers. Bacchides, a high-ranking Seleucid official and military commander, was sent into Judea with Alcimus, whom the Seleucid king had appointed high priest. A group of Hasideans sought peace with them and trusted their promises, but sixty of these faithful Jews were seized and killed in a single day.[66] This provides a direct example of Daniel's

prediction that even some of those who remained faithful and understood would "fall."

Daniel then explains that this suffering would serve "to try them, and to purge, and to make them white." The idea is one of refining and purification. The persecution distinguished those who remained faithful to God and the covenant from those whose loyalty disappeared under pressure. Their trials were severe, and some lost their lives, but the very suffering they endured revealed and strengthened their faithfulness.

The struggle continued. Judas Maccabeus himself eventually died in battle against the much larger army of Bacchides at Elasa in 160 BC.[67] After his death, lawless Jews again gained influence throughout Israel, the friends of Judas were hunted down and punished, and First Maccabees describes this as a period of extraordinary distress. Leadership of the resistance then passed to Judas' brother Jonathan, who was chosen to take his place as ruler and military leader.[68]

The movement that had begun under Mattathias and continued through his sons eventually developed into the Hasmonean ruling house. After Jonathan, leadership passed to his brother Simon, who was formally recognized by the Jewish people as high priest, commander, and ruler.[69] The family that had begun as a small resistance against Antiochus' persecution had now become the political and priestly leadership of Judea. Josephus later states that Hasmonean government continued for 126 years before finally giving way to Herod.[70]

Daniel closes by saying that this period of testing would continue "even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." The persecution under Antiochus began a period of testing and refinement that extended beyond the immediate Maccabean revolt into the Hasmonean era. That period also had an appointed conclusion. The historical sequence would soon move beyond the Hasmoneans to the ruler who replaced them and brought Judea under a new political order – Herod the Great.

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65. Ibid., 4:36-59.
66. Ibid., 7:8-18.
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CHAPTER 5

DANIEL 11:36-12:3 – HEROD, ROME, AND THE TRANSITION TO THE END TIMES

Daniel 11:36

> And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.
>
> -Daniel 11:36

At this point the subject of the prophecy changes. Verses 21-35 centered on Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the crisis produced by his reign, while beginning in verse 32 the prophecy also followed the Maccabean resistance and the rise of the Hasmonean ruling house. Daniel now introduces a ruler identified simply as "the king." A common dispensational interpretation locates a major chronological gap between verses 35 and 36 and identifies this new king with the future Antichrist.[1] We agree that Antiochus IV is no longer the subject, but a change of ruler does not by itself require a jump to the end times. The continuing historical sequence provides another king who came to power over Judea at the end of the Hasmonean period: Herod the Great. Josephus specifically states that after 126 years the

government of the Hasmoneans came to an end and "came to Herod."[2] The New Testament likewise repeatedly identifies him simply as "Herod the king" or "king of Judaea" (Matthew 2:1, 3, 9; Luke 1:5).

Daniel first says that this king "shall do according to his will." The same expression has already appeared twice in this prophecy. Alexander the Great would "do according to his will" in verse 3, and Antiochus III would do the same in verse 16. In both cases the expression describes a ruler who successfully exercises his power and accomplishes his purposes against those who stand before him. Herod fits this description well. Rome had already brought Judea under its power in 63 BC, when Pompey captured Jerusalem during a civil war within the Hasmonean dynasty.[3] Then, in 40 BC, the Parthians helped Antigonus, the last Hasmonean king, seize Jerusalem, forcing Herod to flee to Rome, where the Senate declared him king of Judea.[4] Herod then returned with Roman military support and, in 37 BC, captured Jerusalem, removed Antigonus, and took effective control of Judea as king.[5] In this way, Herod replaced the Hasmonean ruler and established himself over Judea, fitting Daniel's description of a king who would "do according to his will."

Daniel then says that the king "shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god." Verse 38 shows that this king would still honor a particular god, so Daniel's point here is not that he rejected religion altogether. The emphasis is upon his self-exaltation and the supremacy of his own will. Herod repeatedly placed his political authority above the religious institutions of the Jewish nation whenever they threatened his power. After becoming king, he took control of the high priesthood and appointed men of his own choosing. He briefly appointed the young Hasmonean Aristobulus III as high priest, but when Aristobulus became popular with the people, Herod arranged for his death and continued exercising control over the office.[6] Herod's throne and political survival consistently took priority over competing claims to authority, a pattern that the following verses will develop further.

Daniel next says that the king "shall speak marvellous things

against the God of gods." The NKJV renders the phrase, "shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods." Matthew 2 provides a direct example of this in Herod's own words. After the chief priests and scribes identified Bethlehem as the prophesied birthplace of the Christ, Herod secretly called the Magi and instructed them to find the child and report back to him, claiming that he wanted to "come and worship him also" (Matthew 2:4-8). This was more than ordinary political deception. Herod used the language of worship itself as a lie while secretly intending to destroy the Messiah whom God had sent. In that sense, his own words became an expression of his opposition to the "God of gods" and to the King God had appointed. We will return to these events in verse 44, where the arrival of the Magi from the east and Herod's violent response become especially significant.

Daniel also says that the king "shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished." Herod's remarkable political survival fits this description well. He rose during the final years of the Hasmonean dynasty and survived the struggles that transformed the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire. During those struggles, Herod aligned himself with Mark Antony, who controlled Rome's eastern territories. After Antony was defeated by his rival Octavian, Herod successfully transferred his allegiance to Octavian and remained king until the closing years of the 1st century BC.[7] Daniel immediately places a limit upon that prosperity, however: "for that that is determined shall be done." Herod could prosper only for the period God had appointed. Some interpreters understand the "indignation" here as referring specifically to the future end-time judgment upon Israel.[8] The term itself, however, does not require that meaning. Daniel 8:19 uses the same word when the angel speaks of "the last end of the indignation" within a vision whose immediate historical setting is explicitly identified with the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece and culminates in the persecution historically associated with Antiochus IV (Daniel 8:20-25). Daniel 8 therefore shows that the term can describe a divinely appointed period of judgment within an immediate historical setting, so its use here does not by itself point to the end times. The verse therefore finds a direct historical fulfillment in Herod, who acted

according to his own will and prospered only for the period God had determined.

The language of verse 36 also helps explain why this passage has often been connected with the future Antichrist. Paul describes the coming "man of sin" as one "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped" (2 Thessalonians 2:4), wording that closely resembles Daniel's description of the king who would "exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god." That correspondence deserves to be recognized, but it does not require us to conclude that Daniel 11:36 abandons the historical sequence and jumps directly to the Antichrist. Herod provides the direct historical fulfillment, while the same pattern may also anticipate the future Antichrist. Like Herod, he will appear to act according to his own will and enjoy a period of remarkable success, yet his apparent freedom and temporary prosperity will remain entirely subject to the limits God has appointed.

Daniel 11:37

> Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.
>
> -Daniel 11:37

Daniel continues describing the same king by saying that he would not "regard the God of his fathers." The KJV uses the singular "God," while many modern translations render the phrase "the gods of his fathers." Either way, the point concerns the ruler's disregard for the religion inherited from those before him. This fits Herod's background particularly well. Herod was an Idumean, descended from the people of Idumea, the territory south of Judea associated with the descendants of Esau. Several generations earlier, however, the Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus had conquered Idumea and required its inhabitants to be circumcised and live according to Jewish law. Josephus says that from that time the Idumeans continued as Jews.[9] Herod himself publicly identified with this Jewish heritage, referring to Israel's ances-

tors as "our fathers" and speaking of the God worshiped in Jerusalem as "God Almighty."[10] Judaism had therefore become the inherited religion of the family into which Herod was born.

Herod nevertheless repeatedly set Jewish religious tradition aside whenever it conflicted with his political interests or his loyalty to Rome. Josephus says that he introduced foreign practices contrary to Jewish customs and established games in Jerusalem in honor of Caesar.[11] Outside Jerusalem he went even further, erecting temples to Caesar at Sebaste and near Panium and filling his kingdom with monuments honoring the Roman ruler.[12] Herod also rebuilt and greatly enlarged the Temple in Jerusalem.[13] This showed that he was willing to support the worship of the God of Israel when it served his purposes. Ultimately, his religious policy was subordinate to his own authority and political interests, fitting Daniel's broader description that he would neither regard the God of his fathers nor "any god," because "he shall magnify himself above all."

Daniel then adds that the king would have no regard for "the desire of women." This is one of the more difficult expressions in the verse and has been understood in several different ways. Some take the phrase as a reference to sexual desire, leading some futurist interpreters to suggest that the future Antichrist could be homosexual or asexual.[14] We do not find this interpretation persuasive. Herod's own life argues strongly against understanding the phrase as a lack of attraction toward women. Josephus describes his intense love for Mariamne and the overwhelming grief that followed her death.[15]

Another interpretation understands "the desire of women" as referring to a male pagan deity particularly desired or mourned by women, such as Tammuz or Adonis.[16] Ezekiel 8:14, for example, specifically describes women "weeping for Tammuz." However, the wording in Daniel does not identify any particular pagan god, and nothing in the immediate historical description of Herod points specifically to Tammuz or Adonis. For that reason, we do not find this interpretation persuasive either.

A stronger interpretation is that "the desire of women" refers to the Messiah. The Hebrew word translated "desire" is *chemdah*, the

same word used in Haggai 2:7, where the KJV says that "the desire of all nations shall come,"[17] a phrase ancient Jewish interpretation understood messianically. For instance, Rabbi Akiva, one of the most influential early rabbinic sages,[18] applied Haggai's prophecy to Simon Bar Kokhba, whom he believed to be Israel's promised Messiah.[19] Although Akiva was mistaken in identifying Bar Kokhba as the Messiah, his use of the passage shows that Haggai's "Desire of All Nations" was understood messianically within ancient Jewish tradition. While some modern Jewish translations instead render the expression as referring to the desirable or precious things of the nations,[20] that later rendering does not erase the earlier Jewish testimony to its messianic meaning.

If Daniel's closely related expression "the desire of women" also refers to the promised Messiah, Herod's actions fit the phrase particularly well. Matthew records that Herod learned from the chief priests and scribes that the Christ was prophesied to be born in Bethlehem, and he then deliberately sought to destroy Him (Matthew 2:3-8, 13, 16). The king who disregarded the God of his fathers also showed no regard for the Messiah whom that God had promised to Israel. This interpretation also fits naturally with the previous verse, where Herod used the language of worship as a lie while secretly intending to destroy the Messiah.

The closing statement, "for he shall magnify himself above all," explains the larger point of the verse. Herod's ultimate loyalty was to his own throne and authority. Neither the religion he inherited nor the Messiah promised to Israel was allowed to stand above his determination to preserve his power. As in verse 36, Herod may also provide a pattern that anticipates the future Antichrist, who will likewise exalt himself above all religious authority and set himself against the Messiah. Yet this did not mean that Herod honored nothing at all. The next verse explains what he did honor and shows even more specifically where his true allegiance lay.

Daniel 11:38

> But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.
>
> -Daniel 11:38

Verse 38 now tells us what Herod did honor. The KJV calls this figure "the God of forces," while most modern translations render the phrase "a god of fortresses." The Hebrew word behind "forces" refers to a stronghold or fortified place,[21] linking the expression with military strength and political power. In Herod's case, that description points naturally to Rome and especially to the ruler who stood at the head of Roman power. Herod's kingship had been created and sustained by Rome: the Senate declared him king in 40 BC,[22] Roman military support enabled him to capture Jerusalem in 37 BC,[23] and after the defeat of Mark Antony, his position was confirmed by Octavian.[24] In 27 BC, Octavian received the title Augustus and thereafter became known as Caesar Augustus. He received divine honors during his lifetime, especially in the provinces and client kingdoms of the Roman world.[25] As noted earlier, Herod himself participated in these honors by building temples dedicated to Caesar.[26] Herod therefore depended upon Roman military power for his throne while also honoring its supreme ruler as a god, making Daniel's unusual description of a "god of fortresses" fit Herod's relationship with Caesar particularly well.

Daniel then specifies how this god would be honored: "with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things." Josephus records that Herod established games in Caesar's honor and surrounded the theater with inscriptions and trophies celebrating Caesar's victories, including objects made of pure gold and silver, along with precious garments and precious stones.[27] Beyond the temples already noted,[28] [29] even Herod's final will expressed this same devotion through enormous gifts. He left Caesar ten million drachmae, while Caesar's wife Julia received vessels of gold and silver and costly garments.[30] Herod's actions therefore fulfilled Daniel's descrip-

tion of the costly honors the king would bestow upon his "god of forces."

Daniel 11:39

> Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.
>
> -Daniel 11:39

Verse 39 continues the same description and now places special emphasis on "the most strong holds." The NKJV renders the phrase "the strongest fortresses." Few descriptions in this prophecy fit Herod's reign more perfectly than this reference to "the most strong holds." Herod became famous for an extraordinary program of fortress building, military strongholds, and massive engineering projects designed to secure his rule and project his power. Josephus records that Herod strengthened the fortress of Antonia beside the Temple in Jerusalem, transformed Samaria into a fortress and "strong hold," fortified it with massive walls, and developed Caesarea as another fortified center. He explains that Herod was constantly looking for additional ways to secure his rule, surrounding the country with guarded positions so that rebellion could be detected and suppressed.[31] This extensive program of fortification continued throughout his kingdom, and the remains of many of these strongholds and building projects still exist and can be seen today.

Among the most impressive surviving examples is Masada. Herod developed the mountaintop beside the Dead Sea into a heavily fortified refuge, surrounding the summit with a wall nearly a mile long and thirty-eight towers about seventy-five feet high. Inside he built a fortified palace, large reservoirs for storing water, extensive food storage, and an arsenal capable of supplying thousands of men. Josephus specifically says that Herod prepared Masada as a place of refuge in case his rule was threatened.[32]

Herodium, a palace-fortress built on a hill several miles southeast

of Bethlehem, was another major stronghold. Herod raised the natural hill higher, surrounded it with towers, built a palace within it, and brought water to the site from a considerable distance.[33] In Jerusalem, he also built the large defensive towers named Hippicus, Phasaelus, and Mariamne to strengthen the city's defenses.[34] Herod's building program was so extensive that archaeologist Ehud Netzer described his projects as "the most prominent in the country, for any single specific period or personality."[35] Daniel's emphasis on "the most strong holds" precisely describes one of the most recognizable features of Herod's reign.

Daniel then says that the king would act in these strongholds "with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory." In the previous verse, we saw that this "god" was Caesar, the Roman ruler whose power had secured and preserved Herod's throne. Herod fulfilled this wording directly by honoring Caesar through many of his building projects. He rebuilt the ancient city of Samaria and renamed it Sebaste, the Greek form of the title Augustus.[36] He also rebuilt a small coastal settlement known as Strato's Tower into the major port city of Caesarea, naming it in honor of Caesar.[37] Josephus further records that Herod erected temples and other monuments to Caesar throughout his kingdom.[38] Herod's building projects therefore strengthened his own rule while also publicly glorifying the Roman ruler whom he treated as his "god of forces."

The final part of the verse says that the king would "cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain." Herod used both governing appointments and grants of land to strengthen his own rule. Josephus records that Herod used his influence with Caesar to obtain a tetrarchy, or territory to govern, for his brother Pheroras and then gave him an annual revenue of one hundred talents from his own kingdom.[39] In this way, Herod caused his own brother to "rule over many."

Herod also divided land in ways that benefited his rule. At Samaria, he rewarded men who had supported him in war by making them citizens and dividing the surrounding land among them.[40] Later, along his northeastern frontier, Herod offered tax-free land in Batanea to

Zamaris, a Babylonian Jew who came with a large force of mounted archers. Josephus explains that Herod wanted their settlement to serve as a guard against raids from neighboring Trachonitis.[41] Herod therefore used both positions of authority and grants of land to reward supporters, strengthen his control, and protect his territory, fitting Daniel's statement that he would "cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain."

Daniel 11:40

> And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.
>
> -Daniel 11:40

Verse 40 opens with the phrase "at the time of the end," which was already introduced in verse 35. As discussed there, the phrase marks the closing stage of the historical period in view. The Bible commentator Albert Barnes likewise explains that "the 'time of the end' must properly denote the end or consummation of the series of events under consideration."[42] Here, that closing stage culminates in Rome's conquest of Egypt in 30 BC and the end of the Ptolemaic kingdom.

By this point, the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt – the southern kingdom that had appeared repeatedly throughout Daniel 11 – was ruled by Cleopatra VII. She was the famous queen of Egypt and the final ruler of the Ptolemaic dynasty that had governed the country since the division of Alexander the Great's empire. Daniel continues to use the familiar title "king of the south" as a geopolitical designation for the Egyptian power itself, which was now ruled by a queen.

Cleopatra VII's power had become closely joined with that of Mark Antony. Antony was a Roman general and one of the three men who had jointly ruled the Roman world after the assassination of Julius Caesar. Another was Octavian, Julius Caesar's adopted heir. Antony

and Octavian eventually divided the Roman world between them, with Antony controlling the eastern territories and Octavian controlling the West.[43] Antony also became Cleopatra's political and personal ally, while his relationship with Octavian gradually deteriorated into open rivalry. Octavian is the same man discussed earlier who later received the title Augustus in 27 BC.

With that historical setting in mind, the sequence of the verse becomes much easier to follow. First, "the king of the south" pushes against "him," referring back to Herod, the king described in verses 36-39. The subject then changes. "The king of the north" comes "against him like a whirlwind," and at that point the second "him" can refer to the king of the South who has just been introduced. The Bible commentator C.F. Keil understands the Hebrew construction this way, explaining that the first pronoun refers back to the king previously under discussion, while the second refers to the king of the South just mentioned.[44] On this reading, the verse first describes Cleopatra VII's Egyptian power pressing against Herod and then shifts to Octavian coming against Cleopatra's Egyptian power.

Josephus gives us a strong historical background for Daniel's statement that "the king of the south" would "push at him." Cleopatra repeatedly pressured Antony to enlarge her territory at the expense of neighboring rulers. She specifically asked him to take Judea from Herod and Arabia from its ruler and give both kingdoms to her. Antony refused to go that far, but he did take valuable territory from Herod around Jericho, including its famous balsam and palm plantations, and give it to Cleopatra. Cleopatra then held the rights to this territory and its income, and Herod had to lease it back from her and pay her for the use of land that had previously belonged to his own kingdom.[45] Cleopatra's expansion was therefore taking place directly at Herod's expense.

Cleopatra's pressure on Herod soon went beyond territorial demands and began to affect him on the battlefield as well. In 31 BC, as the struggle between Antony and Octavian was approaching its decisive stage, Herod prepared troops to assist Antony. Antony instead ordered him to fight the neighboring king of Arabia. Josephus specifi-

cally says that this was what Cleopatra wanted because she hoped the two kings would weaken one another.[46] During the fighting, Herod initially defeated the Arabians, but Athenion, one of Cleopatra's military commanders in the region, intervened against Herod's forces. Josephus says that Athenion attacked Herod's troops and helped the Arabians inflict a severe defeat upon them.[47] This gives Daniel's statement that the king of the South would "push at him" a concrete historical setting: Cleopatra VII was pressing against Herod through territorial demands and then through military intervention against his forces.

The second half of the verse shifts to the "king of the north." Before the Battle of Actium, Mark Antony controlled Rome's eastern territories, including Syria, while Octavian controlled the West.[48] That political arrangement changed decisively in 31 BC, when Octavian defeated the combined forces of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium. Antony fled, his remaining land forces surrendered, and his power in the Roman East collapsed.[49] Octavian consequently gained control of the eastern territories, including Syria. He now occupied the same northern geopolitical position in relation to Judea that the Seleucid kings had occupied earlier in the prophecy, making him the "king of the north" in the conflict that followed.

With Octavian now established as the northern power, the movement described by Daniel follows. The king of the North would come against the king of the South "like a whirlwind" and would "enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over." In 30 BC, Octavian advanced south from Syria toward Egypt.[50] Herod met him at Ptolemais, a coastal city north of Judea, and supplied his army as it continued south toward Egypt.[51] Octavian was now moving from the territory north of Judea, through the lands between Syria and Egypt, directly against Cleopatra VII's kingdom in the South.

Daniel further describes the invading force as coming "with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships." Plutarch records the enormous scale of the forces assembled for the conflict. Antony and Cleopatra had at least five hundred warships, one hundred thousand infantry, and twelve thousand cavalry, while Octavian commanded two

hundred fifty warships, eighty thousand infantry, and approximately the same number of cavalry as Antony.[52] By the time Octavian reached Alexandria, Antony's position had been deteriorating since his defeat at Actium. He still managed to win a brief cavalry engagement outside the city, but even the soldier he personally honored for bravery in that fight deserted to Octavian that same night.[53] The following morning, Antony formed his infantry and watched as his fleet sailed out to meet Octavian's ships. Instead of fighting, the crews of Antony's fleet exchanged greetings with Octavian's men and then changed sides, joining Octavian's fleet. Antony's cavalry soon followed them, and his remaining infantry was defeated, forcing him back into Alexandria.[54] The collapse of Antony's resistance left Octavian free to press into Egypt, carrying the overwhelming southward advance described by Daniel toward its final objective.

Daniel 11:41

> He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.
>
> -Daniel 11:41

Verse 41 continues the same southward advance described in verse 40, saying that the king of the North would "enter also into the glorious land" and that "many countries shall be overthrown." As established earlier in verse 16, the "glorious land" refers to Judea, the land of Israel. By this point, Octavian's victory had broken Antony's power in the Roman East,[55] and his route from Syria toward Egypt carried his army south through Judea. Josephus specifically records Octavian going from Syria to invade Egypt and his army continuing toward Pelusium.[56] Judea therefore lay directly in the path of the advancing northern power as it continued south toward Egypt.

Daniel then becomes more specific by naming three regions that would escape this advance. Those regions are Edom, Moab, and "the chief of the children of Ammon." The ancient territories identified by

these names lay east and southeast of the land of Israel, outside the direct line of Octavian's march.[57] His campaign continued south through the "glorious land" toward Pelusium and Egypt rather than turning into these regions.

Daniel 11:42

> He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.
>
> -Daniel 11:42

Verse 42 brings Octavian's southward campaign to its final destination. Daniel says that "the land of Egypt shall not escape," and in 30 BC Octavian's forces reached Alexandria and broke the last resistance of Antony and Cleopatra. Antony took his own life after receiving the false report that Cleopatra was dead, and Cleopatra died shortly afterward while in Octavian's custody.[58] With both rulers dead, the Ptolemaic kingdom came to an end and Egypt passed under Roman control. Cassius Dio states that Octavian "made Egypt tributary" and placed it under the authority of the Roman commander Cornelius Gallus, whom he appointed to govern Egypt, concluding his account with the words, "Thus was Egypt enslaved."[59] The kingdom of the South that had dominated so much of Daniel 11 had finally fallen, fulfilling the prophecy that Egypt itself would not escape.

Daniel 11:43

> But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.
>
> -Daniel 11:43

The conquest of Egypt gave Octavian control of its enormous wealth. This was the royal treasure of the Ptolemaic kingdom at the end of nearly three centuries of rule. The same dynasty has appeared

throughout much of Daniel 11, beginning with Ptolemy I and continuing through generations of kings of the South until Cleopatra VII. During those centuries, the Ptolemaic state developed an extensive system of taxation, royal banks, and treasury accounts that gathered revenues from throughout Egypt into the royal treasury at Alexandria.[60] By the time Octavian conquered Egypt in 30 BC, he was taking possession of the accumulated wealth of the kingdom that Daniel's prophecy had followed for generations.

Cassius Dio records that large quantities of treasure were found in Cleopatra's palace, including wealth she had gathered from temples and other sources.[61] Suetonius gives an especially vivid picture of the amount involved, reporting that Octavian brought the "royal treasures" of Egypt to Rome and displayed them in the triumph celebrating his victory over Alexandria. The influx of money was so great that interest rates fell and real-estate values rose.[62] Thus, history powerfully portrays the fulfillment of Daniel's words, as Octavian gained control of "the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt."

The final phrase of the KJV, "the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps," is somewhat difficult for the modern reader. The NKJV renders it more naturally: "the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels." In the years following the conquest of Egypt, Roman military power extended into regions west and south of Egypt. The Roman commander Cornelius Balbus campaigned against the Garamantes and other peoples of the Libyan interior. Pliny records that their cities and territories were overcome by Roman arms and that Balbus celebrated a triumph for these victories.[63]

Roman forces also moved south from Egypt against the Ethiopians. Cassius Dio records that Gaius Petronius, the Roman governor of Egypt, defeated their forces, pursued them into their own country, captured Napata, and eventually compelled their queen, Candace, to make terms with him.[64] The conquest of Egypt was therefore followed by Roman military victories in the regions identified by Daniel as Libya and Ethiopia, fitting the NKJV's wording that they would "follow at his heels."

Daniel 11:44

> But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.
>
> -Daniel 11:44

Verse 44 returns to focus on Herod, the king described in verses 36-39, after the prophecy's account of Octavian and the conquest of Egypt in verses 40-43. The older wording of the KJV becomes easier to follow in the NKJV, which renders "tidings" as "news" and "utterly to make away many" as "annihilate many." The verse therefore describes news arriving from the east and the north that would trouble the king, followed by an outbreak of great fury in which many would be destroyed.

The news from the east has a remarkable parallel in the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. Matthew records that during Herod's reign, Magi came "from the east" to Jerusalem asking, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:1-2). The very next verse states, "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was *troubled*, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matthew 2:3). Daniel had spoken of tidings from the east that would "trouble him," and Matthew records men arriving from the east with news of another King of the Jews that specifically troubled Herod.

The sequence continues with Daniel's statement that the king would respond "with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many." After the Magi failed to return and tell Herod where Jesus was, Matthew says that Herod "was exceeding wroth" and ordered the killing of all the male children in Bethlehem and the surrounding region who were two years old and under, according to the time he had learned from the Magi (Matthew 2:16). The NKJV's wording, "he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many," makes the connection especially easy to see: news from the east troubled Herod, his anger turned to fury, and he responded by ordering wide-

spread killing in an attempt to eliminate the child he viewed as a threat to his throne.

The "news" from the north is more difficult to identify with the same precision, but Herod's final years were also marked by troubling reports coming from Rome about who would succeed him. His oldest son, Antipater, was in Rome and repeatedly sent accusations to Herod against two of his brothers, hoping to turn his father against them.[65] Later, additional letters from Rome brought further accusations involving other members of Herod's family.[66] These reports added to the suspicion, family intrigue, and fear over the succession that dominated the closing years of Herod's reign.

Herod's fury during this period extended far beyond Bethlehem. Near the end of his life, Josephus records that two respected Jewish teachers encouraged their followers to tear down the golden eagle Herod had placed above the great gate of the Temple, a pagan symbol associated with Roman power. Herod responded by having the teachers and several of those involved burned alive.[67] His final years were marked by repeated executions and violent reactions against those he regarded as threats to his authority. The events surrounding the Magi provide the closest correspondence with Daniel's sequence of news, trouble, fury, and destruction, but Josephus shows that this kind of violent retaliation continued to characterize the closing period of Herod's reign.

Daniel 11:45

> And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.
>
> -Daniel 11:45

Verse 45 continues with Herod in view and brings the prophecy's description of his reign to its conclusion. After describing the troubling reports and violent fury that marked his final years, Daniel now turns to the location of the king's royal quarters and then to his death.

The opening phrase in the KJV, "the tabernacles of his palace," is somewhat archaic. The NKJV renders it more naturally as "the tents of his palace" and reads that he would place them "between the seas and the glorious holy mountain." The geographical reference is to the Mediterranean Sea west of Judea and the Dead Sea to the east, while the "glorious holy mountain" points to Jerusalem and Mount Zion. Judea and Jerusalem therefore stand directly within the geographical setting described by the verse.

Herod's royal residences fit this setting especially well. His principal palace in Jerusalem stood in the Upper City on Jerusalem's southwestern hill, west of the Temple Mount. Josephus describes Herod's palace there as a magnificent royal complex protected by massive towers and containing large rooms, courtyards, and elaborate gardens.[68] Archaeological study likewise places Herod's main Jerusalem palace on the southwestern hill of the city.[69] Herod therefore maintained one of his principal royal residences in Jerusalem itself, at the city identified with Daniel's "glorious holy mountain."

Herod also had an extensive winter palace complex at Jericho, east of Jerusalem and near the Dead Sea. Archaeological excavations have uncovered three successive palaces built there by Herod, establishing Jericho as one of his major royal residences.[70] It was also at Jericho that the final events of Herod's life unfolded. By this point Herod was suffering from a severe and worsening illness, sometimes identified as syphilis, although the exact cause remains uncertain.[71] Josephus describes a long list of painful symptoms and records that Herod called for physicians, followed their treatments, and even traveled to the medicinal hot springs at Callirrhoe, east of the Dead Sea, in hope of recovering. None of these efforts restored him, and he eventually returned to Jericho with no hope of recovery.[72]

As his suffering became more severe, Herod attempted to take his own life with a knife, but his cousin prevented him. He then ordered the execution of his son Antipater, and five days later Herod himself died.[73] Daniel closes the king's story with the words, "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." After a reign marked by extraordinary power, wealth, great building projects, and ruthless

efforts to preserve his throne, Herod finally reached a point where physicians, treatments, wealth, and royal authority were powerless to save him.

Daniel 12:1-3

> **1** And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. **2** And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. **3** And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.
>
> -Daniel 12:1-3

Daniel 11:45 brought the historical sequence of the prophecy to the end of Herod's reign, but the revelation itself continues into Chapter 12. Back in Daniel 10:14, the angel told Daniel that he had come to explain what would happen to his people in the latter days, and that detailed revelation continues throughout Daniel 11. When Daniel 12 opens with the words, "And at that time," there is no new vision, no new speaker, and no new introduction. The same heavenly messenger continues speaking directly to Daniel. This continuity becomes especially evident in Daniel 12:4, when the angel tells him to "shut up the words, and seal the book." Daniel then says in verse 8, "And I heard, but I understood not," showing that he is still listening to the same prophetic message that began in Daniel 10. Daniel 12:1 therefore follows directly from Daniel 11:45 as part of that same revelation.

With the opening words of Daniel 12, however, the prophecy suddenly carries us forward to an entirely different period. *This is where the chronological gap discussed earlier in this study finally appears.* Daniel moves directly from the closing years of Herod's reign to the future

deliverance of Israel at the end of the age, passing over the intervening centuries without describing them.

This is the prophetic foreshortening discussed earlier in Chapter 2. Scripture often places prophetic events separated by centuries or even millennia directly beside one another, with no explanation of the time between them. Several examples were noted earlier. Zechariah 9:9 foretells Christ entering Jerusalem "lowly, and riding upon an ass," an event fulfilled at His First Coming. Yet within the space of a single verse break, Zechariah 9:10 jumps all the way forward to the world-wide reign of Christ, when "his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 61:1-2 provides an even more dramatic example. Within the same sentence, separated by a comma, Isaiah moves from "the acceptable year of the Lord," fulfilled in the ministry of Christ at His First Coming, to "the day of vengeance of our God," which awaits His return. Jesus Himself demonstrated the separation when He read the passage in Nazareth and stopped before the words concerning the day of vengeance (Luke 4:18-21). Daniel now uses this same prophetic perspective. The death of Herod and the final end-time events concerning Israel stand side by side in the text, even though more than two thousand years separate them.

The events described in Daniel 12:1 show that the prophecy has now moved into the end times. Daniel is told that the archangel Michael, "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people," will arise during "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Jeremiah similarly describes Israel's future time of unparalleled trouble: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jeremiah 30:7). Jesus uses the same kind of language when describing Israel's future Great Tribulation: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). Daniel's unparalleled "time of trouble," Jeremiah's unparalleled "time of Jacob's trouble," and Jesus' unparalleled "great tribula-

tion" all point to the same final period of distress that will come upon Israel and the world before Christ returns.

Daniel then says that "at that time thy people shall be delivered." The focus remains exactly where Daniel 10:14 established it at the beginning of the vision – upon Daniel's people, Israel. Jeremiah likewise says that Jacob (Israel) shall be saved out of his time of trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). Zechariah places Israel's deliverance in the same end-time setting, describing Jerusalem surrounded by hostile nations, the Lord returning to fight against them, and His feet standing upon the Mount of Olives before He becomes King over all the earth (Zechariah 12:8-10; 14:2-9). This shows that Daniel is now looking beyond the ancient Gentile kingdoms that occupied most of Chapter 11 to Israel's final deliverance at the Second Coming of Christ.

The verses that immediately follow make this end-time setting even more unmistakable. Daniel 12:2 speaks of those who sleep in the dust of the earth awakening, introducing the future resurrection of the dead. Isaiah places similar resurrection language in a prophetic setting involving the Lord coming forth to punish the inhabitants of the earth, declaring, "thy dead men shall live" and calling upon those who dwell in dust to "awake" (Isaiah 26:19-21). Jesus likewise speaks of the future resurrection when the dead will come forth, some "unto the resurrection of life" and others "unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). Daniel 12:3 then says that "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." Jesus uses almost identical language when describing the righteous in the future messianic Kingdom: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43). While Daniel places both resurrection destinies side by side, Revelation 20 later supplies the fuller chronology by separating the First Resurrection, which itself unfolds in multiple phases, from the later resurrection of the wicked dead.

This follows the same end-time pattern established earlier in Daniel itself. Daniel 2 presents a succession of Gentile kingdoms that is finally brought to an end when the stone cut without hands strikes the image, destroys the kingdoms represented by it, and becomes a great moun-

tain that fills the whole earth (Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45). Daniel 7 likewise carries the prophecy beyond the Gentile kingdoms to the time when the Kingdom is given to the people of the saints of the most High and exists under the whole heaven (Daniel 7:27). Zechariah describes the same future earthly reign following the Lord's return, when the Lord shall be king over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9), while Revelation identifies this earthly reign as the thousand-year Kingdom in which the resurrected saints lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6). Daniel 12 has reached that same final horizon – the end of Gentile domination, Israel's deliverance, the resurrection, and the establishment of Christ's messianic Millennial Kingdom on earth.

As mentioned earlier in this study, a common futurist dispensational interpretation places this chronological jump back at Daniel 11:36 and understands verses 36-45 as a direct description of the future Antichrist. But our examination has shown that the historical sequence continues naturally through those verses – from Herod, to Octavian's conquest of Egypt, and then back to the final years and death of Herod. At that point, the prophecy leaves the ancient historical sequence behind, with the chronological leap occurring between Daniel 11:45 and 12:1. In the space of one verse to the next, Daniel moves from the death of a first-century BC king to the unparalleled Tribulation of the end times, Israel's final deliverance, the resurrection of the dead, and the earthly reign of the Messiah.

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CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

What makes Daniel 11 extraordinary is the amount of history it describes in advance and the level of detail with which it does so. At the beginning of the vision, the angel told Daniel, "Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days" (Daniel 10:14). That is exactly what the prophecy proceeds to do. It follows the kingdoms and rulers that would directly affect the Jewish people through the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods, describing their wars, alliances, betrayals, persecutions, changes of power, and struggles for control of the land of Israel. It carries that historical sequence through Antiochus Epiphanes and Herod the Great before finally moving, through prophetic foreshortening, to Israel's future time of trouble, deliverance, resurrection, and the coming Kingdom of the Messiah.

But the significance of Daniel 11 reaches far beyond the ancient history it describes. It vividly demonstrates how biblical prophecy acts as a fingerprint of the supernatural. Human beings can make predictions, recognize trends, and speculate about what may happen in the future, but they cannot describe centuries of future history in advance with this kind of detail and accuracy. Scripture presents this ability as a characteristic unique to God Himself:

> **9** Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, **10** Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:
>
> -Isaiah 46:9-10

Fulfilled prophecy is more than simply an odd curiosity for those who enjoy history. It provides powerful authentication of the message in which it is found. If a written revelation repeatedly demonstrates accurate knowledge of events that were still centuries in the future when the prophecy was given, then that knowledge could not have originated with the human writer alone. It points beyond the human author to the God who already knew the course of history and chose to reveal portions of it beforehand.

This is why prophecy provides such powerful evidence for the divine authorship of Scripture. God does not ask us to accept His Word without evidence. Within that Word He has placed features that point beyond human ability and authenticate its true Source. Fulfilled prophecy is one of those features. It bears the fingerprint of a God who stands outside the limits of human time and knowledge, who knows "the end from the beginning," and who can reveal future events before they occur. The history Daniel recorded in advance points us back to the One who revealed it – the God who knows the future because history itself unfolds according to His purposes.

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