

## The Prophesied Wars between Syria and Egypt Begin

Daniel 11:5-9

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Daniel 11-12 are filled with actual historical events that were hundreds of years yet future to Daniel. These prophecies amazingly follow a linear fulfillment (one historical event following another so that it is easier to identify them—even secular historians confirm their accuracy). Some biblical scholars understand Daniel 11-12 to detail events that end at the time of wicked Antiochus Epiphanes. Others see Daniel 11-12 to give prophecies that end in the first century A.D with the destruction of Jerusalem. And still others consider the prophecies of Daniel 11-12 to end at the time of the future millennium.

There is general agreement among biblical scholars as to the rulers/events that are prophesied in Daniel 11:1-29, but it is with verse 30 and following that differing interpretations begin to emerge (I will seek to point out some of these differences when we get there).

Some preachers might take a very general approach in which these verses and prophecies in Daniel 11-12 are covered in a sentence or two (and all of Daniel 11-12 completed in a sermon or two). That is not the approach I intend to take. I believe the Holy Spirit has included these detailed prophecies not to be raced through, but to be walked through (like walking through a beautiful garden, admiring the specific detail of the flowers and smelling the sweet fragrance that comes from them). So, I will only be covering a few verses at a time in each sermon, seeking to explain the historical people and events that are prophesied to come.

Our God is the God of history—He ordains it and governs it (not just biblical history, but all history). We are to learn from history as those who are in the School of Christ (both from our own history and from the history of the ages). Our God is great, and His wonders are performed in history (even in what we see in nations that are hostile to Him). Let us, therefore, be attentive to what the King of kings and Lord of lords teaches us from the history presented to us in Daniel 11-12. The main points are: (1) An Introduction to Two Dynasties (Daniel 11:5); (2) A Peace Treaty Formed and Broken (Daniel 11:6); (3) Vengeance Executed (Daniel 11:7-9).

### I. An Introduction to Two Dynasties (Daniel 11:5).

A. Gabriel first prophesied (in Daniel 11:1-4) concerning the Persian Empire (Daniel 11:1-2) and then the Grecian Empire (Daniel 11:3-4), particularly noting “a mighty king” (Alexander the Great) who would gain a vast empire, but would be cut down in death at the height of his power. His empire would not be left to his posterity, but would be divided into four parts to be ruled by his generals. Gabriel then turns to two of those four kingdoms into which Alexander’s empire was divided.

B. In Daniel 11:5-29, most of the people and events prophesied concern two kingdoms/dynasties: the kingdom of Syria (the Seleucid dynasty—“the king of the north”) and the kingdom of Egypt (the Ptolemy dynasty—“the king of the south”).

1. It was the holy land and God’s people, Israel, that lay between these two kingdoms. Depending on whether Egypt or Syria was the overpowering kingdom in their ongoing battles with one another, Israel would find itself under the dominion of either Egypt or Syria.

2. Egypt tended to be more tolerant of the Jews practicing their religion revealed by Jehovah, whereas Syria was less tolerant and became barbaric in its persecution of the Jews under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.).

C. Gabriel begins in Daniel 11:5 by identifying the father of each of these two dynasties: “the king of the south”—Ptolemy I (306-282 B.C.); and “one of his princes”—Seleucus I (306-281 B.C.).

1. When Alexander died (323 B.C.), for the next 17 years (until 306 B.C.) there were

continual battles among his generals in struggling to fight for supremacy to reign over the empire. In 312, the four-part division was established with Ptolemy I beginning the dynasty in Egypt, which included Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, Arabia, Phoenicia (modern Lebanon), Israel, and Cyprus. Ptolemy I is the “king of the south” that shall be strong (Daniel 11:5). He was the founder of the great Library of Alexandria in Egypt (that housed around 500,000 papyri scrolls).

2. Who is “one of his princes” (Daniel 11:5) who shall be even stronger than Ptolemy I and have a greater dominion than him? It is Seleucus I, who during the battles for supremacy in the empire after the death of Alexander served under the command of Ptolemy I, but in 312 B.C. he became Seleucus I of Syria (which included Syria, Babylonia, Persia, Media, stretching even into modern India). So, indeed, he was formerly a prince under Ptolemy, but did secure a greater dominion of territory than Ptolemy. The details of this prophecy are amazing!

3. Thus begins these two rival kingdoms/dynasties, and the insatiable thirst for ever greater power/territory leads to wars between their descendants to conquer the territory of one another. That is a common theme in these prophecies—the lust for power and riches. Not content with the power and wealth they had received, they craved more and more (Proverbs 27:20; Philippians 4:11; Hebrews 13:5). What these kings conquered did not finally end their lust for more. True contentment is only found in Jesus Christ—He is enough!

## **II. A Peace Treaty Formed and Broken (Daniel 11:6).**

A. Now we move from the fathers of these dynasties to their descendants that reigned after them.

1. After Ptolemy I and Seleucid I, battles between Syria and Egypt were fought until a peace treaty was proposed (253 B.C.) between Ptolemy II (282-246 B.C.) and Antiochus II (262-246 B.C.).

2. It was Ptolemy II that sanctioned the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek (the Septuagint)—not because he was a lover of God’s Word, but so they could be added to the ever-increasing number of volumes in the great Library of Alexandria.

3. This peace treaty was conditioned upon a marriage of convenience, not upon the truth/trustworthiness of one’s word/integrity as a covenant made in the presence of God. Daniel 11:6 details how Ptolemy II offered his daughter, Berenice, to Antiochus II as his wife, but Ptolemy II conditioned this treaty on Antiochus II divorcing his present wife, Laódice, and disinheriting his son by her (so that neither would be an influence/threat to the throne). This is not a treaty that is going to end well when founded upon such wicked conditions of ending a marriage to establish a marriage of convenience.

B. As Gabriel prophesies, “she [Berenice] shall not retain the power of her arm” (i.e. she would not retain her position as queen), nor would Antiochus II stand and retain the power of his arm (retain his position as king). What happened?

1. Laódice, the former wife of Antiochus II conspired and had both Berenice and Antiochus II murdered (along with their son and heir to the throne) just as we read in Daniel 11:6. Berenice was “given up” in death (246 B.C.) as were her attendants.

2. Back home in Egypt, her father (Ptolemy II) who had strengthened her died just months before she was executed and was not able to come to her aid (246 B.C.). This is the fruit of doing evil that good may come—a policy condemned by Paul (Romans 3:8). Abraham and Sarah followed this method (as do those who compromise the truth to get to “unity” in the church or “peace” in a family—let’s sin that grace may abound).

## **III. Vengeance Executed (Daniel 11:7-9).**

A. Daniel 11:7.

1. “Out of the branch of her roots” means that one will arise from Berenice’s family (namely, her brother, Ptolemy III) who will reign in the place of his father (Ptolemy II) after his death (246

B.C.). Ptolemy III avenged the murder of his sister, Berenice.

2. Ptolemy III invaded Syria and conquered much of the Syrian territory (246-241 B.C.), overtaking Seleucia (the capital), Antioch (a royal city), and Babylon—“shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north.” He took vengeance against Laódice, having her put to death.

B. Daniel 11:8.

1. Upon hearing of a revolt back in Egypt, Ptolemy III returned to Egypt bringing with him a huge bounty of treasure from the Syrian campaign. Jerome records that he brought with him 40,000 talents of silver and 2,500 precious vessels and images of gods, among which were idols that had been taken by the Persian king, Cambyses, when he conquered Egypt (525 B.C.).

2. Indeed, the king of the south (Ptolemy III) did “continue more years” (he died 222 B.C.) than the king of the north (Antiochus II) who was likely poisoned by his wife, Laódice in 246 B.C. Is not the accuracy of these prophecies truly amazing—but on the other hand, should we expect anything less from the God of history who decrees and knows the past, present, and future? Even secular history confirms what is revealed here by Gabriel to Daniel.

C. Daniel 11:9.

1. Thus, this portion of the prophecy ends with Ptolemy III having prevailed against Syria, returning to Egypt, and being honored by the people of Egypt for his great exploits against Syria.

2. Ptolemy III died having conquered much of Syria and even having been proclaimed and worshipped as god. But what did it profit him, for then he faced reality—he faced the One true living God in judgment at his death. People are god-like until they come face-to-face with one true living God at death.

D. Application

1. Is this not what the modern culture teaches—that we sit upon the throne of our own lives—that we are first to think of what we want in life, what will please us, and no one is going to tell us what we can and cannot do. We are lord and master of our lives. If a male wants to think that he can be a female (or vice versa), who is anyone to say he cannot do so? If two males or two females want to get married, no one has the right to tell them they cannot do so. We need not listen to the counsel/advice of parents, of ministers/elders, or of God Himself (2 Timothy 3:1-5). But the grace that God works in our lives is of an altogether different spirit (Ephesians 6:1-3; Hebrews 13:17). Obedience to God-ordained human authority is not a bad thing—it is evidence of a heart that is under submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Correction is not a bad thing—it is the path of life (Proverbs 6:23).

2. Finally, note how marriage was used here as an unlawful means to gain a political peace. How many people enter into marriage based upon money, status, mere physical/sexual attraction? To the contrary, marriage is designed by to God to glorify Him by helping one another to become more like Jesus, to bring forth a holy seed (children) to be raised, taught, and loved within a Christian family, and to maintain a mind, speech, and conduct of purity and fidelity with one’s spouse (with whom the covenant is made) till death do us part?

3. Dear parents, if we are not teaching our children in word and deed by our example what a Christian marriage should look like (not a perfect marriage, but a faithful marriage), then we are teaching them what a Christian marriage should not look like (either way we are teaching them about marriage). If we do not teach our young men how to relate to young women in purity before they are married (and vice versa), we are teaching them how not to do so. The modern dating game puts young people into temptations that are disastrous. Parents, be involved in teaching and talking about these important matters with your children, and young people do not reject that good instruction (whether you are yet in the home or have moved out). It is for your good and for your blessing.

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