

## Though This World With Devils Filled

Daniel 11:2–45

Studies in Daniel #12

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**H**EBREWS 1 tells us that through the Son, God made the world (v. 2). In fact, the writer is more specific. Through the Son, God made the *ages*, that is, God made time itself in which the world exists. Once again as we turn to Daniel, this thought that history is *His*-story needs to be front and center in our minds and upon our hearts. Why? This chapter is like a 1000-piece puzzle. There are so many pieces, there is so much detail; it's overwhelming! But keep the box top close by: history is *His*-story. Amen?

As Daniel was praying in sorrow because the restoration seemed more like a trickle rather than an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God sent his angel to **show him the truth** of history (v. 2). This **truth** came as it had back in chapter 8 where Daniel saw a vision of a ram representing the Medo-Persian Empire and a goat with a great horn representing the Greek Empire. But that horn, representing Alexander the Great, was broken and four more came out of it, representing the division of his Empire after his death. This vision focuses in more detail on the two parts of the former Greek Empire in Egypt and Syria that would directly affect the people of God in the Promised Land.

## **Tons of Details**

I have no fancy ways to dress up this chapter. The honest truth is that it is full of *tons of details*! Let me lead you through as simply and efficiently as possible before we come to some truths it teaches us.

### *Persia*

As Babylon had fallen and the Medo-Persian Empire had ascended, verse 2 says **three kings of Persia** would be coronated, culminating in a **fourth** who **shall be far richer than all of them** and who **shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece**. This was Xerxes or Ahasuerus as the book of Esther calls him.

### *Greece*

Like chapter 8, verses 3-4 go on to speak of Greece and its **mighty king...who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills**. Who is this? Alexander the Great. But **as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven**, again, describing the historical reality that he had no heir and so his Empire was divided into fourths. World history books give entire chapters to the Greeks; Daniel 11 gives it a mere two verses. Kings and kingdoms come and go, but God is King and his kingdom remains forever.

## *Egypt and Syria*

Directly important to Judea and the people of God returning there were the two parts of Alexander's kingdom to the south and north: Egypt ruled by the Ptolemies and Syria ruled by the Seleucids. We see them in verses 4–35. Ptolemy I **shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he and shall rule, and his authority shall be a great authority** (v. 5). This was Ptolemy II. **After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement** (v. 6). In 250BC Ptolemy II gave his daughter Bernice in marriage to Antiochus II of Syria with the agreement that their son become king of Syria. **But she shall not retain the strength of her arm, and he and his arm shall not endure, but she shall be given up** (v. 7). Antiochus was married, set aside his wife Laodice for Bernice, and when Ptolemy died just two years later, Antiochus divorced Bernice and took Laodice back. But how does that line go? “Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.”<sup>1</sup> Laodice poisoned Antiochus, had Bernice and their son killed, and installed her own son, Seleucus II. Then **from a branch from Bernice's roots one shall arise who shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall deal with them and**

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<sup>1</sup> On the original, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Congreve](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Congreve).

**shall prevail** (v. 7). Bernice's brother Ptolemy III avenged her murder by attacking the Seleucid Empire and by capturing and killing Laodice. And as verse 8 says Ptolemy III enjoyed the spoils of war and a period of rest. But eventually the king of the north **shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return to his own land** (v. 9). This describes Seleucus II, who around 242BC counter-attacked Egypt, but unsuccessfully.

But the apple didn't fall far from the tree and Seleucus II's **sons shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall keep coming and overflow and pass through** (v. 10). One of these was **sons** was Antiochus III known as "The Great." When verse 10 says he shall **pass through** it's describing going from Syria in the north to Egypt in the south by passing through the Promised Land. History tells us that eventually he brought Judea under Seleucid rule. In response **the king of the south, moved with rage, shall come out and fight...and he shall raise a great multitude** (v. 11). This was Ptolemy IV, who in 217BC defeated Antiochus III. And as verse 12 says, **his heart shall be exalted, and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but ultimately he shall not prevail.** Why not? Because like kids on a teeter-totter **the king of the north shall again raise a multitude, greater than the first. And after some years he**

**shall come on with a great army and abundant supplies** (v. 13). And the angel tells Daniel that even **the violent among your own people shall lift**

**themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they shall fail** (v. 14).

God will fulfill his plan, his way! Then verses 15–17 describe Antiochus III's

military might. He would **stand in the glorious land, with destruction in**

**his hand** (v. 16). History tells us that after Ptolemy IV died and Ptolemy V

came to the throne at age 4, Antiochus III had a plan to take Egypt by

marriage, just as Ptolemy II had tried to do by giving his daughter Bernice to

Antiochus II. Verse 17 says **he shall bring terms of an agreement...he**

**shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom, but it**

**shall not stand or be to his advantage.** Do you know who this **daughter**

was, betrothed to little Ptolemy V? History knows her was Cleopatra. But she

became enamored with Egypt and Antiochus' plan would **not stand.** In

response, Antiochus **turn[ed] his face to the coastlands and...capture[d]**

**many of them, but a commander shall put an end to his insolence.**

**Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him** (v. 18). Around 192BC

Antiochus III invaded Greece itself, which was Roman Empire soil. His army

was crushed at Thermopylae, retreated to Magnesia in Asia Minor and

crushed again. For his invasion, Rome put a huge tax on him so **he...turn[ed]**

**his face back toward the fortresses of his own land**, traveling through what is today Turkey, looting temples to gather his payment to Rome. **But he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found** (v. 19). In 187BC while looting a temple of Zeus a mob attacked and killed him. **Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute for the glory of the kingdom** (v. 20). His son, Seleucus IV sent a revenue agent named Heliodoras to Jerusalem to loot. But Heliodoras had a vision of angels attacking him so he refused and in poisoned Seleucus IV, who died, but not in battle per verse 20.

#### *Antiochus IV Epiphanes*

Time to take a breath! Kids, have you ever pressed fast forward on the CD player in your parents' car? It goes really fast and sounds really funny, doesn't it? Try singing along and see how fast you run out of breath! In verses 2–20 we have nineteen verses that play the 355 years from 520BC–175BC on fast forward. But then in verses 21–35 this history goes *r-e-a-l-l-y* slow. When I was a kid we had record players. And there were usually two speeds: 33 or 45. If you played a 45 record at 33 speed it sounded like Dory trying to communicate to a whale! So 355 years in nineteen verses; now the twelve years of Antiochus IV Ephiaphanes' reign from 175BC–163BC in fifteen verses.

Antiochus Epihanes is called **a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given who shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries** (v. 21). He was released in a prisoner exchange, heard that his brother Seleucus IV had been murdered, then gathered an army and marched east to take the Seleucid throne. What was his dynasty like? He was successful: **Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken** (v. 22). He was deceitful: **from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully** (v. 23). But notice how verse 24 concludes that all this would last **only for a time** (v. 24). He would renew the war of the north verses the south: **he shall stir up his power and his heart against the king of the south with a great army** (v. 25). He would be successful was **the king of the south...shall not stand** (v. 25). And he would show his deceit once again: **for plots shall be devised against** the king of the south (v. 25). And when Antiochus and the Egyptian king sat down to hash out peace, **they shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for the end is yet to be at the time appointed** (v. 27). But around 168BC Antiochus would **return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before** (v. 29). Why? **For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw** (v. 30).

This describes Roman ships that sailed to Egypt with a decree from the Senate to demand Antiochus abandon his attack of Egypt. After announcing this, the Roman General Popillius Laenas took a stick, drew a circle around Antiochus' feet, and told him he had to decide what to do before stepping outside the circle! Antiochus tucked tail and ran! We read in verse 30 that he **shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant**. He took out his fury on Israel as I mentioned in my sermon on Daniel 8, slaughtering and enslaving tens of thousands. **Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate** (v. 31). He outlawed Sabbath keeping, circumcision, and scrolls of the Old Testament on threat of immediate execution. In response some would forsake the Lord while others would cling to him: **He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action** (v. 32).

#### *A Future Antichrist?*

Let me conclude all these details with the interesting verses 36–45. Let me give an illustration you might be familiar with. If you're driving to Big Bear this winter to play in the snow you see a mountain. Our kids always ask,



“Is that Big Bear?” Yes and no. At first you see one mountain but as you drive up you realize there is a space between more than one mountain. The Old Testament prophets could only see one mountain so to speak. They saw history in visions like these of their time leading to the end of time with no space in-between. But God’s further revelation in the New Covenant takes us up closer to see that in fact, there is time between what Israel experienced until Antiochus and the end; between our Lord’s first and second comings. I mention this because the text seamlessly moves from Antiochus to a future antichrist who comes after **the time of the end** above. None of the things mentioned here fits Antiochus, so it must be another.

Let me encourage you to go back and read Daniel 8; then read 2 Thessalonians 2. You may even want to listen online to the sermons on these texts. This antichrist is described as a king with religious pretensions who **shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers...He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all** (vv. 36, 37). He’s described as a king with military dominance, defeating **the king of the south...like a whirlwind** (v. 40), killing tens of thousands in **the glorious**

**land** (v. 41), ruling over **the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites** (v. 43). But he would **come to his end, with none to help him** (v. 45).

## **Truths for Us**

What are the *truths for us* out of the tons of details?

First, did you notice that in the list of kings who schemed for power and prestige that they all died? Earthly kings and kingdoms come and go; they never find rest; they strive after the wind. There is only one King whose kingdom endures forever and that brings lasting peace: Jesus Christ!

Second, tyrants and their persecution only last for a time. Verses 24, 27, 29, and 35, for example, remind us that God raises up and casts down and determines the boundaries and times for kingdoms. And the call to us is verse 32: **the people who know their God shall stand firm.**

Third, and this is the big picture of it all: history is *His-story*; it began with God, it will end with God, and everything in between is because of God. When we read tedious texts like this, remember, “from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36).

Amen?