

THE UNFOLDING DRAMA OF PRE-HISTORY (Pt. 1).

Theme: Daniel 11:2-20 tells us the story of the events of history--given to him before they occurred--from the time of the kings of Persia to the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes..

The stage had been set in chapter 10 for the last of Daniel's four personal visions. In 11:2, the angel began by telling Daniel, "And now I will tell you the truth . . ." What follows is a presentation of historic events before they occurred--a presentation so accurate, that it has caused many scholars to insist that Daniel could not possibly have been written beforehand. But it clearly was! And as genuine prophecy, it demonstrates the absolute sovereignty that God exercises over the affairs of men.

This doesn't tell us everything of all that happened in the world during this period of time. The main focus is upon Israel; and it concerns the multitude of conflicts that this tiny nation would find itself in the midst of. In this lesson, we will only deal with verses 2-20; and the events that occurred from the times of the kings of Persia to the rise of the notorious Antiochus Epiphanes--that is, from 550 BC to 176 BC.

I. CONCERNING PERSIA (v. 2).

Three kings of Persia were promised yet to arise. Cyrus II (550-530 BC); Cambyses (529-522 BC) and Darius I Hystapes (521-486 BC). A fourth would arise who is promise to be stronger and richer than them all--Xerxes (485-465 BC; also known as Ahasuerus in Esther 1:1; 2:1 and 3:1). Xerxes was the Persian king of the famous Battle of Thermopylae against the Greeks in 480 BC--which stirred up the Greeks and led to his subsequent defeat at the naval Battle of Salamis.

II. CONCERNING ALEXANDER THE GREAT (vv. 3-4).

Alexander arose in 335 BC and died in 323 BC at the age of 33. Note the remarkable prophecy that his kingdom would not be divided to his posterity upon his death. It was, instead, divided to his four generals: Cassander (over Macedonia); Lysimachus (over Thrace and Asia Minor); Ptolemy I (over Egypt); and Seleucus (over Syria and the near east). The division of the kingdom to these four generals is prophetically described in Daniel 8:8.

III. CONCERNING THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE KINGS OF THE SOUTH (vv. 5-20).

A. THE TROUBLE STARTS (v. 5). The first king that is mentioned is Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 BC). The king that is mentioned second, who gained greater power over the first, is Seleucus I Nacater (312-281 BC). He succeeded in expanding his kingdom in Syria to include Macedonia and Thrace.

B. AS THE WORLD TURNS (v. 6). In time, an alliance is attempted. Ptolemy II Philadelphus of the south (285-246 BC) and Antiochus Theos of the north, agree to a peace on two conditions: First, that Antiochus divorce his wife Laodice and marry Ptolemy's daughter Bernice; and second, that any child of Bernice would be the heir of Antiochus. The marriage took place; but when Ptolemy died, Antiochus went back to his first wife. This first wife, Laodice, sought to secure her position by poisoning her untrustworthy husband, and by having Bernice, her attendants, and her infant son killed. She installed her own son, Seleucus II Callinicus (246-227 BC) in Antiochus' place.

- C. THE SOUTHERN RISE OF AN ANGRY BROTHER (vv. 7-8).** From the branch of Bernice's roots would arise her brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-222 BC). He stood up in Ptolemy II Philadelphus' place, easily invaded the territory of the north, and killed Laodice, seized the port of Antioch, and carried a massive amount of booty back to Egypt. He endured past the time of Seleucus II Calinicus by six years--which may also mean that, during that time, Seleucus' kingdom was not able to resist him. (Verse 9 mentions this.)
- D. TWO SONS FROM THE NORTH (vv. 9-10).** Seleucus II Callinicus of the north attempted an invasion of Egypt against Ptolemy II Euergetes of the south; but was unsuccessful and returned to Egypt. But his two sons arose in his place, assembled a great army, overwhelmed the south, returned to the north and stirred up the conflict even more. The names of these two sons are Seleucus III Ceraunus (sometimes called Soter, 226-223 BC), and Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BC). Antiochus' career is described all the way to verse 19.
- E. THE BATTLE OF RAPHIA (vv. 11-12).** A new king of the south, Ptolemy IV Philopater (221-204 BC)--who was the son of Ptolemy III Euergetes, was "moved with rage" because it was against him that the campaign of the two sons of Seleucus II Callinicus (v. 10) had been waged. He was a man that historians tell us was a great lover of ease and luxury; but accompanied by his wife/sister Arsinoe, he went out to fight with the king of the north, Antiochus III the Great. According to the historian Polybius, in the Battle of Raphia in 219 BC, Antiochus met Ptolemy with 62,000 infantrymen, 6,000 cavalrymen, and 102 elephants. But Ptolemy brought with him 70,000 infantrymen, 5,000 cavalrymen, and 73 elephants. Thus, the multitudes of Antiochus were given into the hands of Ptolemy. Ptolemy killed 10,000 of Antiochus' infantrymen, 200, of his cavalrymen, and five of his elephants--also taking 4,000 prisoners. After this decisive victory, however, Ptolemy returned to a life of luxury and indulgence--losing the opportunity to solidify his gains against the north. In the end, in spite of his victory at Raphia, he did not "prevail".
- F. ANTIOCHUS' REVENGE (vv. 13-14).** Fourteen years had gone by; and during that time, Antiochus III the Great--thanks to Ptolemy's laxity--raised another multitude against him, worked to recover much of the eastern regions of his reign, and formed an alliance with the king of Macedonia. Then, in 203 BC, Ptolemy and his wife died--leaving the kingdom of the south to their four-year-old son Ptolemy V Epiphenes (203-181 BC). It was then that Antiochus came to the south with "a multitude greater than the former", and with "a great army and much equipment". Thus, "many" rose against the king of the south--in addition to those of the northern kingdom. The angel tells Daniel that even "violent men of your people" (that is, some of the Jews in Palestine) would "exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision"; and seek to aid Antiochus in an effort to free themselves from Ptolemy's rule. These Jewish men thought that they could fulfill this vision in the Book of Daniel. But they did not succeed. According to the historian Polybius, Ptolemy's general, Scopas, "went in haste" in winter-time and "overthrew the nation of the Jews".
- G. CLEOPATRA STANDS BY HER MAN (vv. 15-17).** Antiochus III the Great succeeded in setting siege against the city of Sidon; and he was thus able to bring an end to Ptolemaic rule. Not even general Scopas and his hand-picked leaders were able to withstand him. In the end, Antiochus was able to seize control of Palestine ("the Glorious Land"); and though he didn't bring destruction upon it himself, he did pave the way for the evils of Antiochus Epiphenes (vv. 21ff), and the destruction *he* would bring to the Jews. Antiochus the Great would not make the same mistake that Ptolemy IV Philopater made. He determined to make the use of his opportunity to solidify his gains by "bringing equitable terms" (v. 17; marginal reading). He

arranged for his daughter Cleopatra I--referred to in the prophecy as "the daughter of women"; a term that indicated her eminence as the "first lady" of the kingdom (a completely different woman than the more famous Cleopatra VII, the mistress of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony who lived over a century and a half later)--to marry Ptolemy V Epiphanes in 197 BC . The actual marriage didn't occur until 193 BC, since Ptolemy was only ten when the marriage was arranged; but it would ensure the aid of Ptolemy later on when Antiochus would pursue warfare against Rome--leading to further solidification of his gains in the south. But the plan didn't work. Cleopatra ended up supporting Ptolemy's interests; and when the Roman general Scipio defeated Antiochus' army at Magnesia in 190 BC, Cleopatra sent congratulations to the Romans! Eventually, Egypt ended up aiding the Romans against Antiochus (see verses 18-19).

H. ROME RISES (vv. 18-19). Antiochus III the Great now set himself to take "the coastlands" (most likely meaning the regions surrounding the Aegean Sea), in a vigorous campaign into Asia Minor. He succeeded in "taking many"--even portions of Greece and Thrace. But the growing power of Rome led to their sending their general Scipio Asiaticus--"a ruler" or "a prince"--to stop Antiochus in his plans. Scipio turned "the reproach" that Antiochus had intended for Greece around upon his own head at Thermopylae in 191 BC. Then, Scipio defeated Antiochus again at Magnesia in Lydia (of Asia Minor); finally forcing him into a treaty of peace at Apamea in 188 BC. Antiochus had to abandon his plans for Asia Minor and return to his own land--having lost much of his gains. He "stumbled and fell"; and was "not found". Little is known of what happened after his return, or of how he died a year later in 187 BC.

I. THE TAX MAN COMETH (v. 20). Antiochus was succeeded by his son Seleucus IV Philopater (187-176 BC). The kingdom he inherited from his father was significant; but the treasury was empty. Plus the Romans now imposed a tax on him. He needed to find a way to raise funds to pay for it all. In the course of events, he set his eyes on "the Glorious Kingdom"; and sent his prime minister Heliodorus to seize the funds of the temple in Jerusalem. But Seleucus died in 176 BC after eleven years of rule (only a "few days" when compared to the thirty-seven years of his father's rule). His death was mysterious. (Well, okay; probably not *too* "mysterious", since Heliodorus was quite clearly seeking his throne . . . and Seleucus died of poisoning.)

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Thus far in this prophecy, we have been given the story of 326 years of detailed history before it even occurred! Bible teachers often call this period "the silent years"; but as you can see, they were clearly far from quite! And this has only been a portion of what this amazing prophecy tells us. In our next lesson, we will pick things up in the year 176 BC--and the beginnings of the career of Antiochus Epiphanes--the notorious king who serves in Scripture as an Old Testament prefigurement of the Antichrist.

And let's learn a practical lesson from it all. If the Bible promises have proven to be so accurate concerning history now past, we can trust everything it tells us about events yet to come--and about the glorious reign of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!