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Daniel 11: The Jews Rebel

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Daniel 11:

North & South Kingdoms



Verse 5 takes in Ptolemy I Soter of Egypt (king of the South) and Seleucid I Nicator (king of the North). Verse 6 happened in about 252 BC when Antiochus II married Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy.

“Antiochus II (Theos). Antiochus II, who reigned 261-247 BC, continued the struggle with the Egyptians, but finally made peace by marrying Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt.” Collier

“Berenice. d. c.246 BC Daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and his sister Arsinoe II; (Berenice married) (c.252) Antiochus II Theos and persuaded him to renounce (his) former wife Laodice and her children; after (the) death of Antiochus, (Berenice) was killed by supporters of Laodice, thus provoking her brother Ptolemy III Euergetes into (a) Third Syrian War against Laodice and Seleucus II.” Infopedia

Verses 7 & 8 are historically correct in the revenge that Ptolemy III took on the king of the North for the murder of his sister Berenice.

“PTOLEMY III (282?-221 bc), called Ptolemy Euergetes (“benefactor”), king of Egypt (246-221 bc), the son of Ptolemy II. He reunited Cyrenaica and Egypt, invaded the Seleucid Kingdom of Syria to avenge the murder of his sister and her infant son, the heir to the Seleucid throne, and established Egyptian naval predominance in the Aegean Sea. Ptolemy III was a liberal patron of the arts and added to the collection of the Alexandrian library. His rule marked the height of Egyptian power, prosperity, and wealth under the Ptolemies.” Infopedia

Verse 9 tells us that the king of the North would not like Ptolemy III for ransacking his kingdom. Therefore Seleucus II turned on Egypt and invaded it. But he was not successful. Because of a revolt by his younger brother, Antiochus Hierax, he had to withdraw.

“Seleucus II Callius (r. 247-226 b.c.). With Antiochus II’s son, Seleucus II, a new factor, dynastic strife, enters the history of the dynasty. When the king, at war with Egypt, appointed his younger brother, Antiochus Hierax (the Hawk), viceroy of all Asia Minor north and west of the Taurus Mountains, Antiochus revolted. With the Gauls as allies he inflicted a severe defeat on Seleucus at Ancyra (modern Ankara) in about 236 b.c. and forced him to cede the western half of his empire.” Collier

In Verse 10 we are told that his sons “will prepare for war and assemble a great army, which will sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his fortress.” In history, we have the fulfillment of this prophecy.

“ANTIOCHUS III, called The Great (242-187 bc), king of Syria (223-187 bc), the son of Seleucus II and brother of Seleucus III (r. 225-223 bc), whom he succeeded. He was the most distinguished of the Seleucids. Having made vassal states out of Parthia and Bactria, he warred successfully against the Egyptian king Ptolemy V and in 198 bc obtained possession of all of

Palestine and Lebanon.” Infopedia

“Antiochus III, c.242-187 BC, succeeded to the throne of the SELEUCIDS in 223, when the kingdom was controlled by a powerful minister and rebellion was spreading in Iran. He defeated the rebels, rid himself of the minister, and conquered much of Phoenicia, Syria, and Palestine from the Ptolemies of Egypt.” Grolier

But the king of the South, “Ptolemy IV won (a) decisive victory over Antiochus at Raphia (217);” Infopedia

War after war continued between the dynasties of the houses of the Ptolemy's and the Seleucids. During this time we take a little break from the wars that are going on between these two rivals and see one going on that involves the Jews.

Daniel 11:

The Jews Rebel

Verse 14 states, “in those times many will rise against the king of the South. ***The violent men among your own people*** will rebel in fulfillment of the vision, but without success.” Did this happen? Did the Jews (your own people) rebel without success? Yes.

“The Maccabees led the Jewish people in their struggle for freedom from the kingdom of Syria. Their exploits and legends about them are recounted in the Old Testament books Maccabees (q.v., books). Prominent members of the family include the following.

“Mattathias, or Mattathiah (d. 166? bc), priest of Modin, northwest of Jerusalem. In 168 bc the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes forbade the practice of Judaism and also decreed that altars to Greek gods be set up in the Temple at Jerusalem and in country towns. Mattathias, then an old man, refused to comply

using the terms “North” and “South” to describe two warring factions that involve the people of God. As these factions get taken over by other factions, the area of the world they involve grows and grows until by the end of Daniel 11 they encompass the whole earth. But the war is the same. The war entangles the people of God. Only the names change.

“Politically, the Middle East was divided between two states ruled by two of Alexander’s generals, the Ptolemies in Egypt and the SELEUCIDS in Syria and Mesopotamia. The constant strife between these two states and their internal weakness eventually led to the intervention of a rapidly rising power in the west: Rome. By 64 BC, Syria fell to the Romans, and, in 30 BC, Egypt was annexed, bringing to an end the Hellenistic kingdoms of the east. The Middle East, which had always been involved in the rivalries between two great powers, was now divided between the Roman Empire, which controlled its western portion around the Mediterranean, and the empire of the Parthians in Persia in the east”. *Grolier*

and killed a royal officer and a Jew who did comply. Subsequently (167 bc), with his five sons and many faithful Jews, Mattathias fled to the mountains and began a revolt against Antiochus. He died soon after, leaving his son Judas in command of the rebellion.

“Judas. or Judah (d. 161 bc), third son and successor of Mattathias. One of the great generals in Jewish history, Judas, with a few thousand followers, defeated several numerically superior Syrian armies in succession (166-165 bc). In December 165 bc, he led his insurgent army into Jerusalem, purified the Temple, which had been used for Greek rites during the preceding three years, and restored the Jewish rites. This purification and restoration is commemorated by the Jewish festival Hanukkah (q.v.). Judas next began extensive military campaigns against the enemies of the Jews in and around Judea. As a result, Syria recognized the religious liberty of the Jews (163 bc). Judas then began to work for political independence as well and to this end enlisted the aid of Rome. Dissensions among the Jews, however, weakened his position. Although Judas won a great victory over the Syrians at Bethhoron (just northwest of Jerusalem) in 161 bc, he was killed in a subsequent battle fought nearby at Elsa.



“Jonathan. (d. 142? bc), brother and successor of Judas, youngest son of Mattathias. After the death of Judas, Jonathan continued for three years to lead a small band of insurgents. In 157 bc, the Syrians, engaged in an internal struggle for political power, made peace with him. Five years later, profiting from the internal con-

flict in Syria, Jonathan became high priest in Jerusalem and administrator of Judea. Thereafter, he alternately supported the Syrian kings and pretenders, using them against one another, while increasing Jewish territory and power. In 143 bc Tryphon (d. 138 bc), pretender to the Syrian throne, decided to crush the power of the Jewish leader as a threat to his own influence. Jonathan was treacherously taken prisoner near Beth-shan (modern Beit Shean) by Tryphon, and he was ultimately killed.

“Simon. (d. 135 bc), successor and brother of Jonathan, second son of Mattathias. In 142 bc he negotiated a treaty with Syria by which Judea was recognized as politically independent. All Syrians were expelled from the citadel at Jerusalem. In 141 bc a great congregation of the Jewish people and priests chose Simon to be high priest and civil governor, and the two offices were made hereditary in Simon’s family. After six years of prosperous rule, Simon was assassinated by his son-in-law and chief rival for power.” *Infopedia*

The revolt did not succeed for long. Judea was soon to be ruled by the Romans.

Daniel 11:

Back to the Future

In Verse 15 we go back in time to verse 14 to see why the Jews revolted. “Then the king of the North will come and build up siege ramps and will capture a fortified city. The forces of the South will be powerless to resist; even their best troops will not have the strength to stand.”

“ANTIOCHUS IV, called Epiphanes (“the illustrious”) (c. 215-164 bc), king of Syria (175-164 bc), son of Antiochus III. From 171 to 168 bc, he was involved in a war against Egypt, defeating

two Egyptian kings, Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy VII. He captured Jerusalem, prohibited Judaism, and tried to establish the worship of Greek gods. Under the leadership of the Jewish priest Mattathias (died c. 166 bc) and his sons, the Maccabees, the Jews revolted (167-160 bc) and drove Antiochus from Jerusalem. Later he won victories over the Armenians and Persians.” *Infopedia*

As you can see from the account above, the fortified city to any Jew was Jerusalem. With the revolts of the Jews by the Maccabees, Jerusalem was recaptured for a while. But the revolt did not last. Even the Ptolemies who attempted to help the Jews were unable to do so.

Why is this chapter in the Bible? Because God is always concerned about His people. In order for the kings of the North (the Seleucids), and the kings of the South (the Ptolemies), to war against each other, they had to cross through the land of Judea, as you can see from the map. That involved the Jews. That is why God has it mentioned in Daniel. He wanted them to know what the future would hold and not to worry. All they had to do was just trust and obey Him. But instead, they took matters into their own hands and lost. The lesson is for us today. Trust God and obey Him and everything will turn out great. Take matters into our own hands and things will be disastrous.

The Ptolemies became so weak, as the Bible said they would, that “to protect themselves against the Seleucids, they cultivated friendship with Rome. Thus Egypt was saved in 168 b.c., when Roman intervention forced Antiochus IV to withdraw from the Egyptian delta, but the final result was that Egypt tended to become more and more a Roman protectorate.” *Collier*

With the introduction of Roman power into the feud that was going on between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, it was just a matter of time before it became the dominant factor in the area. Verse 16 tells us that the “invader will do as he pleases; no one will be able to stand against him. He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land and will have the power to destroy.”

There is a principle here I want you to understand. The Bible is