

Daniel AK01-12

Historical Events Predicted in Daniel 11:2-35 (Copyright David Pawson)

v. 2 Persia

The three rulers after Cyrus were:

- **Cambyes** (529-522 BC) who conquered Egypt
- **Pseudo-Smerdis** (522-521 BC) who got the throne by impersonating the king's murdered brother and was assassinated by
- **Darius I Hystapes** (521-486 BC), mentioned in Ezra 5-6

The fourth ruler was **Xerxes I** (486-465 BC), the Ahasuerus of Esther 1. He was the acme of Persian wealth and power. He invaded Greece in 480 BC but was disastrously defeated at Salamis.

vv. 3-4 Greece

v. 3 Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) avenged Greece by defeating Persia and in 12 years established a vast empire of Greek culture, bringing Asia under Europe. He is the 'he-goat' of Daniel 8. He died in Babylon at the age of 32.

v. 4 Alexander's son by Barsina was murdered, and his son by Roxana, born posthumously, was also murdered, so the empire was divided between four generals:

- **Lysimachus** (Thrace, Bithynia and Asia Minor)
- **Cassander** (Macedonia and Greece)
- **Ptolemy** (Egypt)
- **Seleucis** (Syria to Babylon)

The last two became 'South' and 'North' in the rest of Daniel 11 (i.e. in relation to God's people, Israel, now back in Palestine).

vv. 5-35 Egypt and Syria

This passage covers 162 years, with Israel 'caught between the door and hinges' (Luther) of two interrelated dynasties. The name 'Syria' had not appeared in Daniel's day, so this area is referred to as 'the North' only.

v. 5 Ptolemy I Soter (meaning 'Saviour') (323-285 BC) ruled Egypt and a close relative, **Seleucis I Nicator** (312-281 BC), ruled Syria. Both took the title 'King' in 306 BC. The latter became stronger, ruling the area from Asia Minor to India, and so became a rival and a threat.

v. 6 Ptolemy II Philadelphus ('brotherly love') (285-246 BC) of Egypt persuaded **Antiochus II Theos** ('God') to divorce his wife Laodice and marry his own daughter, Berenice. The union was unsuccessful, both as a marriage and as an attempt to unite the two royal families. When Ptolemy died, Antiochus took Laodice back as his wife, but she murdered him, Berenice and their son.

vv. 7-9

A 'seesaw' period of battle between the two nations.

v. 7 Berenice's brother, **Ptolemy II Euergetes** ('benefactor') (246-221 BC) attacked **Seleucis Callinicus** (247-226 BC) and killed Laodice in revenge. He was victorious throughout the northern kingdom as far as Persia and Media.

v. 8 **Ptolemy II** returned with Egyptian idols carried away 280 years previously and the populace called him 'benefactor' thereafter.

v. 9 **Seleucis** returned the attack, lost his fleet in a storm, was ignominiously defeated and died after a fall from his horse.

vv. 10-20

v. 10 Two brothers in the north – **Seleucis III** (226-223 BC) who was assassinated by mutinous troops during battle in Asia Minor, and **Antiochus III 'the Great'** (223-187 BC) who came to power at 18 and spent his life fighting to avenge his father's humiliation. He swept like a flood as far as Gaza, Egypt's fortified line.

v. 11 **Ptolemy V Philopater** ('love father') (221-203 BC) met **Antiochus the Great** with an army of 70,000 soldiers, 5,000 cavalry and 73 elephants at Raphia in 217. **Antiochus** was totally defeated, with 10,000 dead and 4,000 taken prisoner and narrowly escaped capture himself.

v. 12 **Ptolemy V**, through indolence and indulgence, failed to follow up his advantage. **Antiochus** recovered and went east to India and the Caspian Sea, gaining wealth and strength.

v. 13 When **Ptolemy** and his queen died mysteriously, **Antiochus** attacked Egypt again and defeated its army (under **General Scopas**) at Pnias, near the source of the Jordan, later Caesarea Philippi. **Scopas** fled to Sidon.

v. 14 Others now formed alliances with **Antiochus** (e.g. **Philip of Macedon**), including some Jews who thought they were making prophecy come true in seeing Egyptians routed, and expected national independence to follow. Many perished in battle.

v. 15 Sidon was besieged and taken, in spite of an unsuccessful attempt by three Egyptian generals to break the siege.

v. 16 **Antiochus** made the mistake of occupying Israel as a military base and laid waste the country to support his troops.

v. 17 Threatened by the growing might of Rome, **Antiochus** sought to unite with Egypt by giving his beautiful young daughter, Cleopatra, as wife to the seven-year-old **Ptolemy V Epiphanes** ('glorious') (204-181 BC). His hope that she would bring Egypt under his control was foiled when she sided with her husband against her father.

v. 18 Antiochus became scornful of growing Roman power – ‘Asia does not concern them (the Romans) and I am not subject to their orders’. He refused their ambassadors, decided to conquer Greece himself and was humiliatingly defeated by the Roman consul **Lucius Scipio Asiaticus** at Thermopylae in 191 BC and at Magnesia on the Maeander River in 189 BC.

v. 19 Harsh conditions of peace with Rome sent **Antiochus** home broken and he was killed while trying to plunder a temple at Elym. He had opened Asia to Rome.

v. 20 Seleucis IV Philater (‘love father’) (187-175 BC) wanted only peace and quiet but had to raise huge taxes to pay tribute to Rome. His finance minister, **Heliodorus**, came to take treasures from the Temple in Jerusalem, was halted by a supernatural apparition and returned to poison the king.

vv. 21-30

Antiochus Epiphanes (‘glorious’) (175-164 BC). The ‘little horn’ of Daniel 7. The worst tyrant of the Old Testament period. Syria’s power was declining and was soon to give way to Rome. His frustration was to result in bitter persecution of Israel and an attempt to wipe out her religion by desecrating the Temple and imposing Greek culture.

v. 21 His vileness included association with prostitutes and public copulation, avaricious indulgence, cunning and intrigue. His title ‘Ephiphanes’ meaning ‘glorious’ was converted into the nickname ‘Epimanes’, meaning ‘madman’ behind his back. The direct heir to the Syrian throne, **Demetrius**, was being held as hostage in Rome, so **Antiochus** seized power in Syria by posing as the guardian of the second in line to the throne, **Seleucis IV’s baby son Antiochus**, whom he later killed. He gained popularity by promises of less tax and easier laws, which were not kept.

v. 22 At first his military activity was very successful. He gained peace with Rome by paying tribute in arrears and with bribes, then invaded Egypt in 170 BC and defeated **Ptolemy V Epiphanes** between Gaza and the Nile delta. On the way south he called at Jerusalem and murdered **Onias, the High Priest**, the virtual ruler of Israel.

v. 23 Though Syria was not a large nation, **Antiochus** was now able to control Egypt, using two nephews, **Ptolemy VI Philometer** (181-145 BC) and **Ptolemy Euergetes** as pawns.

v. 24 He now systematically robbed the richest areas in his grip (e.g. Galilee), using the wealth not for himself (as had previous rulers) but as bribes for favours and in extraordinary prodigality (scattering money in the streets, laying on lavish spectacles etc.). He was also making plans to capture Egyptian cities such as Alexandria.

v. 25 He made another expedition to Egypt with chariots, cavalry and elephants. He corrupted Egypt’s court and they conspired against their king.

v. 26 This led to Egypt’s defeat.

v. 27 Antiochus and **Ptolemy Philometer** sat round the table, each aiming to outwit the other while making a treaty. Both failed.

v. 28 When **Antiochus** returned north, he turned to Israel, coveted the wealth of the Temple, massacred 10,000 Jews and sold the same number into slavery. **Jason, the High Priest**, fled to Ammon.

v. 29 During another expedition to Egypt, he captured his nephew **Philometer**, but was forced to retreat from Alexandria.

v. 30 During his final expedition to Egypt, Egypt sent an embassy to Rome, who sent ships from Cyprus. **Consul Gaius Popilius Laenas** demanded **Antiochus'** withdrawal from Egypt and **Antiochus** left in anger, realizing that this was the end of his hopes.

vv. 31-35

Antiochus now turned his frustrated anger against the people of God.

v. 31 Jews became his scapegoat and he began a savage persecution (recorded in 1 and 2 Maccabees), using sympathizers within Israel. He forbade worship and sacrifice, erected an image of Jupiter in the Temple and sacrificed a pig on the altar on 25 December 168 BC (this 'abomination of desolation' is mentioned in Matthew 24:15).

v. 32 This precipitated the revolt of Mattathias' priestly family of the Maccabees ('hammerers'). Under the leadership of Judas, there were many heroic deeds (mentioned in Hebrews 11). Israel was freed and the Temple rededicated on 25 December 165 BC.

vv. 33-35 The surprising effect of persecution was spiritual revival, because of purging and the separation of true from false believers.