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## Daniel: Historical & Chronological Comments (XIII)

by James B. Jordan

### 21. From Alexander to Antiochus (Daniel 11:2-20)

We have already discussed verse 2, which says that three more kings will arise over Persia, after which a fourth will be rich and stir up Greece. Some have suggested that this is just a figure of speech, like the “three transgressions, yea four” of Amos 1, or the same kind of language in Proverbs 30. I don’t think this will wash, though, because here we read specific things about the fourth Persian ruler. It may be **Xerxes**, though I am inclined, as I wrote above, to go with **Artaxerxes Longimanus**.

The “mighty king” of verse 3 is clearly Alexander the Great. He had great authority and did whatever he wanted, but as verse 4 says, he **died** as soon as he had conquered the world, and his kingdom was divided to the four winds of heaven, here a reference not the saints but simply to the four **directions**. The inheritors, as verse 4 **says**, were not his children, but his generals.

The **Seleucids** ruled Syria, the North, while the **Ptolemies** ruled Egypt, the South.

We must now provide a verse by verse exposition of this history, in brief.

v. 5. Ptolemy I Soter (322-285) became strong, as did one of his lieutenants, **Seleucus**. **Seleucus** had been given the **satrapy** of Babylonian in 321, but was forced to flee to Egypt when Antigonus took it from him. Ptolemy made him a general, and **Seleucus** recovered his land in 312, becoming **Seleucus I Nicator** (“the Conqueror”) (312-280). Syria became much stronger and bigger than Egypt, the biggest of the post-Alexandrian empires. But Egypt controlled Palestine, and this became a bone of contention, as the subsequent history demonstrates.

v. 6. About 250 **BC** **Ptolemy II Philadelphus** attempted

to patch **things** up by **sending** his daughter, **Berenice**, to marry **Antiochus II Theos**, king of Syria. **Antiochus** left his first wife, **Laodice**, to do **this**. When Ptolemy **II** died after two years, **Antiochus** returned to **Laodice**, who killed him, **Berenice**, and **Berenice’s** son. This was **in** 246 **BC**.

v. 7. Ptolemy III Euergetes (“the Doer of Good Deeds”), brother of **Berenice**, avenged her by attacking and conquering Syria, putting **Laodice** to death.

v. 8. Ptolemy III took the gods of Syria and its wealth back to Egypt, but trouble at home prevented him from maintaining **control** over Syria.

v. 9. Seeking revenge, **Seleucus II Callinicus**, invaded Egypt in 242 **BC**, but was badly beaten and retreated.

v. 10. **Seleucus’s** son’s **Seleucus III**, before his untimely death in 224 **BC**, and then **Antiochus III** the Great, warred to regain control of the situation. The latter invaded and conquered a large part of Palestine from Egypt.

v. 11. Ptolemy IV **Philopator** (221-203) reconquered Palestine **from** **Antiochus** the Great. They met at **Raphia**, the Egyptian stronghold in Palestine, in 217 **BC**. **Both** had huge armies, but the Syrian army was delivered into the hands of the Egyptian.

v. 12. Ptolemy, a playboy king, did not prevail, however, because he did not press his victory but made peace with Antiochus. Pleasure, not dominion, was his interest.

Meanwhile, 3 **Maccabees** and Josephus tell us that Ptolemy, on his way back to Egypt, decided to enter the Temple. The great high priest Simon 2, or Simon the Just, opposed him. Ptolemy viciously mistreated the Jews, which accounts for their coming to favor the Syrians thereafter.

v. 13. During the next 14 or so years, **Antiochus** the Great conquered in Turkey and in the east and made himself a great army.

v. 14. Native Egyptian rebellions against the Greek **Ptolemaic** rule in Egypt resulted in the death of Ptolemy IV and the accession of his four year old son, Ptolemy V **Epiphanes**. Egypt was ruled by **Agathocles**, a chief minister.

Disorders in Egypt exacerbated disorders in Israel. The background seems to be as follows. When **Onias II** became high priest, in 234 **BC**, in the days of Ptolemy **III Euergetes**, he decided not to pay the required tax to Ptolemy. **Josephus** tells us that Joseph, son of Tobias, became a loyal subject of Ptolemy **III**, averting the king's wrath against Jerusalem. Joseph became prominent as a tax farmer throughout the western part of the **Ptolemaic** empire. His son, **Hyrchanus**, was even more famous as a **servant of Ptolemy**. These men provided money to the pro-Egyptian Tobiads in Jerusalem, financing difficulties for the essentially pro-Syrian high priests **Onias II**, Simon II, and then **Onias III**.

During the **years after** the Egyptian victory at **Raphia**, "violent men" or "wild men" in Israel, acting in the supposed light of a vision, rose up to side with Egypt, but "stumbled" when **Antiochus** the Great conquered the area. The vision probably is **something** parallel to Ezekiel **7:26**, when the apostate **Judahites** are pictured as wanting a revelation to encourage them against Nebuchadnezzar. Compare also the false prophets in Jeremiah, who **led** Judah to doom.

Some have suggested that the "wild men" sided with Syria against Egypt, instead of the other way around. We don't have any records about this incident one way or another, from Josephus, the books called **Maccabees**, or any other source. Josephus tells us that Antiochus the Great was friendly to the Jews, which probably accounts for the Jewish **leadership's** changing their loyalties from the Egyptians, who had treated them badly, to the Syrians. Thus, I believe the interpretation I have given fits the situation better.

Hyrchanus killed himself when Antiochus **Epiphanes** invaded Egypt. Thus, the pro-Egyptian house of **Tobias** "stumbled" again. The damage had been done, however, and the **anti-Oniad** Tobiad party, which was pro-Hellenist (**proto-Sadducee**), had become strong in the city, and were able to help bring about the destruction of the Temple and priesthood in the **days** to come.

v. 15. In 199 **BC**, **Antiochus** the Great, with the help of Philip V of Macedon, **beseiged** and conquered the Egyptians at the City of Pan (**Paneas**, later **Caesarea Philippi**) and then at Sidon. The Egyptians were badly routed.

v. 16. Thus, **Antiochus** was able to do as he pleased. He conquered all the Egyptian territories, but, fearing the Romans, left Egypt itself alone and remained in Palestine

**after** suppressing the rebellion of the "violent men." We are told that Antiochus favored the Jews, releasing them from all taxes for three years, and afterwards from **one-third** of all taxes. He also sending money for the service of the Temple and released the clergy from all taxes.

v. 17. **Antiochus** made peace with Egypt in 197 **BC**, and betrothed his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy V, who was about seven years old, evidently hoping to subvert Egypt to his side since, fearing Rome, he dared not attack the South openly. Cleopatra, however, became loyal to Egypt, and encouraged them to ally with Rome. There is **something** endearing about the loyalty of this youthful Cleopatra to her child husband. She had a heart, **something** her father did not count on.

v. 18. Meanwhile, **Antiochus** conquered Macedon, **Thrace**, and warred in Greece itself (the "**coastlands**"). His **purpose was to break the** power of Rome, thus freeing him to conquer Egypt and to expand his empire at will. "A commander will make him desist from his presumptuous boasting without repaying **him** with like boasting." The famous Lucius **Scipio** Asiaticus, however, defeated him at **Thermopylae** and Magnesia. Unlike Antiochus, the machine-like and reserved Scipio, a true Roman stoic, was not boastful about his prowess and anticipated accomplishments. **Antiochus** became a vassal to Rome, and his son, Antiochus IV, went to Rome as a hostage and was raised in Roman ways. This sentence might also be translated, "A commander **will** make him desist from his presumptuous hubris, turning his hubris back upon him," in which case it refers to the fact that **Antiochus** now became subject to Rome.

v. 19. **Antiochus** returned to Syria, and was assassinated in 187 **BC** while attempting to pillage the treasury of Eel, one of his own gods, to pay tribute to the Romans.

v. 20. **Seleucus IV Philopator** (187-175) had to raise taxes to pay the Romans. He even tried to pillage the Temple at Jerusalem, but was thwarted. He was assassinated.

There are several things we should bear in mind as we summarize this history. **First**, remember that all these riders were Greeks. They **ruled** Syria and Egypt, but they were descendants of Alexander's generals. This is the time of the Greek, or bronze, empire.

Second, note that from 322 **BC** to about 200 **BC**, the Jews were under Egyptian rule. **Antiochus** the Great changed that by conquering Palestine. Since the lawful high priest, **Onias H**, was pro-Syrian, Antiochus evidently favored the Jews. His son, Antiochus IV **Epiphanes**, would initially continue that treatment, but the actions of apostate high priests allied with him would eventually provoke a situation that would result in his turning against the Jews.

Third, thus the seemingly rambling history we have just **surveyed** is **actually setting the stage** for the-history of

**Antiochus Epiphanes**, the first Little Horn, to whose history we now turn.

## 22. Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Desolating Sacrilege (Daniel 11:21-35)

Our method **will** be to proceed verse by verse, and then summarize and comment on this section of Daniel 11. Verse 21 describes **Antiochus's** rise to power. Verse 22 outlines the passage: **first** a **discussion** of his military conquests, and then the **result** of his career on the prince of the covenant. An expansion of **his** military career follows in verses 23-30a, which then leads to an expansion of the effects of his career on the Jews in verses **30b-35**.

v. 21. **Antiochus IV** is called 'despicable.' I don't think **this** is primarily because he wrecked the Temple, which **after all God had already abandoned as we shall see, but** because he **did** not respect the ways of the Jews as his father had. Rather, he allowed corrupt men to purchase the high priesthood from his hand, **and** thereby supported those who were responsible for committing the desolating sacrilege.

**Antiochus** was not the lawful heir, but his older brother **Demetrius** had been sent to Rome to replace **Antiochus** as hostage there. Upon the death of his father, **Antiochus** seized the kingdom on pretense of guarding it for the true heirs.

v. 22. This sentence seems to summarize his reign. Initially at **least, all** those who opposed him were defeated and shattered, and eventually the prince of the covenant, the high priest **Onias III**, would also be slain.

V. 23. After the Syrians allied with him, **Antiochus** initially showed a friendly face to Egypt, the Jews, and everyone else, while he developed his small forces into a mighty flood.

v. 24. During this time, he **consolidated** his hold on the **Syrian empire, building up forces in a way his ancestors** had never done, and laying plans for greater deeds, deeds of conquest.

VV. 25-26. In 169 **BC** an Egyptian army set off to reconquer Palestine, perhaps believing that the apparently peaceful **Antiochus** would do nothing about it. **Antiochus** met them, defeated them, invaded Egypt, and took his nephew Ptolemy VI **Philometer** captive. Evidently Ptolemy VI was betrayed by some of his **confidants**.

V. 27. **Antiochus** had failed to take Alexandria, and the leaders there proclaimed Ptolemy VII king of Egypt. Now **Antiochus** and Ptolemy VI have something in common: a desire to defeat Ptolemy VII and secure Egypt. They come to an agreement over a peace table, each intending to betray the other. Egypt is secured, and Ptolemy VI is put on the throne as co-ruler of Egypt with Antiochus. In

God's plan, however, their peace agreement would not stand.

v. 28. **Antiochus** returned from Egypt with much spoil and stopped in Jerusalem to take part of the Temple treasury as tribute. Some place the rebellion of Jason as this point, but it fits better after the second invasion of Egypt (**see v. 30**).

v. 29. According to God's **pre-ordained** calendar, **Antiochus** returned to Egypt in 168 **Bc**, betraying his arrangement with Ptolemy VI, who in the meantime had been reconciled with his brother Ptolemy VII through the intercession of their sister, Cleopatra II. This time, however, **Antiochus** was thwarted.

v. 30 Ships from Cyprus, **which** were Roman **triremes**, stood against him. The Romans declared Egypt off limits. **C. Popillius Laenus headed the Roman embassy that met with Antiochus** when the latter was **beseiging** Alexandria. - **Popillius** apprised **Antiochus** of the Senate's demand that he quit Egypt. When **Antiochus** tried to stall for time to meet with his officers, **Popillius** drew a circle in the sand around him and told him not to step outside the circle until he had given his answer, or else the Romans would declare war on him. Having been captive in Rome for many years, and **being** personally acquainted with **Popillius**, **Antiochus** knew the Roman character well, and dared not disobey.

Intimidated, utterly humiliated before his men, angry, and out for blood, **Antiochus returned** to Palestine and punished the **faithful**, anti-Hellenistic party in Jerusalem.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the sentence in verse 22 outlines this section on **Antiochus**, which describes first his military activity in the world, and then turns to his relationship to the church and the effects of his policy toward the church. The two sections are somewhat parallel chronologically, and some of the events described in verses 31 and 32 happened before **Antiochus's** humiliation by Rome in Egypt.

At the beginning of **Antiochus's** reign, the righteous high priest **Onias III**, was **slandered to Antiochus by Simon the Benjaminite, a Tobiad**. 'By now the **Tobiad party** was no longer pro-Egyptian, but was characteristically liberal and **Hellenizing**, and therefore opposed to the conservative and faithful **Obiads**. Simon charged that **Onias** had refused to pay taxes to Antiochus's predecessor, **Seleucus IV**. **Onias's Hellenizing** brother Joshua, using **his** Greek name Jason, visited **Antiochus** and promised to pay him a great deal of money if he could be made high priest. **Antiochus** assented, and **Onias** was deposed. Jason then turned **Jerusalem** into a Greek city, with gymnasium, Greek apparel, and even **olympic-style** games. Some of his comrades had pseudo-foreskins sewed onto themselves so that they would not be embarrassed to participate in the games, which were performed naked.

This was bad enough, but Jason was still a **Zadokite** priest, and thus the **requirement** God had instituted in the

Restoration Covenant had not been completely violated (Ezekiel **40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11**; 1 Kings **2:35**). After three years, however, Jason sent a certain **Menelaus (Menehem)**, brother of Simon the **Benjaminite**, to carry the tribute to **Antiochus**. **Menelaus** used the opportunity to buy the high priesthood for himself. This man was not a **Zadokite** at all, and from this time forward no **Zadokite** ever served as high priest in Israel again.

**Menelaus** stole some of the gold vessels of the Temple and sent them to **Antiochus**. When this became known, **Onias III** publicly rebuked him. **Menelaus** had him slain.

After the Roman rebuke of **Antiochus**, there were rumors that he had been **slain**. Jason took the opportunity to attack Jerusalem and try to regain control. **After** much slaughter, he was defeated and fled. When word of this reached **Antiochus**, the garbled message left him with the impression that all **Judea** was **in revolt**. **Already angry and humiliated**, he turned back to **Jerusalem** intent on punishing it.

**Antiochus** found himself welcomed by **Menelaus**, who escorted him into the Temple, where he helped himself to the golden vessels and **furniture** there. He **left** behind governors with the charge of suppressing conservative Jews, destroying the true religion, and converting the nation completely to Hellenistic ways.

v. 31. Coming where it does, this sentence at first glance indicates that the desolating sacrilege was committed at this time. The sanctuary **fortress** (Temple) was **desecrated**, the sacrifices done away with, and the desolating sacrilege committed.

Generally this is assumed to refer to **Antiochus's** pillaging of the Temple treasures, his bringing the **sacrifices** to a literal stop, and his erection of an altar to Zeus in the Temple. We have seen in Daniel 8:14, however, that there were about 2300 **days** from these events to the **"justification"** of the Temple when the sacrifices started again. Thus, the three events spoken of here happened earlier.

Not **Antiochus** but "forces from him" did **these** things. **This** again is usually taken, as 1 **Maccabees** 1 interprets, to refer to the Syrian officials who, after **Antiochus** left, enforced **his** will be doing the evil deeds just mentioned. Again, however, the chronological information in Daniel is against this interpretation.

The last phrase of this verse does not have to be translated "set up" the desolating sacrilege; it more likely means "give" or "establish." It is a rather neutral verb that indicates some kind of action, which is defined by the context. I would translate it "commit the desolating sacrilege."

What actually is referred to, I submit, can be seen from the history of the relationship of the Jews to **Antiochus**, which I have described under verse 30 above. The rejection and then murder of the true **Zadokite** priest, together with the initial spoiling of the Temple by **Mene-la-us**, I submit, constituted the desolating sacrilege and the other events mentioned in Daniel 11:31. They happened in 171 **BC**; see the discussion in chapter 15 (on Daniel 8) above.

v. 32. The **Hellenizing** party among the Jews (**proto-Sadducees**) naturally sided with Jason and **Menelaus**. **Antiochus** favored them. Meanwhile, the faithful Jews, who were called the **Hasidim** (from **hesed**, "covenant loyalty"; proto-Pharisee), came together to oppose what was going on.

v. 33. Godly teachers encouraged the righteous, though there were many martyrs and the agents of **Antiochus** tried to enforce idolatry upon the Jews.

v. 34. The **Maccabean** revolt granted a "little help." The result of this political uprising was that **Antiochus** was driven back and Temple worship restored, somewhat. The true priesthood was not restored, and thus only a "little **help**" was given. **The** full restoration would not **come** until Jesus truly cleansed and restored the Temple. Meanwhile, once the **Maccabees** were successful, many Jews allied with them hypocritically, especially in the days of John **Hyrcanus** (see discussion below).

v. 35. God's refining and purifying work among **His** people would result in continuing **difficulties** for the righteous. This will continue until the time of the end, which refers to the time of the Messiah, the end of **the** first creation (Dan. **12:4, 9**). Thus, this verse simply **characterizes** the condition of the Jews from the time of **Antiochus** to the time of Herod (11:40), and beyond to the time of the coming of Messiah's kingdom (12:1).

*(chapter 22 will be concluded next month)*