

An Amazing Prophecy

Daniel 11:1-35

In the book of Daniel we have seen God do great things through Daniel and his friends because they knew God. He strengthened them and they did great exploits: interpreting dreams and visions, escaping the fires of the blast furnace, stopping the mouths of lions. When we are done studying the first part of Daniel 11 today I will ask you a question. I'll ask it now at the beginning to get you to thinking about it as we study: Do you know God and if so great things are you doing in God's strength?

As I pointed out before, Chapters 10, 11, and 12 are all one great vision. Up to that point in Daniel the chapter divisions represent separate prophetic foresights, but the last three chapters are one great vision.

The background of this vision we had in Chapter 10, where Daniel suddenly saw a most shattering, dazzling sight, the Lord Jesus in the fullness of His majesty and glory, the very same One whom John describes in the opening verses of Revelation. It is the same one who arrested Paul on the road to Damascus and Who appeared in light that was brighter than the sun. You can imagine the effect of all this upon the prophet Daniel. He is drained of energy and falls on his face to the ground. But an angel is sent to help him and to give him the message that goes along with this great vision. What the angel tells Daniel is the most detailed prophecy of the events of human history before they occur that is contained in the Bible.

The angel begins to unfold, in Chapter 11, the history of the future from Daniel's day forward. The first verse of chapter 11 is really related to the closing verses of chapter 10.

1 "Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him.)

Here, the angel that Daniel saw in 10:18, tells about how he stood to confirm and strengthen the angel Michael (Dan. 10:21), the guardian of Israel (Dan. 12:1), during the reign of Darius the Mede. Remember that in chapter 6 in the first year of Darius, efforts were made to turn him hostile toward Daniel and the Jews. But God sent His angel on that occasion and shut the lions' mouths (Dan 6:22). The miraculous deliverance by the angel caused Darius the Mede to reverse his policies to favor Israel (6:24-27).

I. The End of Persia and the Beginning of the Greek Empire (2-4)

The rest of chapter 11 falls into four rather unequal parts. The first section is verses 2-4. In these verses the angel gives Daniel prophecy concerning the immediate future from Daniel's time through the establishment of the Greek empire, covering approximately ninety-five years. The angel said to Daniel, (Dan. 11:2-4):

2 "And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than *them* all; by his

strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece.

Daniel is told that there will be three more kings following Cyrus, the king of Media-Persia at that time (Dan. 10:1). These three are known to history. The first one was Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. He was overthrown by a usurper who took the name of Cambyses' son, Smerdis, and is called in history Pseudo-Smerdis (false-Smerdis). Then the third king was Darius I Hystaspes (Ezra 5). Then a fourth king was to follow. That did not mean that he would be the last of the kings of Persia but it meant he was to be the fourth one from Daniel's day, and he would be an especially notable one, **"far richer than them all."**

This was Xerxes the Great, king of Persia (he is the king Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6 and Esther 1). As Daniel was told, he was indeed fabulously rich, and **"by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece."** Xerxes I used his great riches and to gather a great army of hundreds of thousands, one of the largest armies in the ancient world. The expedition which he launched in 480 B.C. against Greece was disastrous. And one of the by-products of the attack on Greece by Xerxes I is that the Persians incurred the undying hatred of Greece.

Greece began to gain power until about 150 years later Alexander the Great finally led the Grecian armies against the Persian empire, overthrew the might of Persia, and swept on to conquer the then known civilized world. As verse 3 prophesies about him: **"Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will."** Remember we had this same prophecy in Danial 8 pictured as the Greek goat that overthrew the Persian ram.

Just like in chapter 8 when he became strong he was to be "broken." Verse 4 says,

4 "And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.

Alexander died when he was only thirty-three years old, and his kingdom was divided but not to his posterity. He had an unborn son at the time of his death who, when he was born, did briefly inherit the kingdom of Alexander. Ultimately the empire was divided among his four generals, according to what is said here, it would be **"divided towards the four winds of heaven."**

II. The Conflicts of the Kings of the North and South (5-20)

The next division of the vision encompasses Verses 5-20. In this section beginning with Verse 5, the angel traces the course of two Greek kingdoms, one called "the North" and the other "the South." "North" and "South," refer to their position relative to Israel. The "kings of the North" are those kings who rule over the kingdom north of Israel, and the "kings of the South" are those kings who rule over the southern kingdom. The king of the south is Egypt under Ptolemy, who was one of the generals of Alexander, and his successors. The king of the north

is Syria under the rule of the Seleucids (Seleucus was another of the generals under Alexander). These two Greek kingdoms, Egypt and Syria, fought back and forth over the course of about 130 years.

Now you who are good with geography, tell me, what lies between Syria and Egypt? Israel. Poor Israel was caught in between the two, and became the battlefield of these armies as they moved back and forth. Jerusalem was captured by both sides from time to time through the conflict and was sacked and ravaged a number of times -- ground like wheat between two millstones.

The account of these kingdoms is given to us because of Israel's involvement. God's primary concern is for Israel and for her sake he gives us this marvelously detailed account which history has confirmed in every detail. It would be really fascinating, if we had the time, to see how remarkably history records the fulfillment of every single prediction here. The details of this prophecy, particularly from verse 2 to 35, are so accurate, they are so remarkable they are so historically verifiable that this section Daniel has been a cause of many attacks on the book of Daniel. In the first 35 verses of Daniel 11, it's been estimated that there are 135 prophecies that have been literally fulfilled, events that were foretold some 400 years before they happened.

Here Daniel is given prophecies about specific events in the Greek Empires. The skeptical critics have found that the prophecies here are so absolutely accurate that they therefore have concluded that they must have been written after these events happened. Therefore, they take the whole book of Daniel and they shove its writing up past the fulfillment because they say it's impossible that prophecy should be so accurate.

Of course their basic supposition is that God didn't write the Bible. And their secondary supposition is that Daniel was a liar because Daniel said he was receiving these revelations from God before the time. So they've got two problems. Number one, they've got a God who doesn't know the future and number two, have to turn the godly man, Daniel, into an imposter. These are incredible accurate prophecies.

We won't have time to go through all the details of the battles and intrigues between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. If you want all the details I have the notes and can point you to the commentaries that go through it line-by-line showing their fulfillment in history. We will have to be content today to just read the prophecy in verses 5-20.

As I read it I want you to listen for a word that not only tells us that this was prophecy given beforehand, but that it is history that has been determined by God. It is the word "shall." 110 times in 43 verses this chapter we find in our English version the word "shall." What does that tell us? This prophecy is what *shall* be—not what *might* be or *could* happen, but what "shall" take place. All of this history was determined by God, directed by God and therefore predicted by God before it ever took place. Listen for the sovereign power of God as he directs the affairs of this world.

- 5 "Also the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion. His dominion shall be a great dominion.
- 6 And at the end of some years they shall join forces, for the daughter of the king of the South shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand; but she shall be given up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in those times.
- 7 But from a branch of her roots one shall arise in his place, who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail.
- 8 And he shall also carry their gods captive to Egypt, with their princes and their precious articles of silver and gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the North.
- 9 Also the king of the North shall come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land.
- 10 However his sons shall stir up strife, and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one shall certainly come and overwhelm and pass through; then he shall return to his fortress and stir up strife.
- 11 "And the king of the South shall be moved with rage, and go out and fight with him, with the king of the North, who shall muster a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into the hand of his enemy.
- 12 When he has taken away the multitude, his heart will be lifted up; and he will cast down tens of thousands, but he will not prevail.
- 13 For the king of the North will return and muster a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come at the end of some years with a great army and much equipment.
- 14 "Now in those times many shall rise up against the king of the South. Also, violent men of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision, but they shall fall.
- 15 So the king of the North shall come and build a siege mound, and take a fortified city; and the forces of the South shall not withstand him. Even his choice troops shall have no strength to resist.
- 16 But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and no one shall stand against him. He shall stand in the Glorious Land with destruction in his power.
- 17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do. And he shall give him the daughter of women to destroy it; but she shall not stand with him, or be for him.

- 18 After this he shall turn his face to the coastlands, and shall take many. But a ruler shall bring the reproach against them to an end; and with the reproach removed, he shall turn back on him.**
- 19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fortress of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.**
- 20 "There shall arise in his place one who imposes taxes on the glorious kingdom; but within a few days he shall be destroyed, but not in anger or in battle.**

Did you hear it? Over and over again these things *shall* take place. We just read in these verses about the willful acts of godless kings and those who follow them. But all the while it reminds us that while these sinners are rebelling against God and seeking their own interests, God's plans and purposes are being achieved. As we have seen over and over again in the book of Daniel, God is in control of human history, including the events which occur due to the reign of wicked men. The degree of detail depicted about future events in this chapter reflects the degree to which God's sovereign control of history extends.

III. The Career of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (21-35)

Coming to the third section, from (Verses) 21-35 we find the career of a single king of the north, whose name was Antiochus Epiphanes (he called himself Epiphanes which means "The Illustrious One, The Magnificent One" -- it was his own appraisal of himself -- but people called him Antiochus Epimanes, the Madman). We have met him before in the book of Daniel. He is the "little horn" of Chapter 8, who persecuted Israel and ultimately set up the first "abomination of desolation" in the temple at Jerusalem. He is often called "the Antichrist of the Old Testament," a most despicable character. He reigned from 175 to 164 B.C. The opening verses, 21 through 28, are the story of how this treacherous man came to power, gaining influence through flattery. He launched a campaign against Egypt, which he won and thus established his power more thoroughly.

- 21 And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue.**
- 22 With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant.**
- 23 And after the league is made with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people.**
- 24 He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers: he shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but only for a time.**
- 25 He shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the South with a great army. And the king of the South shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand, for they shall devise plans against him.**

26 Yes, those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain.

27 Both these kings' hearts shall be bent on evil, and they shall speak lies at the same table; but it shall not prosper, for the end will still be at the appointed time.

28 While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land.

Then, in Verses 29-30, a very interesting thing is recorded:

29 At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter.

30 For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.

Antiochus made a second invasion of Egypt but this time he met with difficulty.

We know from history how this occurred, He led his army into Egypt, but this time the Egyptians had sent for help from the Romans. The Roman Senate sent a general named Popilius, who led a legion against Antiochus. They arrived in Roman galleys which are referred to here as "ships of Kittim." Popilius insisted that Antiochus return to his own land, keep the peace, and acknowledge the authority of Rome. Antiochus asked for time to consider these terms, but Popilius drew a circle around him with his sword and told him to decide before he stepped out of that circle. So Antiochus gave in and agreed to keep the peace, but returned to Jerusalem to take out his spite on the Jews. Instead of keeping peace, he did what is recorded in verse 31.

31 And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.

Antiochus went up to Jerusalem, entered the temple, and, as we have learned before, erected there a pagan altar. He offered a pig, an unclean animal to the Jews, upon the altar, taking the blood of the pig and sprinkled it around the sanctuary, thus defiling it. Then he set up a statue of Zeus and insisted that the temple be dedicated to that pagan god. This is what is called "**the abomination of desolation**." All this is extremely important because it was a preview of another abomination of desolation that is yet to come.

In Verses 32-35 we have the career of a very remarkable people described, a people known to history as the Maccabees. They were the sons of an old man named Mathias, who rebelled against the desecrations of Antiochus and led a revolt against the authority of the king. His sons were successful in this revolt and finally recaptured the temple, cleansed the sanctuary, and restored the Jewish offerings. The Jews still celebrate this important event as the Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah. Here is the description of the Maccabees in the prophecy.

32 Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.

33 And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering.

34 Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue.

35 And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.

This remarkable section of the prophecy predicts the rise of a people who would know their God, would do exploits, and who are strong. Though they receive a little help they are ultimately overcome. The Maccabees had to appeal to the Romans for help and it was this appeal which was ultimately responsible for the fact that the Roman government was in control of Palestine at the time our Lord was born. But they did great things, were a godly people, and did succeed in cleansing the sanctuary and restoring the offerings of the Jews. As predicted they did mighty things in the name of God against tremendous persecution falling **"by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering."**

Now notice the last words of Verse 35. I believe they suggest a time that will carry us from these days in the past, to the **"the time of the end,"** to the time in the future when this shall again be fulfilled in a greater way. It shall be **"until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time,"** we are told.

Then, beginning with Verse 36, we have the last section of this chapter. And we will deal with that next time.

So what do we take away from Daniel 11 today?

Daniel 11 is a strong validation of the integrity of the Word of God. It demonstrates that it's not merely a human book. It's not just history. This is a divine book. It is a supernatural book, and we can rely upon it. We can rely upon its truth and trust in its promises and assurances.

And what it assures us of, as we've seen all through this study in the Book of Daniel, in each chapter, is that God is in control He can reveal the future events because He has planned them all. And the God who knows all and controls all is a God that we can trust. So this is a chapter of great comfort. God is sovereign. Nothing can frustrate His plan of the ages.

Evil men will come and go. Corrupt and cruel kingdoms will persecute true followers of Christ. As in the days of Antiochus, many will suffer. Many will die for Christ and His covenant. But none of that can stop God from fulfilling His plans and promises.

And that should encourage us to live large for God. It is still true that, **"the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits."**

In John 17:3 Jesus said, "**And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**"

Do you know God? The only way to God is through Jesus Christ whom He has sent. There is a vast difference between knowing about God, and knowing God. Look at what those who know God are like, they "**shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.**"

As I pointed out last time, we are in a spiritual battle not wrestling against flesh and blood, but spiritual powers. In the context of this spiritual warfare in Ephesians Paul said, "**Be strong in the Lord, and the power of His might.**"

Our strength is in Him, "**Be strong in the Lord.**" Our power comes from Him. "**And the power of His might.**" Those who know God will be strengthened by Him.

And those who know God will "**carry out great exploits.**" The Bible is full of stories of the great exploits of those people who knew God and trusted in Him. Jesus said, (Jhn 14:12 NKJV) **12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.**

How can the followers of Jesus do greater things? One, through prayer: (Jhn 14:13 NKJV) **13 "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**

Second by loving one another in the power of the Spirit: (Jhn 14:15-17 NKJV) **15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- 17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.**

And our love for one another will cause the unbelieving world want to know God. Jesus said, (Jhn 13:35 NKJV) **35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

Praying, Living and loving in the power of the Holy Spirit will show the world that we are disciples of Jesus. It will show them God so that they can turn and believe as well.

Daniel 11 should encourage us to be strong in the Lord and do great things for His Kingdom. What great exploit is God doing through you?