

# A Complete Exegesis of the Historical Section of Daniel Chapter 11

## Part II Daniel 11:5-20

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### *THE WARS BETWEEN THE PTOLEMIES AND THE SELEUCIDS: 11:5-20*

Verses 5-35 give detailed predictions of the various wars and campaigns between the Ptolemaic and Seleucidian realms of the splintered Greek empire, with the phrase "king of the South" referring to the ruling king over the Ptolemaic kingdom and "king of the North" to the ruling king over the Seleucidian kingdom. Directions in the Bible of "north" and "south" are normally given relative to Jerusalem and Israel. Therefore, "south" points to Egypt, the center of the Ptolemaic kingdom (capital at Alexandria), and "north" points to Syria, the center of the Seleucidian kingdom (capital at Antioch, founded by Seleucus in 300). The various struggles from 323 to 301 left Ptolemy and Seleucus as the more powerful of the four kings.

#### *The Ptolemies: The Kings of the South*

Ptolemy I	Soter	(Saviour)	(323-283)
Ptolemy II	Philadelphus	(Brother-loving)	(283-246)
Ptolemy III	Euergetes	(Benefactor)	(246-221)
Ptolemy IV	Philopator	(Father-loving)	(221-203)
Ptolemy V	Epiphanes	(Glorious)	(203-181)
Cleopatra I	(Regent)		(181-176)
Ptolemy VI	Philomator	(Mother-loving)	(176-145)
Ptolemy VIII <sup>1</sup>	Euergetes	(Benefactor)	(170-116)

#### *The Seleucids: The Kings of the North*

Seleucus I	Nicator	(Conqueror)	(312-281)
Antiochus I	Soter	(Savior)	(280-261)
Antiochus II	Theos	(God)	(261-246)
Seleucus II	Callinicus	(Gloriously Triumphant)	(245-225)
Seleucus III	Soter	(Savior)	(225-223)
Antiochus III	The Great		(223-187)
Seleucus IV	Philopator	(Father-loving)	(187-175)
Antiochus IV	Epiphanes	(Glorious)	(175-164)
Antiochus V	Eupator	(Having a Noble Father)	(164-162)
Demetrius I	Soter	(Savior)	(161-150)
Alexander Balas			(150-146)
Antiochus VI	Dionysus		(145-142)
Demetrius II	Nicator	(Conqueror)	(145-139)
Antiochus VII	Sidetes	(born in Sida)	(139-129)

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<sup>1</sup> There are some differences in the sources. S. Angus, "Ptolemy," *Old ISBE*, attributes the surname "Euergetes" with Ptolemy VII and takes "Ptolemy VIII" as another designation for this same king. By contrast, Harold W. Hoehner, "Ptolemy," *ISBE*, states that Ptolemy VIII Euergetes assassinates his nephew, Ptolemy VII in 144.

The large section, verses 5-35, naturally divides into two parts: the wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids (11:5-20) and the great persecution of Israel under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (11:21-35).

Beginning, then, with verse 5, we read:

*Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed (v. 5).*

The "king of the South" who became strong was Ptolemy I Soter (*Savior*), the general of the four-fold alliance that ruled over Egypt south of Palestine. The "prince" under him who became even greater was Seleucus Nicator, the general under Antigonus who defected to Ptolemy and later ruled upper Syria and Asia, originally from Babylon and later, beginning in 300, from Antioch, a city he founded and named after his father Antiochus. This realm included the eastern regions of Alexander's empire up to the Indus River. Those far-eastern territories were later lost, but this was the largest of the four parcels of Alexander's empire, and in this way Seleucus Nicator became greater than Ptolemy in fulfillment of Daniel 11:5. As also implied in the verse, however, the two of them become the strongest of the four original parcels.

*And after some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in, and the one who sired her, as well as he who supported her in those times (v. 6).*

"They" refers to the king of the South and his "prince" (v. 5) who became the king of the North. Here are the events leading up to the alliance and marriage referred to in the first part of the text.

Ptolemy II became joint ruler with his father in 285 and then sole ruler when his father died in 283. Ptolemy II and Antiochus I fought the First Syrian War (280-279 and 276-271), with Antiochus I losing important districts in Asia Minor and Syria. During the Second Syrian War (260-253) Antiochus II regained from Ptolemy II much of what his father had lost to him. The war, however, ended inconclusively. It was then that Ptolemy II accomplished a diplomatic master stroke. A peace treaty was struck according to which Antiochus II agreed to divorce his wife Laodice and marry Bernice the daughter of Ptolemy II. Antiochus would then designate Bernice's son as the heir to the throne of the Seleucidian kingdom. The marriage occurred in 252. This Bernice is the "daughter of the king of the South," and this arrangement fulfilled the first part of Daniel 11:6.

Shortly after, in 246, Ptolemy II died ("the one who sired her"). Antiochus II recalled Laodice and named his infant son by her Seleucus II, his successor to the throne. However, Laodice, apparently no longer trusting him or perhaps looking for revenge, organized a successful conspiracy and had Antiochus II poisoned ("nor will he retain his power"). Bernice then appealed to Ptolemy III, her brother now reigning in Egypt, to rescue her and support her son's claim to the throne. Before this could be done, however, Laodice had both Bernice and her infant son by Antiochus II killed ("she will not retain her position of power"). The coup left Laodice as queen regent during the minority of her son Seleucus II. In this way Bernice was "given up," along with those in the court of the late Antiochus II who supported her and brought her to Antioch, thus fulfilling Daniel 11:6. The singular "he who supported her in those times" is difficult. It might be a second reference in the verse to Antiochus II.

*But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength (v. 7).*

"His" in the phrase "in his place" points back to the king of the South, Ptolemy II, who engineered the marriage of his daughter Bernice to Antiochus II. In his place one will arise as the new king of the South, and this was Ptolemy III. The phrase "one of the descendants of her line" can be better translated "a branch of her roots." "Her roots" are her parents (Keil). Ptolemy III, her brother and the son of Ptolemy II, was another branch from those roots.

To avenge the murder of his sister and her son, Ptolemy III invaded Syria, initiating the Third Syrian War (246-241). There was little or no opposition from the residents of Syria. Laodice was killed, her son was forced into exile, and the capital Antioch was plundered. Thus Ptolemy entered the "fortress of the king of the North" and dealt with them concerning the assassination of his sister. Ptolemy not only overran Syria but also Susa and Babylon, his thrust extending all the way to the borders of India. His fleets destroyed the Seleucid navy and recovered territories in the Aegean Sea. He also made advances into Thrace, part of the parcel granted originally to Lysimachus. This campaign marked the apex of Ptolemaic power, fulfilling the last part of 11:7--"He will display great strength."

*And also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years (v. 8).*

Part of the plunder returned to Egypt by Ptolemy III consisted of "their gods," "their metal images," and "their precious vessels"--the gods, images, and vessels currently belonging to the kingdom of the North. In reality these valuable things were Egyptian idols and sacred treasures stolen from Egypt when Cambyses II conquered Egypt in 524. The native Egyptians were so elated at the return of these items that they acclaimed Ptolemy III as *Euergetes*, meaning "Benefactor."

After Ptolemy III returned to Egypt, the formerly exiled Seleucus II regained control of Syria, possibly in 242, although Ptolemy retained a strong naval presence in the Aegean. The second part of the verse refers to the peace treaty established between Ptolemy III and Seleucus II in 241. There was relative peace between the two kingdoms for about two decades. Ptolemy III, however, continued various intrigues against Greece in the attempt to weaken Macedonian power.

*Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land (v. 9).*

"The latter will" is literally "he will" and most likely refers to the king of the North, as indicated by the NASB interpretation. This may be a general statement referring to Seleucus II regaining control of the main part of Syria in 242. According to Archer, it might also refer to the successful attempt to regain control of upper Syria and Phoenicia, probably in the 230's, there being no record that Seleucus II ever invaded Egypt proper.<sup>2</sup>

*And his sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces: and one of them will keep on coming and overthrow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress (v. 10).*

Seleucus II died in 225, or possibly 226, having two sons--Seleucus III and Antiochus III. He was succeeded first by his son Seleucus II. However, this son reigned for only three years and was murdered during a campaign into Asia Minor against King Attalus of Pergamum. His brother Antiochus III The Great succeeded him in 223. These are the two "sons" of Seleucus II, the king of the North mentioned in the opening of verse 10.

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<sup>2</sup> Archer, *Daniel*, in *EBC*, 7:131.

In the second part of the verse, "one of them" is literally "he" and quite probably refers to Antiochus III, the new "king of the North" referred to in the next verse. The "war" is probably the Fourth Syrian War begun by Antiochus and discussed more fully in the next two verses. The overthrowing and passing through would then refer to the initial successes by Antiochus in his advance southward. Thus the suffix "his" refers to the king of the South. The identity of the "fortress" is difficult to determine. Young suggests either Gaza or Raphia, where Antiochus III is finally stopped. The details follow.

*And the king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former. When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail (vv. 11,12).*

Ptolemy III died in 221, or possibly was murdered by his son and successor Ptolemy IV. The debauched life of this new king of the South was characterized by wine and women and marked the beginning of the decline of Ptolemaic power. After Antiochus III crushed a revolt by Molon in his eastern provinces in 220 and stabilized the Seleucid empire, he begins the Fourth Syrian War (219-217) in order to take Palestine and lower Syria from the neglectful king of the South, Ptolemy IV.

After several initial successes in 219 (including the taking of Seleucia near Antioch) and 218 (taking Tyre and Coelesyria, an area lying between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges, which themselves lie between Sidon and Damascus in lower or southern Syria), Antiochus III was defeated by Ptolemy IV at Raphia (near Gaza) in 217, even though Ptolemy had a smaller army. Ptolemy reclaimed southern Syria, Palestine, and Phoenicia. This is the defeat predicted in verse 11. Again, "the latter" is literally "he," but its reference to the king of the North is fairly clear. "Into the hand of the former" is literally "into his hand" and has reference to Ptolemy IV, the king of the South.

Verse 12 predicts that after the army of Antiochus III is defeated ("carried away"), Ptolemy IV (the king of the South) will be filled with pride and will kill many thousands. This probably refers to the utter destruction visited upon the defeated Syrian host. Young quotes Polybius, a second century B.C. Greek historian (V:86) as saying that 10,000 infantry, 300 cavalry, and 5 elephants were killed. In addition 4,000 prisoners were taken. The latter part of verse 12 probably refers to the fact that Ptolemy gained no lasting advantage as a result of this victory. He apparently returned to his dissolute lifestyle.

*For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment (v. 13).*

After being defeated by Ptolemy IV in 217, Antiochus was temporarily forced to relinquish all claim to Phoenicia and Palestine. He therefore directed his attention northward and eastward. These campaigns consumed all his energies in the years from 212 to 204. He subdued rebellious provinces in the north all the way to the Caspian Sea. His most brilliant campaign, however, was to the east into Bactria and Parthia. It was the result of these victories that he acquired the surname "The Great." All of this is a prelude to verse 13.

Ptolemy IV dies in 204 "after an interval of some years" (217-204) and is succeeded by his son, Ptolemy V, born in 210 and only six or possibly seven years old. Antiochus III sees this as an opportunity to retake southern Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine. Antiochus first makes a pact with Philip V of Macedon to divide Egypt, the Ptolemaic realm, between the two of them. He then initiates the Fifth Syrian War (202-198) by attacking Coelesyria in 202, only two years after the child-king, Ptolemy V, assumed the throne. Antiochus does this with an even "greater multitude" than he had before in the Fourth Syrian War.

The details of this campaign are obscure, but by 199 Antiochus had secured southern Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine, as evidenced by the fact that he felt free to invade Pergamos in the winter of 199/198, the territory of King Attalus, who was pro-Roman against Philip V.

*Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down (v. 14).*

This verse and verse 15 point to the result of a counteroffensive initiated during the absence of Antiochus by the young king of the South, Ptolemy V, aided by the powerful Egyptian general Scopas. The Egyptian forces invade Coelesyria and take Jerusalem. "The violent ones among your people" are evidently a pro-Seleucid party at Jerusalem. Evidently Scopas severely punishes many in Jerusalem for their support of Antiochus' claim to Palestine, for the verse concludes by predicting that "they will fall down."

As a theological footnote, the use of the phrase "your people" here should establish beyond all doubt that the phrase elsewhere in the book of Daniel (e.g., 9:24) refers to ethnic Jews-- *Daniel's people*, not "the true church in the Old Testament," a figment of the amillenarian's imagination. As another footnote, observe that this verse clearly claims to be predicting the future, just as 10:14 claims: "the violent ones will lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision." According to verses 10:1 and 11:2, the entirety of chapter 11 is spoken by the interpreting angel to Daniel in the "third year of Cyrus, king of Persia" (535/534).

*Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege mound, and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand (v. 15).*

Antiochus wastes no time in returning to deal with this new offensive on the part of the king of the South. He defeats Scopas in 198 at the Battle of Panium (the city called Caesarea Philippi in the NT and now called Panias). This battle represents the final and definite transfer of Palestine to the Seleucid empire.

Apparently Scopas retreats to Sidon, the "well-fortified city" of this verse. This removes the last claim that the Ptolemys have on lower Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine. In particular, Judah is now under the Seleucid government.

*But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand (v. 16).*

Verse 15 described the final siege of Sidon, where Antiochus had forced Scopas to retreat. Now verse 16 describes the complete victory gained by Antiochus. Antiochus comes against the king of the South and "will do as he pleases," i.e., he is victorious. The second part of the verse predicts the result of Antiochus retaking Jerusalem.

Jerusalem opens its gates to Antiochus, and the majority of the Jewish population welcomes him as deliverer and benefactor. "Destruction is in his hand," meaning that he has the power to destroy, and with the help of the Jews, Antiochus expels the Egyptian garrison at Jerusalem. No doubt he also exercises that power against Jewish pro-Egyptian sympathizers. To reward Jerusalem for its reception of him, Antiochus restores parts of the city that had been destroyed by the war and exempts its citizens from taxes for three years. He also subsidizes the temple service and permits "members of the nation to have a form of government in accordance with the laws of the country."<sup>3</sup>

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3 Josephus, *Ant.* xii. 3,4).

*And he will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side (v. 17).*

By 198 Antiochus III has permanently brought Phoenicia and Palestine under Seleucidian rule. Egypt, however, is still independent under the young Ptolemy V. In the years to follow, a new power is developing in the west. Seeing Rome as a threat, Antiochus in 195 (or perhaps 193) approaches Ptolemy V with a treaty of peace and proposes that it be sealed by the marriage of his daughter, Cleopatra I, to the young king. This would give Antiochus a two-fold influence over the Ptolemaic kingdom: (1) through his daughter and her influence upon Ptolemy, and (2) through their son, Ptolemy VI, the heir to the throne of Egypt (to be born in 186). Therefore the "he" in the first part of this verse refers to Antiochus III. The "him" to whom both the proposal and daughter are brought is Ptolemy V.

There is a problem with the phrase "to ruin it." The "it" is a translation of a third feminine singular pronominal suffix on a Hiphil infinitive, meaning "to corrupt" or "to destroy." There are three possible ways to translate the result. (1) The suffix can be taken as a subjective genitive: "for her to corrupt." (2) The suffix can also be taken as the object of the infinitive, taking the feminine as a true feminine: "to destroy her." Or (3) it can be taken as a neuter: "to destroy it." The second option, though grammatically possible, makes no sense at all. Many would argue for the third option, referring the "it" to an implicit "kingdom of the South" and translating as follows: "in order to corrupt the kingdom of the South"--i.e., give Antiochus a foothold in Alexandria. This was certainly his plan, but the absence of an explicit antecedent makes this translation debatable. Archer argues for the first option: "Antiochus will also give Ptolemy the daughter of women in order for her to corrupt [him]."<sup>4</sup> Despite the translation difficulties, the gist of the verse and its subsequent fulfillment in history is clear.

The last part of the verse accurately predicts that this strategy of Antiochus actually failed. His daughter became completely sympathetic to her husband (Ptolemy V) and the good of the Ptolemaic realm. The "him" and "his" in the last clause, therefore, refer to Antiochus III, and the connective is correctly translated "but." Antiochus III dies in 187 having gained no particular influence in Egyptian affairs. When Ptolemy V dies in 181, Cleopatra becomes queen regent for their son, Ptolemy VI, who had been born in 186. She herself dies in 176. However, this section has not yet finished with the career of Antiochus III.<sup>5</sup>

*Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn (v. 18).*

After finally defeating Scopas in 198, Antiochus III again turns his attention toward Greece and points to the west. He campaigns successfully in Asia Minor in 197 and in Greece in 194, despite a Greek alliance with Rome: "He will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many." However, the Romans join forces with their Greek allies and defeat Antiochus on the Greek mainland at Thermopylae in 191.<sup>6</sup> The Roman "commander" was Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus, the brother of Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, who had defeated Hannibal at the Battle of Zama in 202. Antiochus was forced to retreat to Asia Minor. Again the Romans defeated him at Magnesia in Lydia in 190. In 189 Antiochus is forced to accept a treaty dictated by the Romans: "the "commander" repaid him for "his scorn" in thinking he was capable of engaging the Romans successfully.

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<sup>4</sup> Archer, *Daniel*, in *EBC*, 7:132.

<sup>5</sup> As a note of interest, it is during the reign of Ptolemy V that the Rosetta Stone is inscribed.

<sup>6</sup> Thermopylae is the site of an important historic battle between Greek and Persian forces, which took place in 480 during Xerxes' campaign (discussed earlier in these notes).

The terms of this treaty were extremely harsh: (1) Antiochus had to renounce everything on the Roman side of Taurus; (2) he had to pay enormous reparations over the next twelve years; (3) he had to surrender his entire elephant brigade and his navy; and (4) he had to give to Rome 20 hostages, including his very young son, the infamous Antiochus IV, who spent fourteen years in Rome.

*So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more (v. 19).*

With incredible accuracy this verse predicts the end of Antiochus III in 187. In this year Antiochus marches against a revolt in Armenia, in that part of Asia Minor left to him. He succeeds in suppressing the revolt. But in order to, apparently, replenish his exhausted treasury to continue the payments to Rome, Antiochus attempts to plunder the temple of Bel at Elymais. The local Elymaeans, incensed at this sacrilege, kill him while defending their temple.

*Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though neither in anger nor in battle (v. 20).*

As a result of his defeat by the Romans in 190 at Magnesia, Antiochus III was forced to turn over his son, young Antiochus IV, to the Romans as hostage. After Antiochus III is killed during the raid on the temple at Elymais in 187, his other son, Seleucus IV Philopator, assumes the throne. In 175, for reasons unknown, Seleucus arranged for the release of his brother Antiochus IV from Rome by substituting his own son Demetrius I. Verse 20 summarizes the reign of Seleucus IV Philopator. With the death of his father Antiochus III, the burden of meeting the required payments to Rome fell upon him. Evidently to secure money for this purpose, Seleucus IV sends his minister Heliodorus, the "oppressor" or tax collector predicted in this verse, to Jerusalem--the "Jewel" or "glory" of his kingdom (from God's point of view)--to plunder the temple and thus replenish his empty treasury. According to 2 Macc. 3:7-40, God gave Heliodorus a terrifying vision that he was being flogged, and he returned empty-handed having removed nothing from the temple. It was this same minister Heliodorus who later poisoned Seleucus IV in 175, shortly after Seleucus had arranged for the release of his brother, Antiochus IV, from Rome. Verse 20 predicted that Seleucus would die neither "in battle" nor, as in the case of his father, "in anger," i.e., due to mob action.