

## 20/20 Foresight

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**1** And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him.

### **From Cyrus to Alexander**

**2** And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece.

**3** And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases.

**4** But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded; for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.

**1** Two years previous, this “warrior angel” provided assistance to Michael at a critical juncture in Israel’s history, the transition from Babylonian to Medo-Persian supremacy.

**2** Cyrus (539-529 BC) was followed by Cambyses (529-522 BC), Pseudo Smerdis (522-521 BC), and Darius Hystaspes (521-486 BC). Then came Xerxes (486-465 BC). Through the conquest of Lydia, Babylonia, and Egypt (by his predecessors) and a severe taxation program by Darius Hystaspes, Xerxes amassed considerable wealth. (See Esther 1:1-12 for an account of the 180 day feast of Xerxes!) After four years of preparation and considerable PR to strengthen the resolve of his nation, he mounted a campaign against Greece to avenge a previous defeat by his father. He only succeeded, however, in giving Greece a score to settle.

**3** Alexander the Great (336-323 BC) was the one to settle the score. He retaliated and seized Persia for Greece. He demonstrated amazing strength and ability by his swift conquest of the then known world in a single campaign. His leadership has scarcely been equaled in history – he maintained an army in the field 1,000 miles from home for a period that lasted years!

**4** On the cusp of complete world domination, Alexander died at the age of 32. After several years of contention, four of Alexander’s generals gained positions of dominance as three potential heirs were all subsequently murdered. The four generals were able (after a prolonged struggle) to each carve from Alexander’s empire a domain for themselves although none commanded the level of respect given to Alexander.

### **From Alexander to Antiochus**

**5** 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.

**6** 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.

**7** 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.

**8** And also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will

**5** The Syrian division (north of Palestine) and the Egyptian division (to the south) were of greatest significance for Israel, and therefore, come up for close inspection. Clearly (according to verse 8), “Egypt” is the South. Ptolemy Soter was a very capable general under Alexander who was made satrap of Egypt upon Alexander’s death. He proclaimed himself King of Egypt in 304 BC and ruled until 283 BC. Seleucus Nicator served Ptolemy Soter until a window of opportunity presented itself allowing him to relocate and proclaim himself king (in 304 BC) of the largest section of Alexander’s empire which included Babylonia, Syria, and Media.

**6** About 250 BC (54 years after Ptolemy’s and Seleucus’s declarations in 304 BC), the progeny of these original kings (Ptolemy II Philadelphus, son of Ptolemy I, and Antiochus II Theos, grandson of Seleucus) sought to end their bitter fighting by the establishment of an alliance. Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II, was given in marriage to Antiochus II, who was 23 years younger than Ptolemy II, to seal this alliance. However, when Ptolemy II died (two years later), Antiochus II put Berenice away and took back his former wife, Laodice. Laodice, fearing further fickleness, poisoned Antiochus II, had Berenice, her attendants, and her son (by Antiochus) killed, and proclaimed her own son, Seleucus II Callinicus (246-227 BC), as king.

**7** Berenice had a brother in Egypt who became king, taking the name Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 BC). He marched on Syria to avenge the death of his sister. He penetrated as far as the Tigris River and moved where he wished unopposed. The young Seleucus II Callinicus escaped death by staying in the interior of Asia Minor.

**8** The extent of an ancient king’s victory is often measured by his ability to plunder the defeated people. Jerome reports that Ptolemy brought home

take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years.

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

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

**11** 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.

**12** 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.

**13** 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.

“40,000 talents of silver and 2,500 precious vessels and images of the gods.” Ptolemy did not follow up his conquest with an assimilation plan, although Palestine was retained under his rule.

**9** In about 240 BC, Seleucus Callinicus attempted a return attack but was unsuccessful.

**10** Seleucus Callinicus had two sons, Seleucus III Ceraunus (227-223 BC) and Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BC). The first was killed in a campaign in Asia Minor which concluded his short reign. His younger brother became king at the age of 18. This second son, whose realm was somewhat impoverished from the humiliations suffered at the hands of Ptolemy III, was determined to turn the tables. He moved with a large force and succeeded in extending control as far as the Egyptian frontier post of Raphia, where a major battle with Egypt took place.

**11** Ptolemy IV Philopater (221-204 BC), son of Ptolemy Eurgetes, was something of a party boy and lay-about. But when Antiochus took Raphia, Ptolemy roused himself and assembled a grand army (70,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, 73 elephants) and secured a decisive victory over Antiochus (who had assembled his own equally impressive army).

**12** Ptolemy killed 10,000 infantry, 300 cavalry, and 5 elephants in the army of Antiochus. His natural predisposition to pride and indolence were displayed in boasting matched by an absence of follow-through, although Palestine was returned to his sovereignty.

**13** After his defeat at Raphia, Antiochus turned his attention to the east between 212 and 204 BC. When Ptolemy Philopater died and was succeeded by Ptolemy V Epiphanes (age 4), Antiochus discerned a window of opportunity to return to the West. So 14 years after his defeat at the hands of

Ptolemy Philopater, Antiochus attacked with a battle hardened army even larger than the one from his first engagement with Egypt.

**14** 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.

**15** 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.

**16** 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.

**17** 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.

**14** Antiochus found an ally in Philip V of Macedonia who seized Egyptian overseas holdings. Even some among the Jews, who had languished under Egyptian domination while having the battle front traverse their land, sought to provide aid to Antiochus by provisioning his army and elephants. Their initiative seems to have failed to accomplish its objective, whatever it was, even though Palestine did come under the rule of Antiochus. Peace would prove elusive, despite the fact that under Antiochus III Egypt lost sovereignty over Palestine.

**15** In the campaign of 203 BC, Antiochus successfully raised siege works against Sidon. By 199 BC, he held most of Palestine. Scopas, one of Egypt's ablest generals, was eventually forced to seek refuge in Sidon. Three crack Egyptian generals were dispatched to lift the siege, but to no avail.

**16** When Sidon fell, it marked the end of Egyptian domination of Palestine. Antiochus proved unstoppable, secured Palestine for himself, and established his absolute sovereignty over it.

**17** From this position of power, Antiochus proposed a "peace treaty" with Ptolemy Epiphanes that he presented as "perfectly equitable." Under the terms of this arrangement, he gave his daughter, the "first daughter," Cleopatra, to Ptolemy in 197 BC. The marriage did not take place until Ptolemy was 14 in 193 BC. Antiochus thought this scheme would reinforce a stability in his relations with Egypt which would allow him to turn his attention toward Rome. His plan was foiled for the fact that Cleopatra became a proper wife. Eventually Egypt actually allied itself with Rome against Antiochus!

**18** 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.

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

**20** 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.

### **Antiochus Closely Considered**

**21** And in his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue.

**18** Once the treaty was signed in 197 BC, Antiochus turned his desire northwards. He met with initial success seizing numerous islands of the Aegean along with substantial portions of Asia Minor and Greece. When Antiochus began to nibble away at Greece, Rome commissioned the general, Scipio, to deal with this eastern upstart's contempt for Rome. The humiliation intended for Rome was turned into humiliation for Antiochus when he was forced to abandon Asia Minor through the peace of Apamea established in 188 BC.

**19** He returned to his homeland having been frustrated in his exploits, his grandiose plans now utter failures. He died one year later in 187 BC.

**20** His son, Seleucus IV Philopater (187-176 BC) inherited a sizeable land and an empty treasury. He dispatched leaders who could compel the payment of taxes. Heliodorus was the prime minister sent to seize the funds of the Temple treasury in Jerusalem. But when Seleucus died prematurely and under suspicious circumstances (possibly having been poisoned by Heliodorus) the crisis for Israel now abated somewhat.

**21** The son of Seleucus IV, Demetrius Soter, was the rightful heir to the throne. But, he had been taken hostage to Rome prior to the death of Seleucus.. So when Antiochus Epiphanes, a schemer without a conscience and younger brother of Seleucus, heard of it in Athens, he rushed to Antioch in Syria to have himself declared as king.

We have now arrived at the point in history where a figure who most closely resembles the antichrist can be observed. Study this man and you will learn what to expect!

In verse 36, we jump forward to the antichrist! Recognize that the specificity of the previous prophesy requires us to take what follows very seriously. There is no reason to assume that this predictive material is any less specific than what can currently be verified from history.