

## Daniel 11: 21-35 – Lessons from History that Illuminate our Future

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**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.

**22,23** And the overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. And after an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people.

**24** In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty, and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but only for a time.

**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 (175-164 BC). He used flattery to win the support of key figures, even succeeding in securing assistance from Rome!

**22,23** Those who sought to overwhelm Syria were overwhelmed, notably Egypt. “Prince of the covenant” could refer to Ptolemy Epiphanes, more likely to high priest in Jerusalem, Onias III, killed through treachery in Antiochus’s 4<sup>th</sup> year. Antiochus’s sister, Cleopatra, is now Queen Mother in Egypt (since the death of her husband in 181 BC) and friendly relations were maintained between Egypt and Syria while he reiterated his father’s dowry promise of Palestine to Egypt. Five years after establishing himself, Antiochus rescinded his promises, marching through Palestine and reasserting control over it. His empire is much smaller than it was before Rome came into power, yet despite its comparatively smaller size, he did “come up in the world” by a successful strategy involving the use of power blended with well-timed use of deception.

**24** He relied on the surprise attack as a key component of his planning. He actually did what is without precedent: He “raided” his own richer districts and redistributed wealth to the poorer districts (which would be the majority) as a means of building favor with the populace. He also sought to weaken any community where opposition might galvanize. He raided districts where opposition might

gain strength. This strategy was successful for a time, although Antiochus died an untimely death after a reign of only 12 years.

**25** And he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him.

**26, 27** And those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain. As for both kings, their hearts will be intent on evil, and they will speak lies to each other at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still to come at the appointed time.

**28** Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take action and then return to his own land.

**29, 30** At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before. For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened, and will return and become enraged at the holy

**25** One of Cleopatra's sons, Ptolemy Philometor, became king of Egypt (181-145 BC). (This means he was Antiochus's nephew!) After establishing a strong home base, Antiochus prepared to invade Egypt with a large army. Ptolemy fielded an even larger army. The main battle was fought at Pelusium, just east of the Nile delta. Ptolemy was defeated.

**26, 27** Despite having overwhelming force in Ptolemy's favor, treachery from his advisors contributed to his defeat and the loss of many. Then something quite unusual ensued: The captured nephew sat at his conquering uncle's table, and each pretended friendship making much of their blood relationship. All the while, they were maneuvering for an advantage. Neither of their intentions were realized. Antiochus wanted Egypt, Ptolemy wanted to reclaim all of Egypt (he lost half to Ptolemy VII Euergetes who ruled from Alexandria). To the Oriental mind, to speak lies at the table is deception of the lowest kind. They did not realize their goals, although, by the way, God did and on His own time-table!

**28** Antiochus returned to Syria by way of Palestine with much booty as consolation for his frustrated plans. He took it out on the Jews, whom he had come to dislike and who were conveniently located on his route home

**29, 30** A second campaign against Egypt was waged two years later, in 168 BC. This, too, was a time of God's appointment, by the way. The outcome was different: Some success in the former was followed by no success in this campaign. Antiochus never even had a

covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.

**31, 32a** And forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. And by smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant,

**32b, 33** but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder, for many days.

**34, 35** Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. And some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge, and make them pure, until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time” (Dan. 11:21-35).

chance to fight. He was intercepted en route to Egypt by a Roman fleet and emissary, Popilius Laenas, who handed him a letter from the Roman Senate forbidding him to make war against Egypt. Not wanting to risk a war with Rome, he reluctantly complied. He passed through Palestine once more, this time with a grand army capable of allowing him to do as he pleased and full of rage fueled by his foiled plans. He sought to stamp out every practice finding its roots in the Law of Moses, and cultivated relationships with the religious “sell-outs” to aid him in this pursuit.

**31, 32a** He declared Mosaic observances illegal and those who sought to follow them were subject to death. Antiochus wanted to replace worship of God with a decidedly Greek religion, even erecting a statue of Zeus in the Temple precincts. He praised and made attractive promises to those who cooperated with his plan to establish an alternative, “more enlightened,” religion.

**32b, 33** Those who understood who God is had the strength to defy the tide of public opinion. Those with theological and religious understanding became a prime resource for those who did not, but they were subject to reprisal for their efforts.

**34, 35** Their example of stalwart faith prompted others to join them, albeit not all from sincere motives (which is what happened with the Maccabees). The “reign of terror” at the hands of Antiochus did have a positive effect among the people of God. It produced a refined faith which was devoid of compromising influences. This principle (“persecution produces purity”) will continue in operation until the end of this era, an endpoint which will be established according to God’s time-table.