

## The King of the North and the King of the South.

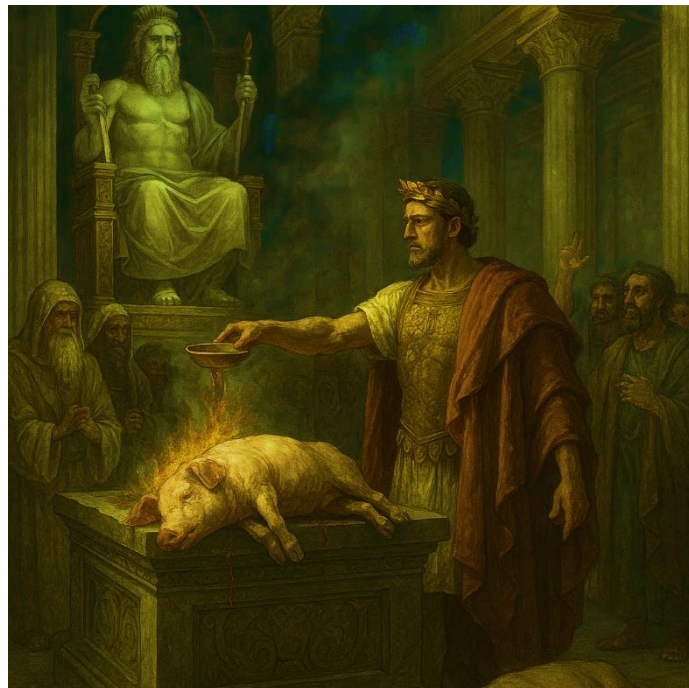
### Questions:

1. When have you been intimidated or frightened by an encounter with another person?
2. Read [Daniel 11:2-31](#). This passage outlines the interactions between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids with incredible detail, hundreds of years before they happened (see over Page). How was this possible?
3. Read [Daniel 10:2-5](#). Daniel had been praying and fasting for weeks - possibly because the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem had ceased due to opposition from the Samaritans. Why is it important that we pray for our political leaders?
4. The Jews welcomed Antiochus III as a liberator from the Ptolemies (11:15-16). What is the danger of looking over the fence at greener pastures?

5. Antiochus IV prevented all worship in Judea (11:31). What subtle forms of persecution can impact your walk with God?

6. If you were suddenly elevated to a social position of great power, what personal pitfalls would you be careful to avoid?

7. [Matthew 24:15-16](#). Why do you think that Jesus referenced Antiochus IV when predicting the forthcoming destruction of the temple by the Romans?



## The Accurate Predictions of **Daniel 11**.

Verse 2: Predicts the power of Xerxes I.

3: Alexander the great.

4: Alexander's Empire stolen by his generals

5: Seleucus I initially served Ptolemy I as his general.

6: Ptolemy II attempted a peace treaty by giving his daughter in marriage to Antiochus II, but she was poisoned.

7: Ptolemy III Conquered Antioch in retaliation for his sister's death.

8: Ptolemy III also looted Syrian idols and treasures.

10: Antiochus III campaigned in Palestine, capturing the Egyptian fortress of Raphia.

11: Ptolemy IV defeats Antiochus III

12: Antiochus suffered 10,000 dead, and 4,000 taken prisoner.

13: 15 Years later Antiochus III rebuilds his forces.

14: Jewish rebels support Antiochus.

15: Antiochus III captured Sidon

16: Antiochus captures Judea.

17: Antiochus III gives his daughter in marriage to Ptolemy V in order to control him, but She supported her husband over her father.

18: Antiochus III helps the Greeks against the Romans, but is defeated.

19: Antiochus III Killed while trying to rob a Persian temple. (Persia was part of his domain).

20: Seleucus IV Appoints a tax collector who fails to rob the Jerusalem temple. He then poisons Seleucus.

21: Antiochus IV, though not the rightful heir, bribes his way to the throne.

22: Ptolemy VI was taken prisoner.

23: Antiochus IV made an agreement with Ptolemy VI

24: Antiochus IV invaded Egypt.

28: Ptolemy VIII Repels Antiochus who takes his anger out on the Jews.

29: Second invasion of Egypt.

30: Rome comes to Egypt's aid and Antiochus again attacks the Jews.

31: Antiochus IV brings an end to Jewish worship.

## The 400 silent years – What Happened Between the Old and New Testaments.

### Introduction

We cannot properly understand the New Testament unless we understand its political and social context, and the events that led up to the life of Jesus. The intertestamental period, which stretches from the end of the prophetic ministry of Malachi (around 420 BCE), to the beginning of the New Testament narrative (around 30 CE), is a fascinating era marked by significant political, social, and religious changes in Jewish life. These changes were influenced by various ruling empires, including the Persians, Greeks, and Romans, and is crucial for understanding the context in which the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and the Jerusalem Sanhedrin emerged.

There have been times in the past, while discussing some of these events, I have been asked “How do you know this?” The answer lies in the fact that the events recorded in the Bible are a small part of a much wider history reported on by historians of the time, or uncovered by archaeologists. Of particular interest here, are the writings of:

- Flavius Josephus who compiled his accounts of Jewish history during the later part of the first century.
- Polybius was a historian who lived in the second century BC. His 40 volume “Histories” detail the events around the Mediterranean between 220 – 146 BC.
- Livy was a first century Historian, who died at 75 years of age when Jesus was about 20. His “Roman History” gives an account of the rise of the Roman Empire, but also of the events in Palestine during these “silent years”.
- Also important are the apocryphal books of the Maccabees which give a detailed account of the Jewish war of independence in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

But to properly understand this period I want to take you back to the time of Daniel. After Judah had been conquered by Babylon, Daniel was taken as a youth into exile. He was trained to become a servant of the king, but refused to compromise his faith to fit in with the culture of his new surroundings. This meant that he became an important example to the Jews of a later period when they came into conflict with Hellenism. Despite persecutions, God used him and he became a prophet to the kings of Babylon. It was in this context that he was given visions that related to the future of Israel. His exploits, along with his visions, were recorded in a dairy which was later edited and became the Book of Daniel. It is likely that this book was written late in the intertestamental period as the editor saw Daniel’s visions becoming a reality in his own time. Consequently, the Book of Daniel interprets Israel’s intertestamental history, and Israel’s intertestamental history interprets the Book of Daniel. More importantly for the Christian, a historical understanding of the Book of Daniel then interprets some of the sayings of Jesus.

It is in this context that I would like to look at some extracts from the prophecies of Daniel, beginning with Daniel’s interpretation of the Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in **Daniel 2:31-35**. “You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. <sup>32</sup>The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup>its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. <sup>34</sup>As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. <sup>35</sup>Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in

pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”

The statue represents four successive empires that would rule much of the known world. These kingdoms are again predicted in another vision in **Daniel 7:1-7**. “In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed (this dream would have been 553BC, about the same time that Cyrus began his revolt against the Medes – we will come to that shortly). Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. <sup>2</sup>Daniel declared, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. <sup>3</sup>And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. <sup>4</sup>The first was like a lion and had eagles’ wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. <sup>5</sup>And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, ‘Arise, devour much flesh.’ <sup>6</sup>After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. <sup>7</sup>After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.”

Then again in **Daniel 8:1-8** “In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first. <sup>2</sup>And I saw in the vision; and when I saw, I was in Susa the citadel, which is in the province of Elam. And I saw in the vision, and I was at the Ulai canal. <sup>3</sup>I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the canal. It had two horns, and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. <sup>4</sup>I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. No beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.

<sup>5</sup>As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground. And the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. <sup>6</sup>He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal, and he ran at him in his powerful wrath. <sup>7</sup>I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns. And the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him. And there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power. <sup>8</sup>Then the goat became exceedingly great, but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.”

We will look at the leopard with four wings and four heads, along with the four conspicuous horns later. In the meantime, let's identify the four empires of Daniel's visions.

	<b>Daniel 2 - Statue</b>	<b>Daniel 7- Four Beasts</b>	<b>Daniel 8</b>
Babylon	Head of gold	Lion with eagle wings which were plucked off.	
Media-Persia	Chest and arms of silver	Lopsided bear	Ram with one horn higher than the other.
Greece (Alexander the Great)	Middle and thighs of bronze – shall rule over all the earth.	Leopard with wings	Goat whose feet never touched the ground.
Rome	Legs of iron, Feet composite clay and iron.	A ten horned beast with iron teeth,	
Kingdom of Heaven.	A small stone that filled the whole earth		

We may note that the images present each succeeding empire as less majestic than its predecessor, but much more powerful. Though the feet of composite iron and clay applies to the fragile nature of the Roman Republic it also indicates the unstable foundation of all human kingdoms. Arising out of the Roman Empire was a kingdom that God will establish that shall never be destroyed (Dan 2:44). Compared to the ephemeral nature of earthly kingdoms, this kingdom is eternal. Though it began as a small stone it filled the whole earth, bringing to an end the glory of the glorious statue that represented human kingdoms. In the parable of the mustard seed Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God as having insignificant beginnings but growing so that its influence spreads throughout the entire world (Mat 13:31-32) and is still growing today.

So let us look at each of these kingdoms in more detail:

### **The Persian Empire**

In 559 BC Cyrus II (559–530 BC) ascended the throne of Anshan. The earlier rulers of Anshan had created a hegemony over the surrounding Persian tribes from the 9th century BC, onwards, but they then came under the control of the Median Empire. Even so Anshan remained strong enough to warrant Cyrus's father Cambyses I, to be granted the right to marry the Median king's daughter. Thus, Cyrus was descended from both the Persian and the Median royal houses. Following his becoming King, Cyrus began to follow an independent path, angering his grandfather, the king of Media. By 553 the rebellion had resulted in open hostilities lasting three years. In 550 Ecbatana fell to Cyrus, aided by dissatisfied Median nobility, who welcomed Cyrus as the rightful Median heir.

Though Media effectively became assimilated within the Persian Empire, both Daniel and the Book of Esther regard them as two empires that coalesced. The book of Esther even pokes fun at the laws of the Medes and the Persians. Hence, the lopsided bear and the two horned Ram of Daniel's visions. The side of the bear that was raised up, and the horn that was higher than the other refers to Persian Dominance. In 539, after other

military conquests that enlarged his empire, Cyrus marched into Babylon virtually unopposed, adding that empire to his own. By this time, he had built the largest empire the world had ever seen. At the end of Cyrus's rule, the Persian Empire stretched from Asia Minor in the west to the Indus River in the east. His successors would continue to enlarge the empire, making it even more powerful.



The Persian Empire. For a high-resolution version of this map go to the [maps](#) page.

For almost seventy years the people of the tribe of Judah had lived in exile under the rule of the Babylonian Empire. But Cyrus's attitude to conquered peoples was quite different to what had gone before. He allowed the kingdoms of his empire to govern themselves and also granted freedom of religion and abolished slavery. One of the first things he did after conquering Babylon was to issue an edict that allowed all the people of his empire to return to their homelands from which they had been deported by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. He also allowed them to take the images of their gods and sacred relics back with them, and to freely worship their own gods.

So now the Jews were free to go home ([Ezra 1](#)) returning in three different waves of migrations. The first return was under the leadership of Sheshbazzar in 538 BC. To begin there was great joy among the returnees as an altar was built and worship begun. Even the foundations for the new temple were laid, but soon opposition from the Samaritans had discouraged them and work on the temple ceased. It is at this time (536 BC) that Daniel had the incredible vision recorded in chapters 10-12. He was then about 84 years old. The vision so clearly outlines the historical events that led up to the birth of Jesus. For example, Daniel 11:2 mentions the kings that would succeed Cyrus.

Xerxes, the fourth king after Cyrus, was the husband of Queen Esther ([Est 2:17](#)) and the king before whom the drama between Mordechi and Harman played out. He became very powerful, even conquering parts of Greece, making it as far south as Corinth, sacking Athens in the process. He was only stopped by a coalition of forces led by Sparta. The

movie “The 400” depicts a rather unflattering caricature of this mighty king as he was confronted by the Spartans.

### **The Persian Kings that Followed Cyrus II.**

559-530 BC	Cyrus II
530-522 BC	Cambyses II
522 BC	Smerdis
522-486	Darius I Hystaspes
486-465	Xerxes I
465-424 BC	Artaxerxes I

**Daniel 11:2** “--- Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them. And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece.”

It was during the reign of Darius, Xerxes predecessor, that the temple was completed under the governorship of Zerubbabel in 517 BC. The second return, led by Ezra, was not until 81 years after the first, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:7). The third return was led by Nehemiah in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1). This, of course, does not rule out many other Jews, individually straggling back home on their own, over this period of time.

Prior to being exiled, both Israel and Judah were large kingdoms led by kings and prophets. But now the Jews were a small group of cities in the region of Judea under the leadership of governors and a small group of priests. The post-exilic prophets were few and did not have the same political authority they previously had, and the role of the prophet slowly disappeared, making Malachi (432–431 BC) the last. This began what is called the 400 silent years, when the Lord no longer spoke to His people through the prophets. The priests, who were concerned with ritual order, sought out a different kind of “wise man” from the prophets. The law was now in the hands of educated men known as scribes.

### **The Greek Empire**

In 513 BC Darius I was the first the Persian king to cross the Hellespont Strait into Europe, invading the divided city-states of Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece. However, he was defeated at the Battle of Marathon, leaving it to his successor, Xerxes to complete the invasion. The Greek city-states would rebel against Persia and war among themselves for the next two centuries until King Philip II (359–336 BC) of Macedonia gradually united the Greek city-states into one nation. With his eyes set on blunting Persia’s teeth he recognised that only a united Greek nation could match their strength. After his death, his son, Alexander III (336–323 BC), took up the fight against the Persians. In 334 BC he crossed the Hellespont Strait into Asia Minor and began his conquest, one that would eventually take him all the way to India before his death. Battle after battle, he swiftly conquered Asia Minor, Syria, and all of Palestine, including Israel. The Egyptians received him as a liberator from the Persian’s, crowning him as Pharaoh. He then began the construction of the city of Alexandria.

At the end of 332 BC, he moved north to Mesopotamia, conquering Babylon and then Susa, the Persian capital. Within three years of crossing into Asia minor he had defeated Artaxerxes V, the last Persian king, and so taking control of what was left of the Persian Empire. His amazing conquests earned him the title of Alexander the Great and the

speed with which he accomplished them was expressed in Daniel's depiction of him as a leopard with wings, and a goat whose feet never touched the ground.

He then continued to conquer region after region as he made his way to India. In 326 BC he crossed the Indus River, continuing his unstoppable conquest. But on the way to the Ganges River the men began to revolt. They were exhausted from years of conquest. Fearing the increasing size of the Indian armies, and their elephants, they wanted to return home to see their wives and children. Alexander agreed, making it back to Babylon, where he died in 323 BC. It is disputed among scholars as to whether it was from a fever or poison. He was only 32 years old, but by then he ruled "over all the earth" (Dan 2:39), from Greece to India, from Egypt to Kyrgyzstan.



The Greek Empire of Alexander III. *For a high-resolution version of this map go to the [maps](#) page.*

## The Roman Empire

About the same time that Nabopolassar was asserting Babylon's independence of Assyria (626 BC), local village people in Italy began migrating to an area that was to become the city of Rome. This rapidly growing city was at first ruled by a series of kings who expanded its territory, with growing military and economic power. In 510, During the Reign of Darius 1 of Persia, Rome became a republic, ruled by a Senate made up of Rome's Aristocracy, but with a complex arrangement of other assemblies and officials creating a series of checks and balances. The executive power was held by two councillors, appointed for one year, each with the power of veto over the other. There was even a plebian council, elected by the plebian classes based on the area in which they lived. The president of this council had the right of veto over any act of any assembly, including the Senate. Thus, Rome's constitutional system was a balance of the monarchic (consul), oligarchic (senate), and democratic (assemblies) elements. And the fear of the gods held it all together.

Rome was highly Hellenized taking and absorbing foreign cultures, ideas and religions. It became the melting pot of the ancient world with the Greek culture being the dominant influence. Its ideal was great statesmanship, rather than the search for good, truth, and beauty, as in Greece. The government, ruled by law, was what was important above all else. None the less, they continued to expand militarily so that by the time that Alexander the Great had ascended to the Macedonian throne (336) Rome had taken full control of the Italian peninsular.

Over the next two centuries Rome expanded westward along the Northern Mediterranean coast all the way to Spain. They fought three major wars with the Carthaginian Empire in Africa, known as the Punic Wars (262-241, 218-201, 149-146 BC). With the defeat of Carthage, they came to control all of the western Mediterranean from Libya to the Atlantic. At the same time, they fought four Macedonian Wars in the east (214-205, 200-196, 171-167, 150-148 BC). At the end of these wars, Rome controlled Macedonia, broke Greece down into their component city-states and destroyed Corinth. By 168 BC Egypt and Syria had become client states, paying taxes to Rome.

A century later, Pompey established himself as a military leader and statesman by sweeping the Mediterranean of pirates. He marched into Syria ending its existence as an independent state. Then, in 63 BC he invaded Jerusalem and appointed a procurator, bringing Judea under Roman control. In the 50's Julius Caesar conquered Gaul (France), giving Rome control over all of Southern Europe.

Despite the complex set of checks and balances designed to prevent one person from increasing in power to the point of creating a monarchy, the Republic needed strong leaders to hold such a large grouping of people together, ending up with powerful generals in various regions, all vying for control over the others. This led to a series of civil wars that tore the Republic apart, eventually leading to the rise of the emperors. In 133 BC there was social upheaval throughout the Republic. Economic stagnation, coupled with the greed and corruption within the ruling aristocracy, resulted in them being unable and unwilling to adapt to the needs of Rome's growing population. In 90 BC the Civil Wars began, giving rise to Daniel's vision of Rome as being unstable, standing on feet of composite iron and clay (Daniel 2:33,41-43). In order to circumvent the Senate and the other checks and balances of the constitution, three Roman generals—Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus—forged a secret alliance, called the First Triumvirate, in which they agreed to help each other maintain a great deal of power and control in the Republic.

Upon Crassus' death the balance was upset, and the senate demanded that Julius Caesar release control of the army having completed the conquest of Gaul. He refused and in 49 BC he crossed the Rubicon River, the legal boundary of Roman Italy. It was forbidden for any commander to bring his army into Italy, and so, civil war ensued between him and Pompey for control of the Republic. With the defeat of Pompey in 48 BC, the war came to an end but only for a short time.

Four years later Julius Caesar proclaimed himself perpetual dictator. In response, a group of senators led by Gaius Cassius and Marcus Brutus assassinated him, fearing that he would bring back the monarchy. Caesar had named his great nephew Octavian as his heir. He and Caesar's chief lieutenant, Marc Antony, formed the Second Triumvirate, gained control of Rome and defeated the conspirators at the battle of Philippi in 42 BC.

Soon conflict broke out between Octavian and Marc Antony, who by then was involved with Cleopatra VII, queen of the Ptolemaic Empire. Octavian's defeat of Marc Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC, led to them both committing suicide. Egypt then became part of the Roman Republic, its territories now extending all the way around the Mediterranean rim and up the Atlantic coast to the North Sea. But note the Parthian Empire. It had grown to become a threat to Rome's eastern border, and will play a part in the events that were to come. But Rome had become the terrifying beast of Daniel 7:7-8. Its ten horns correspond to the ten toes in [Daniel 2:42](#), a reference to the composite nature of the empire that dominated many nations.



Roman Empire at the time of Jesus. *For a high-resolution version of this map go to the [maps](#) page.*

The Roman wars were finally at an end, as was the Republic. Octavian gave power back to the senate and relinquished control of the armies and the Roman provinces. But in reality, he maintained complete legislative power. In 27 BC the senate gave him the titles Augustus ("the illustrious one") and Princeps ("first in order"). Augustus (27 BC – 14 AD) did not see himself as an emperor, but his actions and policies would pave the way for the emperors who would follow him. The contributions of Augustus to the Roman Empire included peace, economic prosperity, improved communications, stable government and a sense of renewal. It was during his reign that Jesus was born in a Judea that was firmly under Roman control, in circumstances accurately predicted, not only by Daniel, but many of the other prophets as well. It is this Jesus who ushered in a kingdom that will become a great mountain that fills the whole earth.

Upon his death Octavian was succeeded by his adopted son Tiberius (14–37 AD) who continued to expand the empire. He came to be remembered as a gloomy and reclusive ruler who never really desired to be emperor.

## The Diadochi

Between the death of Alexander the Great and Pompei's invasion of Jerusalem there were other nations that had an important impact on Judea in the period leading up to the birth of Christ, and this takes us back to **Daniel 8:8-9**. "Then the goat became exceedingly great, but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. <sup>9</sup>Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land."

You will recall that in chapter 7, Alexander was depicted as a leopard with four wings and four heads. Also in Daniel 11:3-4 "Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills. <sup>4</sup>And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these."

Alexander's Empire did not survive him. Dissention and rivalry among his generals saw them fighting, dividing the empire among themselves. Five came out on top, but in the process both, Alexander's brother and his infant son, were murdered. The successful generals became known as the Diadochi, meaning "successors" and the wars were known as the Diadochi wars. Over a period of forty years, with much fighting, assassinations and boundary changes the five kingdoms coalesced into four. They were Macedonia, Pergamon, the Seleucid Empire and the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt; the Seleucids being indisputably the greatest. Alexander, the great horn, was broken and instead there came up four conspicuous horns. His empire was divided toward the four winds, but not to his posterity.

Only two of these Greek kingdoms were of significance to Israel's history. Seleucus took control of central Asia, his territory extending to the Indus River. Then, after the defeat of Antigonos (one of the other Diadochi), he expanded into Syria and what is today Eastern Turkey. He was the little horn who grew exceedingly great toward the South, toward the east and toward the glorious land (Israel). Ptolemy initially had control of Judea, but this territory soon became the contested frontier and the battle ground over which the two empires would fight for control. The Ptolemies and the Seleucids were known in [Daniel 11](#) as the king of the south and the king of the north.

Daniel's vision in this chapter predicts precise events during this period in striking detail, but it is only as we come to grips with these historic details that we can interpret this vision. It is not my intention here to produce a commentary on the chapter, but rather, to indicate how clearly Daniel foresaw these events.

Soon after Seleucus had established himself in Babylon, Antigonos attacked him, causing him to flee to Egypt, where he became Ptolemy's principal general. But after Antigonos was defeated in 312 BC, Seleucus returned to Babylon, re-established his authority, taking control of Syria, Babylon and Media, making him even more powerful than Ptolemy.

*<sup>5</sup>"Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he and shall rule, and his authority shall be a great authority."*



The Greek Empire of the Seleucids. *For a high-resolution version of this map go to the [maps](#) page.*

With constant conflict between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, in 253 BC Ptolemy II attempted a peace treaty by sending his daughter, Bernice, to marry the Seleucid king Antiochus II. Antiochus was already married, so he divorced his wife and disinherited her sons. 7 years later he returned to his original wife who promptly responded by poisoning him, declaring her son as king Seleucus II. She then had Bernice murdered, so cutting off the planned alliance. In the same year Ptolemy II (he who fathered her) also died.

*“After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement. But she shall not retain the strength of her arm, and he and his arm shall not endure, but she shall be given up, and her attendants, he who fathered her, and he who supported her in those times.”*

We need to note that Ptolemy II had a good relationship with the Jews. At the time of Jeremiah, many Israelites had escaped the Babylonian invasion by fleeing to Egypt (Jer 43:5-7). Consequently, by the time of the Ptolemies, there was a large concentration of Jews in Alexandria. Josephus tells us that “the second of the Ptolemies was a king who was extraordinarily diligent in what concerned learning, and the collection of books; that he was also anxious to procure a translation of our law, and of the constitution of our government that it contained, into the Greek tongue.” (Ant. Preface.3). Though, by Jesus’s time, a rather fanciful tradition had developed that the translation was the work of 72 Jews sent from Jerusalem, giving rise to the name “Septuagint”, it is likely that the initial work was of only the Pentateuch, and by Alexandrian Jews. The rest of the Old Testament and the books of the Apocrypha were translated by different people over the next two centuries. There are large differences in style and usage between the Septuagint’s translation of the Torah and its translations of the later books. It is this Greek translation of the Old Testament, initiated by Ptolemy II, that is quoted by the New Testament writers, and the principal translation still used by the Greek Orthodox Church today.

By the time of Ptolemy II's death, Antioch, which had been founded by Seleucus I, had become the Seleucid capital city, with the Seleucids from then on being generally referred to as Syrians. Bernice's brother succeeded to the Egyptian throne as Ptolemy III and in 244 BC he conquered Antioch in retaliation for his sister's murder. After having penetrated deep into Seleucid territory Ptolemy returned to Egypt with the Syrian gods and other items of silver and gold totalling 40,000 talents. He also repatriated Egyptian idols taken by the Persians when they had sacked Egyptian temples. In 241 BC a peace treaty was agreed to between Seleucus II and Ptolemy III. In the meantime, with internal conflict and various other wars in Asia minor, Seleucus gradually lost control of lands east of the Euphrates due to the rebellion of Parthia in north-eastern Iran. This new kingdom gradually took control of all of the Seleucid territory east of Babylon, greatly reducing Seleucid power. The Parthian Empire would later become a threat to the Roman Empire's eastern border, with the rivalry between these two great empires being an important factor in the final demise of the Hasmonaean kingdom. We will come to that later.

*<sup>7</sup>"And from a branch from her roots one shall arise in his place. He shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall deal with them and shall prevail. <sup>8</sup>He shall also carry off to Egypt their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold, and for some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north."*

Seleucus II's two sons succeeded him, with Seleucus III's rule lasting only two years before being assassinated. Antiochus III, then pulled the fragmented empire together, again enlarging its borders, even taking back Parthia and subjecting the king of Afghanistan. He campaigned in Phoenicia and Palestine, reaching the Egyptian fortress in Raphia. Ptolemy IV responded with a great force, defeating Antiochus, who suffered a huge loss of 10,000 dead and 4,000 taken prisoner (Polybius, Histories, 5.86). But over the next 15 years Antiochus rebuilt his forces before again attacking Egypt.

*<sup>9</sup>"Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return to his own land. <sup>10</sup>His sons shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall keep coming and overflow and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress. <sup>11</sup>Then the king of the south, moved with rage, shall come out and fight against the king of the north. And he shall raise a great multitude, but it shall be given into his hand. <sup>12</sup>And when the multitude is taken away, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail. <sup>13</sup>For the king of the north shall again raise a multitude, greater than the first. And after some years he shall come on with a great army and abundant supplies."*

In the meantime, Ptolemy V reign began with considerable turmoil in Egypt. Even in Palestine there were Jews beginning to rebel against high taxes, thinking that they might be better off under Syrian control.

*<sup>14</sup>"In those times many shall rise against the king of the south, and the violent among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfil the vision, but they shall fail."*

Then, in 198 BC in the decisive battle of Panium, near Paneas (Caesarea Philippi in the New Testament) Antiochus III defeated Egypt and seized control of Palestine (Polybius, Histories 16.18; 28.1). As a result of their defeat the Egyptians were forced into an alliance

with Syria. This included an agreement in which Antiochus gave his daughter, Cleopatra, to Ptolemy V in marriage, with the expectation that the marriage would give him greater leverage over Egypt. Unfortunately for him, his daughter sided with her husband, not her father, so that the advantage he hoped to achieve was lost. We should note at this point, that the Jews welcomed Antiochus III as a liberator. This is recoded in a letter that Antiochus sent to Ptolemy:

"The Jews, upon our first entrance on their country, demonstrated their friendship towards us, and when we came to their city, received us in a splendid manner, and came to meet us with their senate (*Gerousia*), and gave abundance of provisions to our soldiers, and to the elephants, and joined with us in ejecting the garrison of the Egyptians that were in the citadel" (Josephus - *Ant* 12.3.3). This is an important early reference to a Jewish ruling council which later became known as the Sanhedrin.

<sup>15</sup>"Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siegeworks and take a well-fortified city. And the forces of the south shall not stand, or even his best troops, for there shall be no strength to stand. <sup>16</sup>But he who comes against him shall do as he wills, and none shall stand before him. And he shall stand in the glorious land, with destruction in his hand. <sup>17</sup>He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them. He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom, but it shall not stand or be to his advantage."

At this time Rome was taking control of Greek city-states and Antiochus III tried to confront the Romans. He had some initial success, with a grouping of Greek towns electing him commander in chief of their league. But then he was soundly defeated. As he retreated, the Romans followed him into Asia Minor and a second battle ensued at Magnesia. This resulted in the Treaty of Apamea (188 BC) in which Antiochus abandoned all the territory in Asia Minor, north and west of the Taurus Mountains. He also had to pay a very large tribute of 1,000 talents a year to Rome (1Macc 8:6-8).

<sup>18</sup>"Afterward he shall turn his face to the coastlands and shall capture many of them, but a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him."

The Kings of the South and the Kings of the North.	
Egypt	Syria
Ptolemy I Soter (323-285)	Seleucus I Nicator (312-281)
Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246)	Antiochus I Soter (281-261)
	Antiochus II Theos (261-246)
Ptolemy III Euergetes I (246-221)	Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226)
Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204)	Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-223)
Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-180)	Antiochus III The Great, (223-187)
Ptolemy VI Philometer (180-145)	Seleucus IV Philopater (187-175)
Ptolemy VIII Euergetes (170-164, 145-123)	Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164)

Antiochus returned home, but was killed by an angry mob as he tried to loot a Persian temple to pay his debt to the Romans. He was succeeded by his son Seleucus IV who appointed a tax collector whose job it was to extract sufficient funds to pay the debt owed to Rome. This tax collector even tried to plunder the temple in Jerusalem, but was warned off by a terrifying dream (2 Mac 3:7-20). He went home and poisoned Seleucus.

*<sup>19</sup>“Then he shall turn his face back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found. <sup>20</sup>Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute for the glory of the kingdom. But within a few days he shall be broken, neither in anger nor in battle.”*

So we come to the key verse of **Daniel 11:21** “In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given. He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.”

Seleucus was succeeded by his brother **Antiochus IV** (175–163 BC). He claimed the throne, even though not the rightful heir, paying large bribes to those who supported him. He then squeezed his regions in order to provide the money he needed to pay the Roman tribute. But it is the way he treated the Jews that gives rise to his description as a contemptible person.

While the “little horn” that grew exceedingly great seems to initially refer to the Seleucid Empire, it is also applied personally to Antiochus IV who thought himself a God. He took the name Epiphanes which means “god manifest”. **Daniel 8** continues: “<sup>10</sup>It (the little horn) grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. <sup>11</sup>It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. <sup>12</sup>And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper. <sup>13</sup>Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, “For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?” <sup>14</sup>And he said to me, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.”

Under the Persians, and then under the Ptolemies, Judea enjoyed a considerable amount of autonomy—as long as they paid their taxes to the local imperial governor. Over time they had become a Temple-state, in which the priesthood controlled the political governing body. The high priest headed this body and was the principal political figure in the land. But the Greek rulers brought Hellenization to the eastern world. The philosophy of Hellenism asserts that the Greek worldview and its culture are superior to all others, and so all others should become Greek in their worldview. It emphasized reason, individualism, competition, and art for the sake of entertainment. Education was based on the instruction of experts in several subjects rather than a lifelong mentorship under one teacher. They developed the theatre, organized competitive sports and produced art that emphasized the



Bust of Antiochus IV at the Altes Museum in Berlin.

accomplishments of man and the human body. Man's ability to reason and accomplish anything he puts his mind to is the core of this culture.

Antiochus IV was particularly determined in this program of Hellenization, but many Jews opposed it because of its disregard for community, its self-glorification of humans, and the paganism and nudity that were often associated with such institutions. Among those who opposed Antiochus's Hellenization program was the high priest, Onias III. In 175 BC, Jason, Onias's brother, gave Antiochus a large bribe with the promise that he would support what Antiochus wanted to achieve. Antiochus agreed and deposed Onias, replacing him with Jason who carried out a program of "such a scheme of Hellenization and the adoption of foreign ways" (2Mac 4:13). Then three years later Menelaus, bribed Antiochus to make him high priest instead of Jason. Ever since David appointed Zadok as High Priest (2 Sam 8:15) it had always been recognised that the role had to be filled by one of his descendants (Ezek 40:46). Menelaus was not a Zadokite, and therefore not qualified for the role. Furthermore, he was even more corrupt than Jason, and when Onias discovered that Menelaus had stolen gold items from the temple, he made a public protest. So Menelaus killed him in 170 BC (2Mac 4:34).

In the same year, Antiochus decided to march his superior army toward Egypt in order to take it for himself. While Ptolemy VI was at battle, his courtiers declared his younger brother Ptolemy VIII to be king. Antiochus pretended to make a treaty with Ptolemy VI to put him back on the throne, setting him up as king in Memphis, but in actuality Ptolemy became the puppet of Antiochus. But Antiochus's control over Ptolemy VI, and Egypt, was lost when Cleopatra II got her brothers Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy VIII to reconcile and become co-regents. With his plans thwarted, Antiochus returned home. As he passed through Judea, he took his anger out on the Jews. He vindictively killed many of them, then robbed the temple (Dan 11:28).

A second campaign against Egypt ended in humiliation for Antiochus, when the Romans came to the Egyptian's defence. The Roman commander, Gaius Popilius Laenas confronted Antiochus outside Alexandria, handing him a letter from the Roman senate demanding that Antiochus leave Egypt or face war with Rome. Laenas drew a circle around Antiochus and told him to decide before stepping out of the circle. Being afraid of the growing Roman might, Antiochus sensibly decided to retire (Daniel 11:29-30). On the way home he found an insurrection underway in Jerusalem (Polybius, Histories 29.27; Livy, Roman History 45).

Jason, the ousted priest, heard rumours that Antiochus had been killed in Egypt. This led him to attack Jerusalem with a thousand men. Though he killed many supporters of the Syrians, he failed to take the city and eventually fled to Ammon. When Antiochus heard of the revolt, he sent his army to crush it, not realizing it was already over. His general Apollonius pretended to come in peace but deceitfully attacked Jerusalem without warning, killing thousands. The city walls were torn down, and a citadel was built. Many pro-Seleucid Jews fought against their own people and served in the citadel.

In order to enforce his Hellenization program, Antiochus forbade all Jewish practices and festivals on pain of death. He stopped the daily offerings in the temple, banned circumcision, and burned copies of the Torah. Altars to his gods were set up throughout the land, and pigs (an unclean animal) were sacrificed on them. On December 16, 168 BC, Antiochus entered the temple sanctuary, set up an idol to Zeus and sacrificed pigs to it, bringing an end of Jewish sacrifice. Hence the imagery of him trampling on the stars, making himself as great as the Prince of the host, whom he blasphemed. He thought that

he was the Lord's equal. With the regular burnt offering taken away, the temple sanctuary was desecrated. This was the transgression that makes desolate ([Daniel 8:13](#)). It is also called "the abomination that causes desolation" in [Dan. 11:31](#) which Jesus referred to in Mat 24:15.