

THE HAPPENING

DANIEL 11:2-28 APRIL 3, 2019

In Romans chapter 3 Paul said, “Let God be true and every man a liar.” The Bible you’re holding is a reliable revelation. It is sure and true and unbreakable. One of the great confirmations of God’s word is to look through history and see how Biblical prophecy has always been 100% accurate. That’s not just some parlor trick meant to impress people, it’s a powerful announcement that what God has said is not just true for *history*, but it is true for you *personally*.

Our text tonight is an amazing verification of the truth of the Bible. The prophecy given here is so detailed and so historically accurate that unbelieving critics must make up arguments to try to convince themselves that Daniel was written centuries after when it claims. Because, after all, how could anyone have known what Daniel wrote here? In reality, this passage proves the reliability of Scripture, the faithfulness of God and the fact that God likes to tell us what is going to come to pass.

You’ve heard from us countless times that over a quarter of the Bible was prophetic in nature when it was written. Sometimes those prophecies are *very* specific and plain. For example, in Isaiah, God identifies Cyrus by name. In Micah we’re told that the Savior would be born in *Bethlehem*. And then you have *other* passages of prophecy that are much *less* direct. They’re difficult. They’re not altogether clear. Why is that? Why didn’t the Lord just give us a very clear list and specific timeline?

I don’t know the mind of God, but there are a couple of principles we find elsewhere in the Bible that can be helpful parts of the answer. First of all, God’s desire is that we *seek* Him. When Jesus taught the people in the Gospels He often used *parables*, so that those who really wanted to know Him would have to draw near and ask and commune and spend time with the Lord.

And, second, it seems that as God accomplishes His will, even in prophecy, there are *some* points of elasticity in how things will come to pass. For example: Jesus famously told the Jews that John the Baptist could have been the one to fulfill the prophecy of the man coming in the spirit and power of Elijah, *if they would have accepted it*. But they didn’t. We think of the Israelites on the edge of the promised land, being told to go in, as part of the fulfillment of prophecy. And yet, they refused and so the timeline was put on hold for 40 years.

As providence unfolds, some things *must* happen at specific moments through specific people. Cyrus. Bethlehem. 42 months. 1,260 days. And other things are accomplished in less specific ways. So, it follows that not all prophecy is going to be a set list of names, dates and places.

But here is a key to keeping a proper perspective on Bible prophecy: It *must* relate to real, actual events that either *have* taken place or *will* yet take place. Our text opens with an angel saying “Now I will tell you the *truth*.” And then goes on to give *specific* details about hundreds of years of world history. And when you go to history, you find that these things *actually* happened the way the Bible said they were going to happen. But that isn’t only true of *Old* Testament prophecies that have already been fulfilled. It must also be true of *all* prophecy.

Why is this important? This matters, because when you get to the book of the Revelation you read in the very first verse that what follows is a message of “things which must shortly take place.” Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse, “When you see these things happening.” Paul and Peter and Jude talked about the coming time of the end. And yet, even within the Church, there are so many who teach that Revelation is just imaginary or impossible to understand, that it doesn’t speak about

future events, just sort of mystical images meant to “comfort” you in your daily life. That’s not how prophecy works! It works like Daniel 11. And Daniel 11 is the prophetic equivalent of Babe Ruth striding up to the plate, pointing to the center field bleachers, then hitting a home run to center on the very next pitch.

Charles Feinberg writes: “*Secular history verifies every statement made in this chapter and confirms every detail of these predictions, which were made long before the events actually occurred.*”¹

So let’s get into it. In the first section, verses 2 through 4, we learn about the next 95 years, or so, of Persian history, starting with Daniel’s day, then moving forward till the empire was toppled.

Daniel 11:2 - 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.

After we read each of these verses we can say, “This all happened.” It’s quite remarkable. We don’t have time to go through each element, but we’ll get to what we can.

So, this happened. 3 more kings came to the throne of Persia and then came Xerxes, who *did* wage fierce campaigns against Greece. His wealth was indeed fabulous. In fact, when Alexander defeated him and plundered the treasure house behind the palace of Xerxes, he took away between 8 and 9 *million* pounds of gold.²

Daniel 11:3-4 - ³ Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. 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.

This all happened. We saw in an earlier vision of the furious goat how Alexander vented his wrath at Xerxes by conquering Persia. But then, Alexander died suddenly. His sons were murdered and his kingdom was split into 4 regions, north, south, east and west.

Verses 5 through 20 are their own section, covering the ongoing wars between 2 of those regions: Syria in the north and Egypt in the south.

Daniel 11:5 - 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.

This happened. Remember, Judea is *always* at the center of prophecy and it was at the *geographical* center of this political tug-of-war, between the northern and southern kingdoms of Syria and Egypt.

Now, as we read these verses, they will constantly refer just to “the king of the north” or “the king of the south.” But these aren’t just 2 individuals, they are *dynasties* that cover over a century of time. In the south you had the Ptolemaic dynasty and in the north you had the Seleucid dynasty. In your own study, it’s helpful to consult a chart or a side-by-side list as you read. You can find them online.

¹ Charles Feinberg Daniel: The Kingdom Of The Lord pg. 158

² <http://www.xenograg.com/280/excerpts/immense-wealth-of-the-persian-kings>

Historically we know that this *first* ruler of the north had, at the start, been subject to Ptolemy in the south, but then he was able to “throw off...Egypt and rule independently,”³ over a large territory.

Daniel 11:6 - 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.

This all happened. The Egyptian princess Berenice was given to the king of Syria in an effort to secure peace between the kingdoms. As part of the agreement, the northern king had to divorce his current wife and put her away, which he did. Her name was Laodice.

Well, shortly after this plan was put in motion, the king of Egypt died. And so, his daughter nor he, retained their power or authority. The king of Syria gave up Berenice and took back Laodice. Unfortunately, Laodice wasn't too happy about how everything had gone down. So she poisoned the king of Syria and had Berenice and her children killed.

Daniel 11:7-8 - 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.

This all happened. Berenice's brother set out to save his sister, but he was too late. Hearing about her murder, he then avenged her by attacking and subduing much of the Syrian empire. The historian Jerome reports that Ptolemy took with him, on his return to Egypt, forty thousand talents of silver, a vast number of precious vessels of gold, and images to the number of two thousand four hundred.⁴

Daniel 11:9-10 - 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.

This all happened. The king of the north died when he fell from his horse,⁵ and then his sons started waging war again against the Egyptian provinces.

Daniel 11:11-13 - 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.

³ Feinberg

⁴ <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bnb/daniel-11.html>

⁵ Feinberg

This all happened. Ptolemy IV came and fought against Antiochus the Great, who had mustered an immense army⁶, but Egypt was victorious over Syria. Rather than take advantage of his victory, Ptolemy, we're told, began to "display pride and self-confidence. He gave himself over to the indulgence of his every desire...abandon[ing himself] to a life of luxury and licentiousness. He began to lose the allegiance of his own subjects...[and eventually] his own people revolted against him."⁷ So, as the text says, despite his victory over tens of thousands, he would not prevail.

In the mean time, the northern empire was rallying once more and in 203 B.C. Antiochus the Great assembled and even *larger* army to fight against Egypt.

Daniel 11:14-16 - 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. ¹⁵So 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. ¹⁶But 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.

This all happened. A coalition of nations came together to support the Syrian kingdom against Egypt. Even some Jews joined him in the fight, just as Daniel wrote. As part of the campaign, the Syrian forces chased the Egyptian general into the city of Sidon and laid siege against it. Ptolemy did send a choice army, led by 3 select generals to rescue their trapped troops, but it was too late. The Egyptian army was forced to surrender.⁸

At this point, Antiochus the Great was totally victorious. History records that no one could stand against him. He turned his attention to the Holy Land and subjected it as well.

Daniel 11:17-19 - 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. ¹⁸After 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. ¹⁹Then he shall turn his face toward the fortress of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

Antiochus wanted to have control over all the Southern Empire, so he made a plan. He would give his daughter, Cleopatra, to the Egyptian prince, thereby securing peace, which he needed because by now he was also at war with the Romans, who had come onto the scene. Unfortunately for him, once married, Cleopatra didn't side with her dad, but with her new husband.

At the same time, as Antiochus the Great was fighting and conquering islands of the Mediterranean sea, the Romans came and defeated him, causing him to turn tail and run home, as we read in verse 19. Once back, he attempted to take treasure from one of their sacred temples, which made the people so angry they murdered the king and his guards.

Daniel 11:20 - 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.

⁶ Gæbelein

⁷ Feinberg

⁸ *ibid.*

This happened. Antiochus the Great's successor imposed a ton of taxes. He "died [not in battle, but] by the hand of his own minister, who poisoned him."⁹

Now, in verses 21 through 28, we have the third section. The vision zooms in on the rise and reign of one particularly wicked man, Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn of Daniel 8.

Daniel 11:21 - 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.

Antiochus Epiphanes was *not* the rightful monarch, but schemed his way in, while the true heir to the empire was captive in Rome. He used flattery and deceit to usurp the throne without any bloodshed. It happened just like Daniel wrote.

Daniel 11:22-24 - 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.

All this happened. Antiochus pretended to be a friend of the young king of Egypt, but while he was glad-handing him, behind his back he was plundering the Egyptian countryside and overtaking fortified positions. Suddenly, the most productive and fertile portions of Egypt were under his control. As Daniel predicted, Antiochus Epiphanes was able to do what none of his forefathers were able to: conquer the kingdom of the south. And then he *did* reward his followers by sharing the spoils he had taken with them. But only for a time. The Romans came along and ordered him to leave Egypt.

Daniel 11:25-27 - 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.

This all happened. You can read about it in history books. In verse 26 it says, specifically, that the king of the south would be overthrown by members of his own court, and that's exactly what happened.

Daniel 11:28 - 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.

Antiochus Epiphanes was on his way back to Syria with the spoils of war, but decided to stop off in Jerusalem. A report had come to him saying that the Jews had heard he had been killed and they were celebrating because of it. In his fury, Antiochus killed 80,000 men, women and children. Took

⁹ Feinberg

40,000 people as slaves and plundered the city.¹⁰ His atrocities are recorded in the book of Maccabees.

We'll learn more about Antiochus Epiphanies next time, but for now we'll have to pause.

All this prophecy, all these details, and all of it *happened*. Not metaphorically. Not imaginarily, but *really*. There is no reason to arbitrarily turn and look at prophecies of *yet* future events, like the Revelation, like the Olivet Discourse, like Ezekiel 38 through 48 and say, "Well *that's* not really going to happen." Let God be true and every man a liar.

But before we close, one small devotional insight. If you read straight through Daniel 11:2-28, a couple of ideas keep popping up. You see again and again people being "stirred up" to be led in these conquests. And you see the unending pattern of death and destruction, and for what? For riches. Wealth, riches, spoil keep getting mentioned. But as men hurry after those things, death and destruction is their reward.

Now, we don't live in a day and age where men get mustered for crusades like we read about here. But the application is still there, and it's simple: What are you stirred up for? It's a phrase that gets used a *lot* in Scripture. And it means to be excited, or to rouse one's self. To get yourself on the move toward something. While we're not being mustered for battles against Egypt, there still are *many* people in this world who stir themselves up to try to go out and get wealth and plunder, like these armies of old. Of course, we're reminded that God has called us to go out under *His* banner. He *stirs us* up to love and good deeds. And the Bible is full of verses like Psalm 57:8, which tells us to stir up praise in our lives. Or Isaiah 64:7, which tells us to stir ourselves up to take hold of the Lord.

Remember: The Book of Daniel, from the beginning, has shown us a contrast between God's way and the world's way. The world's way is about wealth and power and pleasure, but also wickedness and destruction and death. God's way is about life. Daniel 11 is the same. I'm "stirred up" for something. Some pursuit. Some cause. Is it the Lord's? Is He the King leading me to His victories? I'll close with some words of Paul found in Galatians:

Galatians 5:16 & 6:8 - So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves...Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.

¹⁰ Feinberg