

## Unraveling Daniel 11:5-20

Throughout chapter 11:5-20 the expressions “king of the south” and “king of the north” repeatedly occur. It is clear, however, that these terms are being used generically to describe the Ptolemaic king (i.e., “of the south”) or the Seleucid king (i.e., “of the north”) who happens to be in power at any particular time. The specific identity of these kings can be established more or less successfully by a comparison of this chapter with the available extra-biblical records that discuss the history of the intertestamental period. In the following notes the generally accepted identifications are inserted to help make sense of this difficult section.

Dan. 11:5 “Then the king of the South (Ptolemy I Soter, 323–285 B.C.) will grow strong (Ptolemy I was one of Alexander’s most powerful generals, who proclaimed himself king of Egypt in 304 B.C.) along with one of his princes (Seleucus I Nicator, king of North) who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed (Seleucus’ kingdom stretched from Palestine to India, his dynasty lasted until 64 B.C.).”

In the South, Ptolemy I of Egypt died in 285 B.C., and his son, Ptolemy II, assumed his throne. In the North, Seleucus was assassinated in 281 B.C. and his son Antiochus I began ruling. Antiochus I died in 281 B.C. and his son Antiochus II took the throne. Antiochus II of Syria and Ptolemy II of Egypt, were contemporaries. They were also bitter enemies.

Dan. 11:6 “And after some years they (Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Antiochus II Theos) will form an alliance, and the daughter (Bernice) of the king of the South (Ptolemy II) will come to the king of the North (Antiochus II) to carry out a peaceful arrangement (marriage). [In an attempt to bring about peace, they made an alliance in 250 B.C., and Ptolemy II of Egypt gave his daughter Bernice in marriage to Antiochus II]. But she (Bernice) will not retain her position of power, nor will he (Ptolemy II) remain with his power, but she (Bernice) will be given up, along with those who brought her in, and the one who sired her (Ptolemy II), as well as he who supported her in those times.”

When Ptolemy II died, Antiochus II divorced Berenice and remarried his former wife Laodice, whom he had divorced to marry Bernice. Laodice then had Berenice put to death, poisoned her husband, and installed her own son, Seleucus II Callinicus (246–227 B.C.), as the Seleucid king of north, Syria.

Dan. 11:7 “But one of the descendants of her (Bernice’s) line will arise in his (Ptolemy II) place, and he [Berenice’s brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–221 B.C.). will come against their (Seleucus II’s) army and enter the fortress of the king of the North (Seleucus II’s), and he (Ptolemy III) will deal with them (the Syrians) and display great strength.”

Ptolemy III attacked Seleucus II at Antioch in Syria and killed Laodice, took control of a vast territory, and remained in control for the remainder of his reign.

Dan. 11:8 “And also their (Seleucus II) gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he (Ptolemy III) will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years.”

Ptolemy III returned to Egypt from Antioch (Syria), and carried off much booty from his pillaging their temples and treasure houses. Following this victory, Ptolemy III signed a peace treaty with Seleucus II in 240 B.C.

Dan. 11:9 “Then the latter (Seleucus II) will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land.” Seleucus was unsuccessful.

Dan. 11:10 “And his (Seleucus II) sons (Seleucus III and Antiochus III) 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.”

Seleucus III took the throne following his father’s death in 227 B.C., but died a few years later in 223 B.C., and his brother Antiochus III, became king of the North, Syria. Both of these sons, Seleucus III and Antiochus III, attempted to elevate Syria to her former glory. Seleucus invaded Asia Minor and his brother Antiochus III came against Ptolemy IV of Egypt, and although he was not successful in gaining control over Egypt, he did seize control of Palestine/Israel. Antiochus III was called “the Great” because of his military prowess.

Dan. 11:11 “And the king of the South (Ptolemy IV) will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North (Antiochus III). Then the latter (Antiochus III) will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former (Ptolemy IV).”

Dan. 11:12 “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.”

In an attempt to recapture his lost territory to the north, Ptolemy IV (the king of the South) came up against Antiochus III on the southern border of Israel at Raphia in 217 B.C. Ptolemy IV prevailed, and according to Jerome, “Antiochus lost his entire army and was almost captured as he fled into the desert.”

Ptolemy IV’s victory caused him to be prideful and foolish. He did not pursue Antiochus III.

Dan. 11:13 “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.”

Antiochus III made it home to Antioch in Syria, and raised a greater army than his former one. He carried out conquests to the east and the north, and after several years came against Egypt, and the new child king, Ptolemy V. Antiochus III drove the Egyptians back to the south as far Gaza.

Dan. 11:14 “Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people (political zealots in Israel) will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down.”

Antiochus III (Northern Kingdom) was joined by Philip V of Macedonia (Greece) and Israel (zealots) in the attack against Egypt (Ptolemy V).

Dan. 11:15 “Then the king of the North (Antiochus III) will come, cast up a siege mound, and capture a well-fortified city (Sidon); and the forces of the South (Ptolemy V) will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand.”

Antiochus III defeated Sidon in 200 B.C. , which resulted in the surrender of the Egyptian General Scopas, Three other Egyptian commanders attempted to free Scopas from Sidon but were unsuccessful.

Dan. 11:16 “But he (Antiochus III) who comes against him (Ptolemy V) 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.”

Antiochus gained control over all of Palestine, and when he entered Jerusalem he was hailed a hero. This victory solidified Syria's control over Israel.

Dan. 11:17 "And he (Antiochus III) 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 (Ptolemy V) the daughter of women (Cleopatra) to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side."

Rome forced Antiochus III (Syria) to make peace with Ptolemy V, and sealed the deal by giving Ptolemy V his daughter Cleopatra in marriage. Antiochus was hoping that his daughter Cleopatra would remain loyal to him and help promote Syrian interests in Egypt. Cleopatra rejected her father and committed herself to her husband Ptolemy V.

Dan. 11:18 "Then he (Antiochus III) will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander (Rome) will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn."

Antiochus III annexed the Aegean coast lands of Asia Minor, and was unsuccessful in his attempt to conquer Macedonia and Greece. He was humbled and made to withdraw from his campaign by the Roman commander Claudius Scipio.

Dan. 11:19 "So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more."

Antiochus returned home to Antioch in Syria, and died a year later in 187 B.C. He had attempted to reunite Alexander the Great's empire under his own authority, but he failed to recognize the power of the rising Roman Empire. However, history recognized Antiochus III, "the Great" as a brilliant a highly successful military leader.

Dan. 11:20 "Then in his (Antiochus III) place one will arise (Seleucus IV) who will send an oppressor (Heliodorus) through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though neither in anger nor in battle."

Antiochus was followed by his eldest son, Seleucus IV. He leveled heavy taxes against both his people and the Jews in order to satisfy Roman taxes. Heliodorus his tax collector was the oppressor that he sent through Israel, the Jewel of his kingdom, to collect taxes. Heliodorus poisoned him (2 Macc. 3:7).