

Fulfilled prophecy is one of the proofs of the inspiration of the Bible, for only an omniscient God can know future events accurately and direct His servants to write them down. “He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him” (Dan. 2:22, NKJV). It is no surprise, then, that the radical critics have attacked the Book of Daniel, and especially these chapters, because they claim that nobody could write in advance so many accurate details about so many people and events. Their “scientific conclusion” is that the Book of Daniel is a fraud; it was written centuries after these events, and therefore is not a book of prophecy at all. These critics can’t deny the historicity of the events, because the records are in the annals of ancient history for all to read and cannot be denied. Therefore, to maintain their “scientific theories,” they must deny the reality of prophecy. Those of us who believe in a great God have no problem accepting “the word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19–21).

First, we will consider the verses that were prophecy in Daniel’s day but have been fulfilled and are now ancient history. As we do, we will try to glean some practical spiritual lessons to help us in our Christian walk today.

1. Prophecies about Persia (Dan. 11:1–2)

It’s likely that verse 1 should be at the end of the previous chapter since it deals with the holy angels’ conflict with Satan’s angels. The rulers of Persia had no idea that Satan was seeking to control their minds and lead them into making decisions that would hurt the people of God. The Persian rulers were much more considerate of the Jews than were the Babylonian rulers, and Satan didn’t want this to happen. He hates the Jews and is the father of anti-Semitism wherever it is found (Rev. 12). However, Michael and Gabriel won that battle and Darius and Cyrus showed compassion for the Jewish exiles. In fact, it was Cyrus who issued the important edict that permitted the Jews to return to their land and rebuild their temple (Ezra 1:1–4).

The four kings that would rule in the future were Cambyses (529–522), Pseudo-Smerdis (522–521), Darius I Hystapes (521–486), and Xerxes (496–465), the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther.

Cambyses was the son and successor of Cyrus the Great, and perhaps is the Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6. His passionate ambition was to invade Egypt and regain the territory that Nebuchadnezzar had gained but that was later lost. Cambyses manufactured an excuse for the war, saying that he had asked for the hand in marriage of one of the Egyptian princesses but had been rejected by her father. He did conquer Egypt, but when he tried to take Ethiopia and Carthage, he failed miserably and had to retreat. He ruled Egypt with an iron hand and gave every evidence of being insane. He married two of his sisters, murdered his brother and heir Smerdis, and then murdered the sister who protested the murder of the brother. One of the leading Persian priests plotted an insurrection and seized the throne, taking the name of the dead prince. (Historians call him Pseudo-Smerdis.) Cambyses died while marching home to unseat the new king, who reigned for about a year.

But the most important of the four kings, and the wealthiest, was Xerxes I, the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. He ruled an empire that reached from Ethiopia to India and he had a great passion to conquer Greece. In 480 he tried to invade Greece, but his vast fleet was defeated at Salamis and Samos, and his army was defeated at Plataea. All of this occurred between chapters

1 and 2 of the Book of Esther. He came home a bitter and angry man and sought to find relief for his wounded pride by enjoying his harem. It was at this time that Esther entered the picture. Xerxes was assassinated in August 465.

2. Prophecies about Greece (Dan. 11:3–4)

From the previous visions, Daniel already knew the sequence of the great empires.

<i>The image (chap. 2)</i>	<i>Vision (chap. 7)</i>	<i>Vision (chap. 8)</i>
Babylon—head of gold	lion	
medo-Persia—arms and chest of silver	bear	ram
Greece—belly and thigh of bronze	leopard	goat
Rome—legs of iron, feet of clay	terrible beast	

The mighty king of 11:3 is, of course, Alexander the Great, who was determined to punish the Persians for Xerxes' invasion. We have already met Alexander and know about his vast army and his lightning-like conquest of the nations. Indeed, he did what he pleased and nobody could stand in his way. In 332, Alexander defeated the Persians and in 323 he died and his kingdom was divided among four of his generals.

Once again, Alexander's incredible conquests were part of the sovereign plan of God. The spread of the Greek language and Greek culture assisted in the eventual spread of the Gospel and the Greek New Testament. Alexander's goal was not just to conquer territory but to bring people together in a "united empire." His soldiers married women from the conquered nations, and Alexander's empire became a "melting pot" for all peoples. This too assisted in the spread of the Gospel centuries later.

3. The kings of the north and the south (Dan. 11:5–20)

The nations here are Egypt (south) and Syria (north), and the rulers change regularly. The little nation of Israel was caught between these two great powers and was affected by their conflicts. All of these people and events may not be interesting to you, but the prophecies Daniel recorded tally with the record of history, thus proving that God's Word can be trusted. The Ptolemy line provided the rulers in Egypt, and the Seleucid line the rulers in the north (Syria). These paragraphs are merely summary statements, but if you read them in the light of the related verses, you will see how Daniel's prophecies were fulfilled. Along with reading your KJV, you may also want to read these verses in the NASB or the NIV.

V. 5—Ptolemy I Soter and Seleucus I Nicator. Seleucus was the stronger of the two and ruled over a large empire, but it was his alliance with Ptolemy that enabled him to seize the throne of Syria.

V. 6—*Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Antiochus II Theos*. As was often done in the days of monarchies, the rulers used marriage as a means of forming strong political alliances, a policy Solomon had followed (1 Kings 3:1; 11:1ff). However, Ptolemy demanded that Antiochus divorce his wife Laodice in order to marry his daughter Berenice. Ptolemy died after two years, so Seleucus took back his former wife, who then murdered both him and Berenice. It was one marriage where they all didn't live happily ever after. "She will not retain her power, and he and his power will not last" (Dan. 11:6, NIV).

Vv. 7–9—*Ptolemy III Evergetes and Seleucus II Callinicus*. The new king of Egypt was the brother of Berenice, and he was intent on defending his sister's honor and avenging her death. He attacked the northern power, won the victory, and collected a great deal of wealth. Then the two kings ignored each other for some years until Seleucus attacked Egypt in 240, was defeated, and had to return home in shame. He was killed by a fall from his horse and his son Seleucus III Soter took the throne, only to be assassinated four years later. Antiochus III the Great, who ruled from 223 to 187, succeeded him.

Vv. 10–19—*Ptolemy IV Philopater and Antiochus III the Great*. The sons of Seleucus II were Seleucus III, who was a successful general but was killed in battle, and Antiochus III the Great, who carried out the Syrian military program with great skill. He regained lost territory from Egypt, but in 217 the Egyptian army defeated the Syrians. This didn't stop Antiochus, for he took his army east and got as far as India.

In 201, Antiochus mustered another large army, joined forces with Philip V of Macedon, and headed for Egypt (vv. 13–16), where he won a great victory against Ptolemy V Epiphanes. Contrary to God's law, but in fulfillment of the prophecies (vision), some of the Jews in Palestine joined with Antiochus, hoping to break free of Egyptian control; but their revolt was crushed (v. 14). Antiochus not only conquered Egypt and Sidon (v. 15), but also "the glorious land" of Palestine (v. 16).

Once again marriage enters the scene. Antiochus offered to negotiate with the Egyptian leaders and to marry his daughter Cleopatra I to Ptolemy V, who was seven years old at the time! He hoped that his daughter would undermine the Egyptian government from within and use her position to help him take over. However, Cleopatra was loyal to her husband, so the marriage stratagem didn't succeed.

Antiochus decided to attack Greece but was defeated at Thermopylae (191) and Magnesia (189). The "prince on his own behalf" (v. 18) was the Roman consul and general Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus who led the Roman and Greek forces to victory over Antiochus. At an earlier meeting, Antiochus had insulted the Roman general, but the Romans had the last word. The Syrian leader died in 187 and his successor was his son Seleucus IV Philopator, who oppressed the Jewish people by raising taxes so he could pay tribute to Rome. Shortly after he sent his treasurer Heliodorus to plunder the Jewish temple, Seleucus Philopator suddenly died (probably poisoned), thus fulfilling verse 20. This opened the way for the wicked Antiochus Epiphanes to seize the throne.

As you review the history of the relationship between Egypt and Syria, and the family relationships among the Seleucids, you can't help but realize that human nature hasn't changed over these thousands of years. The ancient world had its share of intrigue, political deception, violence, greed, and war. The lust for power and wealth drove men and women to violate human rights and break divine laws, to go to any length to get what they wanted. They slaughtered

thousands of innocent people, plundered the helpless, and even killed their own relatives, just to wear a crown or sit on a throne.

While God is not responsible for the evil that men and women have done in the name of government and religion, He is still the Lord of history and continues to work out His plans for mankind. Studying the evil deeds of past rulers could make us cynical, but we must remember that one day “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14).

3. Prophecies about Antiochus Epiphanes and Syria (Dan. 11:21–35)

We have already met this wicked man (8:9–14) who in his character and activities is a picture of the future Antichrist. He gave himself the name “Epiphanes,” which means “glorious one,” but Gabriel calls him “a vile [contemptible] person.” Antiochus wasn’t the heir to the throne, but he obtained it by guile. The true heir was Demetrius Soter, who was very young, so Antiochus claimed to be his lawful protector and seized the throne.

He was very successful in his military endeavors and knew how to combine deceptive strategy with brute force. In his first campaign against Egypt (11:25–28), he won the battle even though he failed to take all of Egypt. He sat down at the bargaining table with the Egyptian leaders, never intending to keep any agreements. In spite of deception on both sides, the Lord was still in control and was watching the calendar. He has His appointed times and He is always on time.

On his return to Syria in 170, Antiochus turned his attention to Israel and the wealth in the temple (v. 28). He plundered and defiled the temple, abolished the daily sacrifices, killed a great many Jews, and left soldiers behind to keep things in control. Two years later (168) he again invaded Egypt, but this time the Romans (v. 30, “ships of Chittim”) confronted him and told him to stop. He obeyed grudgingly and took out his anger on the Jews, with the help of Jewish traitors who forsook their own covenant to support him. He promised to reward them generously for their help.

On December 14, 168, Antiochus desecrated the temple by erecting an altar to Zeus and by offering a pig as a sacrifice. Gabriel calls this “the abomination that maketh desolate” (v. 31). The future Antichrist will put his own image in the Jewish temple when he breaks his covenant with the Jews in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period, Daniel’s seventieth week (9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14). Antiochus was doing his best not only to exterminate the Jewish people but also to eliminate their religion from the earth. He promised to reward the Jews who followed his orders, and there were those who forsook their holy covenant to obey him. This was a time of testing and refining for the Jewish people, when they had to decide to obey the God of their fathers and possibly be slain, or submit to the pagan Syrian leaders and live as traitors to their faith (Dan. 11:34–35).

According to verses 33–35, there was a small group of faithful Jews who opposed the godlessness of Antiochus and trusted God to enable them to fight back. A Jewish priest named Mattathias, with his five sons, gathered an army and were able to fight back. His son Judas, nicknamed Maccabeus (“the hammerer”), was one of the heroes of this revolt. Many Jews laid down their lives for their city, their temple, and their faith, and finally they won. On December 14, 165, the temple was purified and the altar dedicated. (See 8:9–14, 23–25.) The Jews celebrate this occasion annually as the Feast of Lights (Hanukkah). Their enemy Antiochus Epiphanes died

in Persia in 163. He was judged insane, and it was no wonder people called him “Antiochus Epimanes—Antiochus the madman.”

Gabriel closes this section about Antiochus by reminding Daniel that what he had related to him had implications for Israel in “the time of the end” (11:35). Although he had spoken about leaders who would appear after the fall of Persia, Daniel could see in those events some of the things that would happen to the Jews in the end times. This was especially true of Antiochus Epiphanes, a clear picture of the future Antichrist. Daniel knew that his people would endure great suffering for their faith, that some would apostasize and join the enemy, and that others would trust the Lord and “do exploits” (v. 32). No matter how difficult the times, God has always had His faithful remnant, and He will keep His covenant with His people to the very end.

Having mentioned “the time of the end,” Gabriel will now speak about the future Antichrist and the terrible time of Jacob’s trouble (11:36–12:1).