

The Coming Last King of the Nations

Daniel 11:1-45

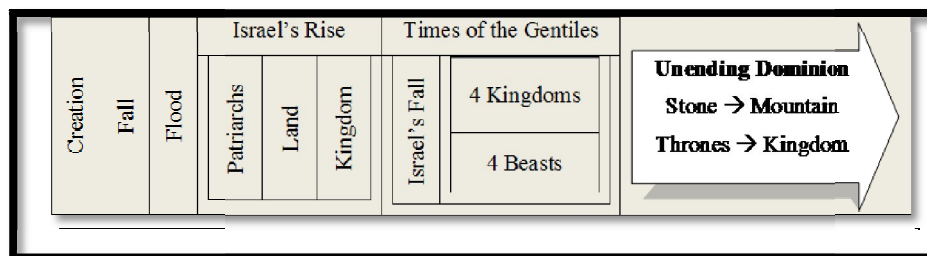
Introduction Hear ye, hear ye... 2 Timothy 3:14-16

¹"And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.

The speaker here is the heavenly messenger introduced in Daniel 10. He has come to inform Daniel and to confirm Darius. His words will flow into the hearts of two very different men to accomplish God's will. In one will arise courage, conviction and commitment to rule his nation well. In the other will arise the Word of God as prophesy in the hard times ahead for God's people down through the ages.

Now, we come to portion of Daniel which has largely been fulfilled. Once again, our context is very important.

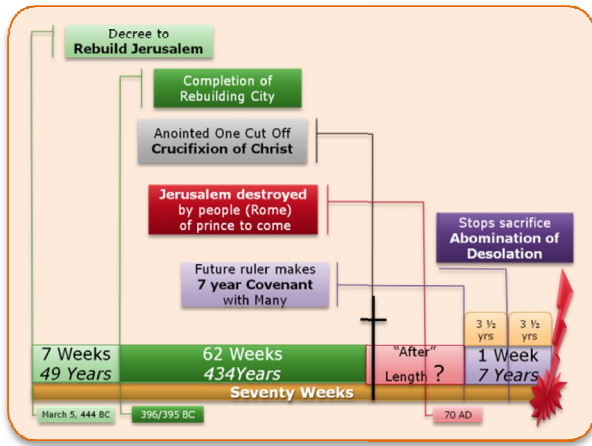
We have been introduced to the *times of the Gentiles*. This is the period of history from the fall of Israel as a nation until the culmination of the kingdom of God at His coming. It is the time when God will begin to expand His kingdom beyond a single people group, the Gentiles.



We have had a vision of a giant image meant to portray *four world kingdoms* that will rule on the earth during the times of the Gentiles. We have had a vision of four great beasts each of whom portray these kingdoms from a different light. In both cases, the kingdoms of this world are destroyed by the intrusion, rise and eventual triumph of God's kingdom.

Our text today will focus on the period when Greece was in a slow fall into collapse as Syria and Egypt fought each other across the land of Israel. But it will also look into the time represented by the feet of iron and clay and the growth of the stone into a mountain to show us things that are yet to come.





We have had a prophecy about seventy weeks. This is meant to convey the *timeline* for the flow of redemptive history during the times of the Gentiles. It sets a general time from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the execution of the Messiah, that is, the crucifixion of the Jesus Christ. It also establishes the fact of the final destruction of the nation of Israel and the events that will just precede the end of time.

Central to understanding prophecy is the idea of three horizons. Our text today will blend the near future rise of a wicked king with the far horizon of the rise of a great and terrible ruler just before the second coming.



The text we are about to take up will speak in great detail of historical events. We know that these verses are remarkably accurate as to what actually happened. This has led many liberal commentators to assert that it cannot possibly be prophecy. They assert that the whole book of Daniel or these chapters had to have been written after all these events had already happened. In other words, the book of Daniel is pretending to write prophecy when in fact it is writing history.

I want to emphatically assert that that view is utterly wrong. This text we are reading was given to Daniel long before the events actually unfolded. This prophecy was designed to confirm the confidence God’s people have in God’s Word, to comfort them in the midst of the dreadful things that would unfold and to instill future hope in God’s ultimate victory. *It still serves those purposes for us today.* The fact that these exact (and maybe to us, boring) details actually happened causes us once again to trust that what God has said is true; what God has promised will be fulfilled; what God has predicted, will come to pass. And since some of this is yet future, we can draw comfort and set our hope on God’s coming kingdom while the world falls apart all around us.

Now, with that in view, let’s take up this text and admire our great God who knows what will take place, not just because He is all-knowing, but also because He is sovereign, all-powerful and causes what He has purposed and planned to take place.

The Larger Stage of History

(v.2-4)

The messenger begins by setting the larger stage of redemptive history. This text refers to two of the kingdoms in the great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

² "And now I will show you the truth. 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. ³ Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills. ⁴ 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.

The Persian Dynasty

(v.2)

Daniel is told that three more kings will arise in Persia. The fourth king will be vastly richer than the others. We know that king used a portion of his riches to fund the rebuilding of the Temple and the initial purchase of the livestock for sacrifices.

The three kings of Persia mentioned here were Cambyses (530–522 BC), Gaumata (522 BC), and Darius I (522–486 BC). Darius I was the father of Xerxes (486–465 B.C.), the fourth king in this verse. We meet Xerxes in the book of Esther where He is also known as Ahasuerus and made Esther wife and queen. The author of Esther relates how He put on a six-month exposition to display his wealth and military power in the third year of his reign. That was followed by a weeklong banquet in the citadel of Susa. He did all this because he was about to march his vast army to the west and to shore up his kingdom. The defeats he suffered in those campaigns eventually broke him and led to the downfall of the Persian dynasty.²⁰

The Grecian Dynasty

(v.3-4)

The Persian kingdom fell to swift and powerful surge led by Alexander the Great. In a relatively brief time, he swept across the Fertile Crescent, conquering and destroying all along the way. At the height of his power with little else to overcome, he succumbed suddenly to disease and drunkenness. After his death, just as predicted here, the Grecian empire was divided among his four generals. Two of these generals, Ptolemy over Egypt and Seleucus over Syria and Mesopotamia became very powerful, founding dynasties that waged a hundred and fifty year war with Israel caught between them.

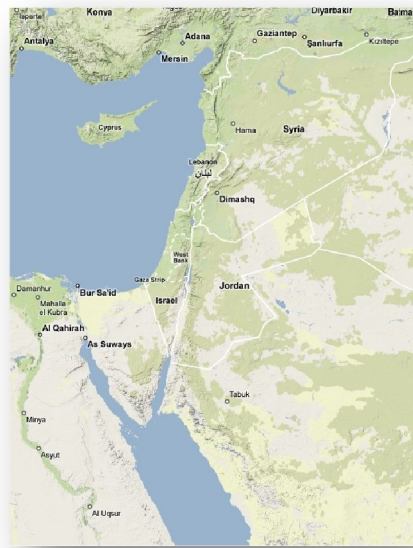
But their descendents soon fell to the might of Rome as she marched across the landscape, conquering and assimilating the Greek culture creating not just a mighty empire, but a whole civilization.

The Neighborhood Wars

(v.5-20)

Let us remind ourselves of a bit of geography. Israel is bordered on the south by Egypt and on the north by Syria. This has been true going back to the Davidic kingdom. The kings of the south here are the Ptolemaic Dynasty in Egypt. The kings of the north are the Seleucid Dynasty in Syria²¹. So, Israel lies between them. Thus, the neighborhood wars.

I am going to provide, paragraph by a paragraph, a running summary on what happened as predicted.



The First Egyptian Surges

(v.5-12)

⁵ "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. ⁶ 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. ⁷ "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. ⁸ 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. ⁹ Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return to his own land. ¹⁰ "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.

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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.

The initial attempt to settle the rivalry between the two rising powers was the marriage between the grandson of Seleucus I, Antiochus II and the daughter of Ptolemy II, Berenice (v.5-6). That peace did not last long. Ptolemy III invaded the north (v.7-8) with some great success. Seleucus II (v.9) launched a counter attack which was carried on by his sons Seleucus III and Antiochus III. They pushed as far south as Raphia in southern Palestine (v.10). Ptolemy IV attacked Raphia, destroying the city and inflicting massive casualties on the Syrians. Due to his own pride and profligate lifestyle, he was not able to consolidate his gains and move north into Syria.

Keep in mind why these prophecies and the history that flowed from them are important to Israel. Many of the most destructive of these battles between these two nations were actually fought in Israel wrecking havoc across Palestine between 304 BC and 30 BC. These are the perilous times referred to in the sixty-two weeks when Jerusalem was rebuilt but did not dwell in safety.

The Great Syrian Victories (v.13-20)

¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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 fulfill the vision, but they shall fail. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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.

After coming to the throne, Antiochus III raised a huge army and conquered (v.13–16). He camped out in Palestine, attacking Egypt from southern bases. He was unsuccessfully resisted by Jewish zealots in his attempts to force the Jews to adopt Greek culture, a process known as Hellenization. These Jewish zealots supported the Syrian forces against Egypt who had dominated them and whom they hated with a fierce hatred.

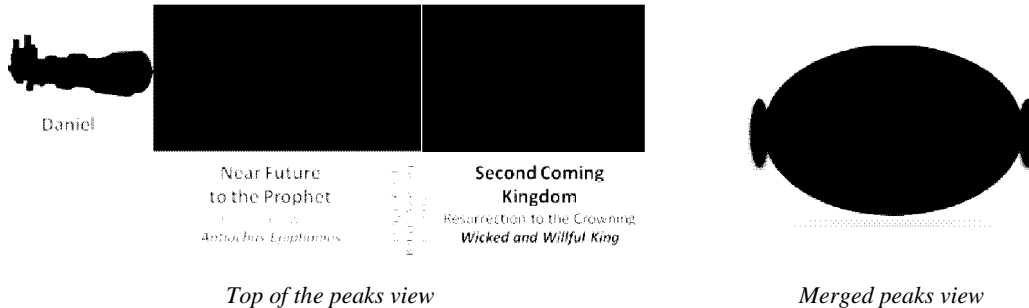
To consolidate his gains and to prepare for further expansion, Antiochus III arranged a political marriage between his daughter Cleopatra and the young Ptolemy V (v.17) which also failed. He still sought to expand his kingdom by attacking Greece to the west. He was soundly defeated by Rome and returned home to die two years later (v.18-19). His son, Seleucus IV became the next king of Syria. He inherited a vast, but bankrupt empire due to the wars. His attempts to raise taxes destroyed the financial structure of the country (v.20) and led to his being poisoned by his treasurer.

Now, this may be a lot of the kind of history that people despise: dates, kings, wars, places, deaths, destruction all to appear on a quiz at the end of the week and on a test at the end of the semester. Except, this prophecy and its ensuing history were lived through by successive generations of Jews. The people who returned to the Palestine, rebuilt the temple and the city, neither experienced nor passed on a legacy of godliness, peace and blessing. They lived under the severe hand of God even as He brought them back into the land. They continued to be helpless, down-trodden and destroyed. But this was all God's ordination. While sinful pagan kings did what they wanted and willed, they were still guided by the design and decree of God working out redemptive history.

The Wicked and Willful King

(v.21-45)

The next two large sections focus on the rise of the evil king we have been introduced to before. In this section, we are in the near horizon where there is a historical fulfillment in the immediate future. This wicked king is known to us as Antiochus Epiphanies. The middle paragraph is a blending of the near and far horizons looking forward to rise of an abominable ruler in the distant future more fully pictured in the last paragraphs.



Version 1 – Near Horizon

(v.21-31)

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. ²² Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, even the prince of the covenant. ²³ And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully, and he shall become strong with a small people. ²⁴ Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province, and he shall do what neither his fathers nor his fathers' fathers have done, scattering among them plunder, spoil, and goods. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time. ²⁵ And he shall stir up his power and his heart against the king of the south with a great army. And the king of the south shall wage war with an exceedingly great and mighty army, but he shall not stand, for plots shall be devised against him. ²⁶ Even those who eat his food shall break him. His army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. ²⁷ And as for the two kings, their hearts shall be bent on doing evil. They shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for the end is yet to be at the time appointed. ²⁸ And he shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. And he shall work his will and return to his own land. ²⁹ "At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before. ³⁰ For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant.

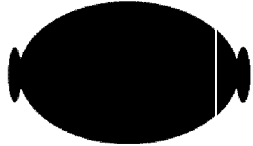
The notorious Antiochus Epiphanes came to power through two coups in 175 BC. His horrific rule, destruction and desecration of the holy land were prophesied earlier in Daniel 8 where he is referred to as the "little horn" and are now chronicled in these and the following verses. Again, these prophecies are remarkable for their accuracy and precision. He came to the throne through intrigue, replacing the rightful heir. After consolidating his power, he moved against his arch-enemy, the Egyptians. He raised enormous money and a vast army. He moved into Israel. While there, he removed the high priest and left his own people in key government positions. He met the Egyptians along the Nile and defeated them with overwhelming force and trickery. Even at the peace table, he

lied, pretending to be the friend of Egypt. He carried enormous wealth back to his homeland.

Two years later, he moved against Egypt again. He was opposed by the Romans who came to Egypt in ships. The Roman Senate had issued an edict forbidding him to attack Egypt. Facing a war with both Egypt and Rome, he had to submit to the Roman demands. Humiliated and angry, he turned back towards home venting his wrath on the helpless Israelites.

Version 1.5 – Merged Horizons

(v.31-35)



It is here that we begin to see the two horizons blend. What is said here of the Antiochus Epiphanes is also true of a terrible monster who will arise towards the end of time.

He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. ³¹ Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. ³² He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. ³³ And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. ³⁴ When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery, ³⁵ and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.

Antiochus Epiphanes vented his fury against the entire Mosaic system (v.28). He desecrated the temple and abolished the daily sacrifice. Antiochus sent his general Apollonius with 22,000 soldiers into Jerusalem pretending to come on a mission of peace. Instead, they attacked Jerusalem on the Sabbath, killing many and taking many women and children as slaves. They plundered and burned the city.

He attempted to exterminate Judaism and to Hellenize the Jews by forbidding the Jews to follow their religious rites, festivals and circumcision. He had copies of the Law be burned. In a final act of desecration, on December 16, 167 BC, he set up an abomination of desolation by converting the altar of burnt offering outside the temple into an altar to Zeus. He then had a pig offered on the altar. The Jews were forced to offer a pig on the 25th of each month to celebrate his birthday. Antiochus promised apostate Jews (v.30) great reward if they would set aside the God of Israel and worship Zeus, the god of Greece. He offered favors to any Jew who turned to help him (v.32). Many Jews were persuaded by his promises and worshiped the false god.

However, a small remnant remained faithful to God, refusing to engage in those abominable practices. Any refusing to submit to Antiochus' false religious system were persecuted and martyred. Verse 33-34 is referring to severe suffering for many and dreadful deaths for others. This speaks of the rise of the Maccabean revolt. In 166, Mattathias, a priest, refused to submit to this false religious system fleeing with his five sons from Jerusalem to the mountains and began the Maccabean revolt. At first they were small in number, but as the revolt became popular,

many joined them, albeit with mixed motives. Their suffering served to refine and purify them but was of short duration.

It had previously been revealed to Daniel that the temple would be desecrated for 1,150 days (8:14). Here Daniel was assured that this persecution would run its course and then be lifted, for its end will still come at the appointed time. So, Antiochus IV died insane in Persia in 163 BC.

Version 2 – Far Horizons

(v.36-45)

Now we come to another of those horizons. What has transpired in the previous verses has been fulfilled. Yet, in them are the shades and shadows of a greater and more wicked king who is to come. 2 Thessalonians 2 speaks of the abomination of desolation as a yet, to Paul and the church of his day, future event. What unfolds next is not recorded in the history of Antiochus Epiphanies nor of anyone else during this time. This leads us then to conclude that this is a far horizon which may yet have not come to pass.

³⁶ "And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done. ³⁷ He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. ³⁸ He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. ³⁹ He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price. ⁴⁰ "At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through. ⁴¹ He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. ⁴² He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. ⁴³ He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train. ⁴⁴ But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. ⁴⁵ And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.

This speaks of the rise of anti-Christ. John tells us that there will be many anti-Christ. Jesus warned us that many will come claiming to be the Christ but are false Christs. The language does include and characterize these as a whole. But, it is clear from the text itself that a particular historical person is in view. While there has been much in recent Christian writing that is speculative and irresponsible in regards to the future superman, the Anti-Christ, we never-the-less have a Biblical reason to expect such a person to come onto the scene as is described here and in other texts.

This wicked and willful king, this anti-Christ, will rise above all earthly authority to simply do whatever he wants. He will exalt himself as a god and claim to be God. He will attempt to subvert and supplant all religious worship and direct it to himself. He will speak the most atrocious lies and blasphemies against the God of heaven and His people. He will hand out favors and awards and kingdoms to those who acknowledge his claims.

In the name of bringing peace, he will love to make war. He will sweep over the whole Middle East and Fertile Crescent bringing all under his control. For seven years, he will locate his center of rule in Jerusalem, bringing great wealth, power and prestige to the city and great persecution, pain and suffering to any who oppose him. He will plunder the hidden and untapped wealth and treasures across the southern Fertile Crescent and north Africa.

But he will hear disturbing news about gathering armies and opposition arising from the north and east. He will gather up his armies to meet this opposition. At that time, he will meet a sudden and dreadful end from which no one has the power or ability to rescue him. We know from other scriptures that this sudden and final destruction is when God Himself descends from heaven, destroys the anti-Christ and his armies and brings about the great and final day of judgment.

Reflect and Respond

From these detailed prophecies and their extraordinary fulfillments, let us strengthen our commitment to the truthfulness and reliability of God's Word. His prophetic Word will unfold as God has intended and planned. What God predicted will come to pass. Yes, the prophecies often are neither "simple" nor easily understood. But, we rest in our sovereign God who is not just guessing at a hoped for future, but is working towards a glorious end He has designed.

Let us then fully expect that God will also keep His promises. I have been encouraged this week in realizing that since what He has foretold will come true, then how much more what He has promised will be given. So, while some of these prophecies foretold dooms, dangers and destruction, they still cause me to look with hope, confidence and assurance to God who has guaranteed what He has promised.

We must never forget that sometimes God delivers us from troubles and sometimes God sustains through troubles. Israel returns to rebuild but does so still under the hard hand of God's displeasure and thus the painful rod of His disciplines. May our steady joy be evident as we live in the midst of hardness until the day the glory comes.

May we hold fast to faith and stand true to God resisting the deceits, allurements, flattery and false promises of those who are anti-Christ. Ever more as we see the day approaching will commitment, constancy and courage be necessary. Much that is false and many who are deceivers will seek to entice you to run after them. May you have the grace of discernment along with all the household of faith to know the deceiver when he arises.

Let us rejoice in judgment. Without judgment meted out on Christ our sins would still be in sin, the penalty, punishment and price still due. Without judgment on Satan and his followers, the spiritual war would never be ended and peace realized. Without judgment on the lost, God's holiness and glory is stained.

May we always look and long for the final day of the glorious triumph of our God.

Notes

²⁰ Rodney Stortz and R. Kent Hughes, *Daniel : The Triumph of God's Kingdom*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 192.

²¹ A chart of the kings of the north and the south, of Syria and Egypt, referred to by Daniel 11. This is from the *Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

(BKC [OT]p. 1367)

The Ptolemies and the Seleucids in Daniel 11:5-35	
Ptolemies (Kings "of the South," Egypt)	Seleucids (Kings "of the North," Syria)
Daniel 11:5 Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 B.C.)*	Daniel 11:5 Seleucus I Nicator (312-281 B.C.)
11:6 Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246)	Antiochus I Soter † (281-262)
11:7-8 Ptolemy III Evergetes (246-221)	11:6 Antiochus II Theos (262-246)
11:11-12, Ptolemy IV Philopator 14-15 (221-204)	11:7-9 Seleucus II Callinicus (246-227)
11:17 Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204-181)	11:10 Seleucus III Soter (227-223)
11:25 Ptolemy VI Philometer (181-145)	11:10-11, Antiochus III the Great 13, 15-19 (223-187)
	11:20 Seleucus IV Philopater (187-176)
	11:21-32 Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163)

*The years designate the rulers' reigns.
†Not referred to in Daniel 11:5-35.