

Soap Opera (God Is In Control) (Omniscience) (God Has A Plan)

Daniel 11

The Basic Bible Truth

God is omniscient. He knows all and plans all and we struggle with that concept. He operates outside of time and can see the past, the present, and the future even more clearly than we see the present. The eleventh chapter of Daniel is a perfect example of this amazing character trait of God. Written many years before it actually happened, the passage matches perfectly with the history recorded by the secular world.

The Object
(None)

The Lesson

The eleventh chapter of Daniel is the most incredibly detailed account of history ever written—before it came to pass! Approximately two hundred fifty years of time are predicted with accuracy so astonishing that critics of the Bible insist that it could never have been written before it happened. But it was, and while much of this chapter has been fulfilled, it retains the fingerprint of the miraculous hand of God in Scripture. We stand in awe of a God who exists outside the boundaries of time and space. He is above such things, and we cannot explain or fully understand His omnipotence.

Daytime dramas, commonly called “Soap Operas” or “Soaps”, are a staple of American television culture. The stories are intertwined, twisted, often morally questionable, but fascinating to many. The problems and difficulties experienced by the characters in the scripts are seemingly endless.

If there is a “Soap Opera” in the Bible, it would have to be the secular history that overlays what Daniel so profoundly predicted in chapter eleven of his book. We will take the risk posed by an almost excessively technical look at this chapter for one reason. God placed it there for us to see and to study. All scripture is profitable the Bible says elsewhere, and this is no exception.

Verse 1. Chapter 11 is a continuation of the previous chapter and the angel, who has been talking to Daniel, reiterates that he has been deeply involved in the politics and national security of the Median Empire, and Darius in particular.

Verse 2. God states that there would be four more kings of Persia before it fell. We know them as Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis, (who was actually an imposter who looked like Cambyses’ son), Darius, and Xerxes, the king found in the story of Esther. Xerxes was a wealthy king who spent his reign attempting to conquer Greece. He successfully burned Athens, which infuriated a young man named Alexander.

Verse 3. The mighty king mentioned is Alexander the Great. He came to power as a very young man. A genius leader, he conquered the world, but did not live to enjoy his spoils, dying in 323 BC. His only living relatives, including his mother, an illegitimate son, and a brother who was mentally retarded, were all murdered within a few short years of his death.

Verse 4. With no surviving relatives to assume power, Alexander's four leading generals took the kingdom and split it four ways. Cassander took Macedonia, Lysimachus got Turkey, Seleucus I (Nicator) inherited Syria and much of the Middle East, and Ptolemy I received Egypt. Only two of these kingdoms were near Israel, and so they will dominate the remaining record. We will find the Seleucids and the Ptolemies fighting endlessly, and the Jews receiving a beating through it all because their country inconveniently was located between these two warring families. The Seleucids are the King of the North in Scripture because of their geographical location relative to Israel, and the Ptolemies, the King of the South, for the same reason.

Verse 5. Ptolemy I was quite powerful, but not as strong as Seleucus I, who at first went down to Egypt and fought with Ptolemy I against a common enemy, Antigonus. Seleucus I went north to begin his own rule after the twenty year war ended.

Verse 6. A period of time passed, during which the generals fought among themselves over trivial matters. And now the "Soap Opera" debuts a special cast of characters and drama. Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) sent his daughter Bernice to be married to Antiochus II (Theos), the Seleucid king, in an attempt to stabilize their political relationship. Antiochus II was already married, but Bernice was far prettier than his wife Laodice, so he divorced Laodice forthwith. Two years later, Ptolemy II died unexpectedly, and feeling that there was no need to remain married to Bernice, Antiochus II put Bernice and her son aside, and remarried Laodice. But Laodice was a woman spurned and was not at all ready to forgive Antiochus II. She secretly poisoned his food and, upon his death, put her own son, Seleucus II (Callinicus), on the throne. She then proceeded to use her influence to have Seleucus II kill Bernice and her son. If you are keeping score, Ptolemy II, Antiochus II, Bernice, and her son are all dead.

Verse 7. Ptolemy III (Euergetes), the brother of Bernice, was incensed at her treatment by the Seleucids, and in rage, came against the Seleucid empire, even taking the capital city and controlling it for a time.

Verse 8. His campaign was so successful that he carried off much treasure to Egypt. The records are specific: 4,000 talents of gold-today's price-\$4 Billion 40,000 talents of silver-today's price-\$1.5 Billion 2,500 idols-\$\$\$\$\$\$ He received the name Euergetes, (the benefactor), for obvious reasons.

Verse 9. Ptolemy III would have crushed the Seleucids, were it not for the fact that he was called back to Egypt to stop a rebellion inside his own kingdom.

Verse 10. The sons of Seleucus II, Seleucus III (Aurelius) and Antiochus III (The Great), took their time to develop a very efficient war machine, and made plans to go to war against Ptolemy IV (Philopater) who was ruling Egypt. He received his name from the fact that he personally killed his own father, mother, and brother to gain control of the kingdom. Seleucus III died during the preparations for war, so only Antiochus III actually marched on Egypt. Initially, he recovered Syria and the other lands that had originally been part of the Seleucid Empire.

Verse 11. Antiochus III approached Egypt with 62,000 footmen, 6,000 men on horses, and, count 'em, 102 elephants! Ptolemy IV was stronger than anticipated, and Antiochus III lost 10,000 troops in battle, with an additional 4,000 men taken captive. Antiochus III was forced to retreat and beg for peace.

Verse 12. Ptolemy IV became proud and arrogant, and it dimmed his understanding and decision making process. He accepted foolish terms for peace, and spent the rest of his life chasing sensual luxury.

Verse 13. Ptolemy V (Epiphanes) succeeded his father at five years of age, and but a handful of years later, had to face Antiochus III as his father had. Antiochus III had spent fourteen years building an army of 300,000 men, and he came to the doorstep of Egypt with this huge force.

Verse 14. Israel had been pummeled as these two armies constantly fought back and forth, trampling the land of Israel with each expedition. It is no wonder that some mercenaries from Israel took sides in an effort to help quash the problem. Many of those paid fighters stood with Antiochus III. In spite of all the planning, the sheer size of the Northern army was no match for Egypt, and they retreated to their homeland.

Verse 15. But Antiochus III had not given up hope. He eventually came again against the cities that had been taken over the years by the Ptolemies. One by one they succumbed to his power, and he regained the cities of Palestine for the Seleucid Empire.

Verse 16. This series of battles was fought on the soil of Israel. The process consumed much of the wealth to be found there, and when it was all over, Ptolemy V was completely defeated, and Israel stripped bare.

Verse 17. Antiochus III intended to conquer all of Egypt, but he had other concerns as well. He wished to save the bulk of his fighting force to go against Rome, so he sent his daughter, Cleopatra I, to Ptolemy V in marriage, along with a huge dowry. He had hoped his daughter would function as a spy and return valuable information to him. This arrangement took place when she was only sixteen years old, and Ptolemy V was ten. He did not count on Cleopatra I falling in love with Ptolemy V, and completely turning her back on her father.

Verse 18. Antiochus III first goal was indeed Rome. He took many of the islands along the Mediterranean coastal area with 300 ships of various sizes. He eventually lost to Rome, and was sentenced to pay war reparations for the damage he had done at a rate of 1,000 talents a year—at today's values, approximately \$1 Billion.

Verse 19. Antiochus III returned home in shame, completely defeated. The public burden placed upon the country because of the war reparations was immense, and after he plundered a temple to get some needed cash, he was assassinated by his own people.

Verse 20. Seleucus IV (Philopater) attempted to pay the taxes due to Rome, but after just a short reign, he was assassinated by someone close to him.

Verse 21. This verse brings us to 175 BC. When Antiochus III was defeated by Rome, they kept his son Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) to guarantee that the payments they exacted from the Seleucids were made in a timely manner. The people of the Northern Kingdom saw Seleucus IV's son Demetrius I (Soter) as the rightful heir to the throne. In the background, Antiochus IV was lurking. A despicable, vile politician, he knew his craft and was able to insert himself into powerful positions.

Verse 22. Antiochus IV used a brilliantly subversive ploy to gain his popularity. He convinced others that his interest in consolidating and defining power was to protect the throne of Demetrius I. Nothing could be further from the truth. He wanted everything for himself.

Verse 23. Antiochus IV made a treaty with Ptolemy VI (Philometer), who was technically his nephew by virtue of his being the son of Cleopatra I, his sister. This "friendly" attitude set Ptolemy VI in a mindset of false safety and security.

Verse 24. Antiochus IV was unlike any of the kings before him. He was brutal, and very, very sly and untrustworthy. He spent the next years gradually taking Egypt and buying friends along the way. As he conquered an area, he would methodically bribe local nobles for their support.

Verse 25. The instability that this action created in Egypt was significant. Antiochus IV soon felt he could mount a full scale attack, and caught Ptolemy VI completely off guard, his own inside supporters had been

purchased by Antiochus IV's treason.

Verse 26. Ptolemy VI was defeated from within his own country.

Verse 27. He was basically a captive of Antiochus IV, but invited him to Memphis for a banquet. Antiochus IV had been telling his huge lie about only being concerned about Ptolemy VI and wanting to help, but Ptolemy VI had ulterior motives as well. He planned to form a coalition with his brother to go against Antiochus IV.

Verse 28. Having taken a tremendous amount of booty from Egypt, Antiochus IV started for home. The Jews in Jerusalem heard a false rumor that Antiochus IV had been killed, and they began celebrating. This action enraged Antiochus IV and he vented his fury on Jerusalem, killing 80,000 people indiscriminately, and desecrated the temple.

Verse 29. In God's timing, he returned once again to Egypt.

Verse 30. Antiochus IV was deep into Egyptian territory on his latest campaign, but was met by Roman Naval Ambassadors and told to leave. Ptolemy VI and his brother Ptolemy VIII (Euergetes) had gone to Rome to beg for relief from Antiochus IV. Adding insult to injury, the ambassador who rebuffed him personally was someone Antiochus IV had once considered a friend, back when he had been held in Rome. He became insanely furious, and vented all of his anger upon Jerusalem and the Jews, who once again just happened to be on his return route.

Verse 31. Antiochus IV built garrisons around the temple in Jerusalem, controlling all access to it. He profaned it in the vilest way, placing an idol of Jupiter on the altar of burnt offering and making the side rooms into a brothel. Antiochus IV had a nickname, Epimanes, which means "mad man." He was very likely the vilest, most profane anti-Semite the world has ever known, far exceeding Hitler and Stalin.

Verses 32-35. History describes valiant Jews who stood up against the overwhelming odds of Antiochus IV. We know them by their nickname, the Maccabees. They were a family of ruler-priests who guided Israel for nearly one hundred thirty years. Much of what they accomplished is recorded in the Apocryphal books, which are historically quite accurate. Their trifling numbers afforded only small but voracious attacks here and there, the eventuality though, was the elimination of Antiochus IV from their land and the restoration of the temple.

The historical portion of this prophecy ends here. The phrase in the last days takes us to a time in the future, a time yet to be.

Daniel was a man loved by God, a man who was faithful to God through many tough and trying times. Verse twenty-three of the eighth chapter contains a phrase worthy of note. Daniel is described as a man highly esteemed. That same word can also be translated beloved. It was not the accomplishments of this man that warranted such a comment, but his willingness to serve and be used by his God in any and all circumstances. Oh that we would live our lives and walk with God in such a way as to elicit that same response of God towards ourselves.