

# From North *and* South to the Beautiful Land



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Daniel 11; Dan. 8:3–8, 20–22; Isa. 46:9, 10; Dan. 8:9, 23; Matt. 27:33–50.*

**Memory Text:** “And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time” (*Daniel 11:35, NKJV*).

As we begin this challenging chapter, a few points should be made at the outset.

First, Daniel 11 stands in parallel overall with the previous prophetic outlines in Daniel. As in chapters 2, 7, 8, and 9, the prophetic message extends from the days of the prophet to the end of time. Second, a succession of world powers emerges, powers that often oppress God's people. Third, each prophetic outline climaxes with a happy ending. In Daniel 2, the stone obliterates the statue; in Daniel 7, the Son of man receives the kingdom; and in Daniel 8 and 9, the heavenly sanctuary is cleansed through the work of the Messiah.

Chapter 11 follows three basic points. First, it begins with the Persian kings and discusses their fates and the time of the end, when the king of the north attacks the holy mountain of God. Second, a succession of battles between the king of the north and that of the south and how they affect God's people is described. Third, it concludes with a happy ending as the king of the North faces his demise by the “glorious holy mountain” (*Dan. 11:45*). Such a positive conclusion signals the end of evil and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 21.

## Prophecies About Persia and Greece

**Read** Daniel 11:1–4. What do we see here that reminds us of some of the previous prophecies we have seen in Daniel?

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Gabriel tells Daniel that three kings will still rise from Persia. They will be followed by the fourth king, who will be the richest one of all and will provoke the Greeks. After Cyrus, three successive kings exert dominion over Persia: Cambyses (530–522 B.C.), the False Smerdis (522 B.C.), and Darius I (522–486 B.C.). The fourth king is Xerxes, mentioned in the book of Esther as Ahasuerus. He is very wealthy (*Esther 1:1–7*) and marshals a vast army to invade Greece, as predicted in the prophecy. But, in spite of his power, he is repelled by a smaller force of valiant Greek soldiers.

It is not difficult to recognize Alexander the Great as the mighty king who arises in Daniel 11:3 and who becomes the absolute ruler of the ancient world. He died at age 32 without leaving an heir to rule the empire. So, the kingdom was divided among his four generals: Seleucus over Syria and Mesopotamia, Ptolemy over Egypt, Lysimachus over Thrace and portions of Asia Minor, and Cassander over Macedonia and Greece.

**Compare** Daniel 11:2–4 with 8:3–8, 20–22. How do these texts together help identify Alexander as the power here?

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What can we learn from this assortment of names, dates, places, and historical events? First, we learn that the prophecy is fulfilled as predicted by the divine messenger. God's Word never fails. Second, God is the Lord of history. We may get the impression that the succession of political powers, leaders, and kingdoms is propelled by the ambition of emperors, dictators, and politicians of all stripes. However, the Bible reveals that God is in ultimate control and will move the wheel of history according to His divine purpose, which ultimately will lead to the eradication of evil and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom.

## Prophecies of Syria and Egypt

**Read** Daniel 11:5–14. What is unfolding here?

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Upon the death of Alexander the Great, the vast Greek Empire was divided among his four generals. Two of them—Seleucus in Syria (North) and Ptolemy in Egypt (South)—managed to establish dynasties that would fight each other for control of the land.

Most Bible students understand the wars between the king of the North and the king of the South prophesied in Daniel 11:5–14 as referring to the many battles involving these two dynasties. According to the prophecy, an attempt would be made to unite these two dynasties by marriage, but that alliance would be short-lived (*Dan. 11:6*). Historical sources inform us that Antiochus II Theos (261–246 B.C.), grandson of Seleucus I, married Berenice, a daughter of the Egyptian king, Ptolemy II Philadelphus. However, that agreement did not last, and the conflict that directly involved the people of God soon resumed. Thus, Daniel 11 deals with some important events that will touch the lives of God's people during the centuries after the prophet Daniel passes from the scene.

Again, we can ask the question of why the Lord reveals ahead of time all these details about wars involving kingdoms fighting each other for supremacy in that part of the world. The reason is simple: *these wars affect God's people*. So, the Lord announces beforehand the many challenges His people will face in the years to come. Also, God is the Lord of history, and as we compare the prophetic record with the historical events, we can again see that the prophetic word is fulfilled as predicted. The God who predicts the vicissitudes of those Hellenistic kingdoms fighting each other is the God who knows the future. He is worthy of our trust and faith. This is a big God, not an idol manufactured by human imagination. He not only directs the course of historical events, but He also can direct our lives if we allow Him to do so.

**Read Isaiah 46:9, 10. How much basic Christian theology is found in these two verses, and what great hope can we take from them? Think about how scary verse 10 would be if God were not kind and loving but vengeful and mean.**

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## Rome and the Prince of the Covenant

**Read** Daniel 11:16–28. Though the text is difficult, what images can you find that appear elsewhere in Daniel?

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A transition in power from the Hellenistic kings to pagan Rome seems to be depicted in Daniel 11:16: “But 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” (NKJV). The Glorious Land is Jerusalem, an area where ancient Israel has existed, and the new power that takes over that area is pagan Rome. The same event also is represented in the horizontal expansion of the little horn, which reaches the Glorious Land (*Dan. 8:9*). So, it seems clear that the power in charge of the world at this point is pagan Rome.

Some additional clues in the biblical text reinforce this perception. For example, the “one who imposes taxes” must refer to Caesar Augustus. It is during his reign that Jesus is born, as Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem for the census (*Dan. 11:20*). Also, according to the prophecy this ruler will be succeeded by a “vile person” (*Dan. 11:21*). As history shows, Augustus was succeeded by Tiberius, an adoptive son of Augustus. Tiberius is known to have been an eccentric and vile person.

Most important, according to the biblical text, it was during the reign of Tiberius that the “prince of the covenant” would be broken (*Dan. 11:22*). This clearly refers to the crucifixion of Christ, also called “Messiah the prince” (*Dan. 9:25*; see also *Matt. 27:33–50*), as He is put to death during the reign of Tiberius. The reference to Jesus here as “the prince of the covenant” is a powerful marker that helps show us the flow of historical events, again giving readers powerful evidence of God’s amazing foreknowledge. God has been right on all that has come before in these prophecies; so, we can surely trust Him on what He says will happen in the future.

**Even amid all political and historical events, Jesus of Nazareth, “the prince of the covenant,” is revealed in the texts. How does this help show us that, despite all the upheaval and political intrigue, Jesus remains central to Scripture?**

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## The Next Power

**Read** Daniel 11:29–39. What is this power that arises after pagan Rome?

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Daniel 11:29–39 refers to a new power system. Although this system stands in continuation with the pagan Roman Empire and inherits some characteristics of its predecessor, at the same time it seems to be different in some aspects. The biblical text says that “it shall not be like the former or the latter” (*Dan. 11:29, NKJV*). As we look further, we find that it acts as a religious power. It aims its attack mainly at God and His people. Let us look at some of the actions perpetrated by this king.

First, he will act “in rage against the holy covenant” (*Dan. 11:30, NKJV*). This must be a reference to God’s covenant of salvation, which this king opposes.

Second, this king will produce forces that will “defile the sanctuary” and take away the “daily sacrifices” (*Dan. 11:31*). We noted in Daniel 8 that the little horn casts down the foundation of God’s “sanctuary” and takes away the “daily sacrifices” (*Dan. 8:11*). This must be understood as a spiritual attack against Christ’s ministration in the heavenly sanctuary.

Third, as a consequence of his attack on the sanctuary, this power places the “abomination of desolation” (*NKJV*) in God’s temple. The parallel expression “transgression of desolation” points to the acts of apostasy and rebellion by the little horn (*Dan. 8:13*).

Fourth, this power persecutes God’s people: “some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end” (*Dan. 11:35, NKJV*). This reminds us of the little horn, which cast down some of the host and some of the stars and trampled them (*Dan. 8:10; compare with Dan. 7:25*).

Fifth, this king will “exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods” (*Dan. 11:36, NKJV*). Unsurprisingly, the little horn also speaks “pompous words” (*Dan. 7:8, NKJV*), even against God (*Dan. 7:25*).

**Other similarities could be mentioned, but, considering what we read in Daniel 7 and 8, who is this power, and why is it so important to us, despite social pressures, to stay firm in our identification of it?**

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## Final Events

**Read** Daniel 11:40–45. What is happening here?

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The following phrases help us understand this text:

*Time of the End:* The expression “time of the end” appears only in Daniel (*Dan. 8:17; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9*). Examination of Daniel’s prophecies indicates that the time of the end extends from the fall of the papacy in 1798 to the resurrection of the dead (*Dan. 12:2*).

*King of the North:* This name first geographically designates the Seleucid dynasty, but then it refers to pagan and finally papal Rome. As such, it does not describe a geographical location but the spiritual enemy of God’s people. In addition, we also should note that the king of the North represents a counterfeit of the true God, who in the Bible is symbolically associated with the North (*Isa. 14:13*).

*King of the South:* This name at first designates the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt, south of the Holy Land. But as the prophecy unfolds, it acquires a theological dimension, and is associated by some scholars with atheism. As Ellen G. White, commenting on the reference to Egypt in Revelation 11:8, says, “This is atheism.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 269.

*The glorious holy mountain:* In Old Testament times this expression referred to Zion, the capital and heart of Israel and geographically located in the Promised Land. After the Cross, God’s people are no longer defined along ethnic and geographical lines. Therefore, the holy mountain must be a symbolic designation of God’s people spread throughout the world.

So, perhaps, we can interpret events like this:

(1) The king of the South attacks the king of the North: the French Revolution attempted to eradicate religion and defeat the papacy but failed. (2) The king of the North attacks and defeats the king of the South: the forces of religion headed by the papacy and its allies will eventually overcome the forces of atheism and will form a coalition with the defeated enemy. (3) Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon will escape: some of those not counted among God’s true people will join the fold in the last hour. (4) The king of the North prepares to attack the holy mountain but comes to his end: the forces of evil are destroyed, and God’s kingdom is established.

**How can we draw comfort from knowing that, in the end, God and His people will be victorious?**

**Further Thought:** It is interesting that at least in reference to Daniel 11:29–39, Martin Luther identified the abomination of desolation in Daniel 11:31 with the papacy and its doctrines and practices. Thus, the correlation of Daniel 11 with Daniel 7 and 8 reinforces the view of Luther and many other Protestant commentators that the institution of the papacy and its teachings constitute the fulfillment of these prophecies in history. In this connection, Ellen G. White says: “No church within the limits of Romish jurisdiction was long left undisturbed in the enjoyment of freedom of conscience. No sooner had the papacy obtained power than she stretched out her arms to crush all that refused to acknowledge her sway, and one after another the churches submitted to her dominion.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 62.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 How can we be sensitive to the feelings of others yet not compromise on what the Bible teaches regarding the role of Rome in the last days?
- 2 Daniel 11:33 reads: “And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering” (NKJV). What does this text say about the fate of some of God’s faithful people? What does the text say, too, about what some of these faithful people are doing before they are martyred? What message is there for us today?
- 3 Daniel 11:36 reads: “Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done” (NKJV). Of whom and what does this remind you? (See Isa. 14:12–17; see also 2 Thess. 2:1–4.)
- 4 Daniel 11:27, 29, and 35 use the phrase *lammo‘ed*, “the appointed time” (NKJV). What does that tell us, again, about God’s control of history?

## ***Part I: Overview***

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**Key Text:** *Daniel 11:35*

**Study Focus:** *Daniel 11; Dan. 8:3–8, 20–22; Isa. 46:9, 10; Dan. 8:9, 23–25; Matt. 27:33–50.*

**Introduction:** Daniel 11 is undoubtedly the most difficult chapter in the book. However, the overall contours of the prophecy stand out clearly. God’s people will be persecuted and attacked, but in the end, God wins. In this study, attention is given to the great war between the powers of the north and south and the picture of the final events that concludes the chapter.

### **Lesson Themes:**

- 1. The Great War.** The “great war” mentioned by the angelic being in Daniel 10:1 (*NIV*) unfolds throughout chapter 11 as a succession of rulers of the north and south who fight against each other until the time of the end.
- 2. The Final Events.** The final section of the chapter culminates in the annihilation of the evil forces as they launch the last attack against Zion, God’s “glorious holy mountain.”

**Life Application:** Behind the many battles between the rulers of the north and south, there is only one great war. It is the great controversy between God and Satan, which also has political and social repercussions on earth. The war is not primarily about territorial conquests or material achievements. It is a battle of cosmic proportions for the hearts and minds of human beings. In this battle, neutrality is impossible; we must choose a side.

## ***Part II: Commentary***

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Let us take a more in-depth look at the lesson’s themes as outlined above:

### **1. The Great War**

The war between the north and south evokes the battles between powers vying for control of the Promised Land. Located between the confluence of the great empires of the time, the land of Israel was often entangled in



the international conflicts of the time. The northern powers (Assyrians, Babylonians, Seleucids) fought against the southern powers (Egyptians, Ptolemies) for the strategic control of Palestine. Obviously, a war for the control of the Holy Land entails suffering for God’s people. As Gabriel makes clear, the prophecy intended to make Daniel “understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come” (*Dan 10:14, NKJV*). So, the long sequence of kingdoms and the wars they fought are relevant inasmuch as they make God’s people undergo tremendous suffering. As the prophetic events unfold, the wars between the north and south culminate in an attack against the people of God on Mount Zion. Actually, this final battle, together with God’s saving intervention in favor of His people, is the apex of the message of Daniel.

As we apply the historicist approach in the interpretation of this chapter, we also must understand that as the prophetic time line passes through Calvary, the prophetic symbols and the events they represent must be interpreted according to the terms of the new covenant. In Christ the covenant with Israel is offered to the Gentiles, and the Promised Land is expanded to encompass the whole world. We must factor in such new realities that the Messiah brought about as we interpret the prophetic events depicted in Daniel 11.

Thus, most historicist interpreters understand the king of the north initially as a reference to the Seleucid power located in Syria and the king of the south as representing the Ptolemies, who were ruling over Egypt. Subsequently, the role of the king of the north is taken over by pagan Rome and later on by papal Rome. In the same vein, later in the prophetic time line the south comes to represent atheism, which was strongly promoted by the powers that unleashed the French Revolution, and which continues to this day.

The exact points in Daniel 11 where a transition of power takes place remain a matter of debate. Therefore, we should focus on those matters that are fixed and clear, because they stand in parallel with the other prophetic outlines of Daniel. The following table shows the correlations of chapter 11 to the other prophecies of Daniel, especially chapter 8.

Power	Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8, 9	Daniel 11
Babylon	Gold	Lion		
Persia	Silver	Bear	Ram	Persia ( <i>Dan. 11:3</i> )
Greece	Bronze	Leopard	Goat	Greece ( <i>Dan. 11:2-4</i> )

<b>Pagan Rome</b>	<b>Iron</b>	<b>Dreadful Beast</b>	<b>Little Horn</b> Death of the Messiah ( <i>nagid</i> , <i>Dan. 9:25, 26</i> )	<b>King of the North</b> Death of the Messiah ( <i>nagid</i> , <i>Dan. 11:22</i> )
<b>Papal Rome</b>	<b>Iron</b>	<b>Little Horn</b> Heavenly Judgment (Ancient of Days / Son of Man, <i>Dan. 7:9–14</i> )	<b>Little Horn</b> The daily is taken away ( <i>tamid</i> , <i>Dan. 8:13</i> ) Cleansing of the Heavenly Sanctuary / “Time of the End” ( <i>‘et qets</i> , <i>Dan. 8:17</i> )	<b>King of the North</b> Death of the Messiah ( <i>nagid</i> , <i>Dan. 11:31</i> ) Time of the End ( <i>‘et qets</i> , <i>Dan. 11:40</i> )
<b>Kingdom of God</b>	<b>Stone</b>	<b>Kingdom</b> given to the saints of the Most High ( <i>Dan. 7:27</i> )	Demise of the <b>Little Horn</b> ( <i>Dan. 8:25</i> )	<b>King of the North</b> defeated at the <b>Glorious Mountain</b> ( <i>Dan. 11:45</i> )

## 2. The Final Events

The final section (*Dan 11:40–45*) shows that the long war between the king of the north and the king of the south reaches its climax in the time of the end. By then, the king of the north overcomes the king of the south and launches the final attack on Mount Zion. Because most of the events herein described lie in the future, their interpretation remains tentative; thus, we should avoid dogmatism. Nevertheless, it is possible to delineate the broad contours of the prophecy by applying two basic principles of interpretation. First, we must understand that the events foretold in the prophecy are portrayed with language and imagery derived from the reality of Old Testament Israel and its institutions. Second, such imagery and language must be interpreted as symbols of the universal ecclesiological realities brought about by Christ.

According to the above principles, the king of the south stands for Egypt, as consistently indicated throughout the prophecy. The king of the north in turn must be identified with Babylon, which appears in the Old Testament as the power from the north (*Jer. 1:14; Jer. 4:5–7; Jer. 6:1; Jer.*

10:22; Jer. 13:20; Jer. 16:15; Jer. 20:4; Jer. 23:8; Jer. 25:9, 12). Founded by Nimrod, Babylon became a center of pagan religion and the archenemy of Jerusalem. In apocalyptic symbolism, Babylon came to symbolize both pagan and papal Rome. Thus, at this point in the prophetic time line, which is the time of the end, Babylon, or the king of the north, symbolizes the papacy and its supporting forces. Egypt, in turn, represents the forces that make opposition to, but eventually are overpowered by, the papacy. Thus, among other possibilities—such as the former Ottoman Empire—Egypt most likely represents atheism and secularism.

As the king of the north invades the “glorious land,” we are told that “Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon” (*Dan. 11:41, NKJV*) escape from his overwhelming power. Because these three nations have long ceased to exist, they must be interpreted as symbols of broader eschatological entities. To better understand the symbolism related to those nations, we should note that the “glorious land” is not a geographic entity in the Middle East, but a symbol of God’s remnant people. In the same vein, “Edom, Moab, and Ammon” are not ethnic entities, but they represent those who will resist the seduction of Babylon and come from different faiths and philosophical traditions to join the remnant in the last days.

The final battle of the long war will take place when the king of the north will “plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain” (*Dan. 11:45, NKJV*). This scenario recalls the foreign kings who, coming from the north, attacked Jerusalem. Sennacherib, for example, set up his military tents at Lachish, which was between the Mediterranean Sea and Jerusalem. These images symbolize the final confrontation between the forces of spiritual Babylon (the papacy and its allies) and God’s people. The “glorious holy mountain” represents God’s people under the lordship of Christ. So, with language evocative of the experience of old Israel and Judah, the prophecy portrays the attack of the end-time Babylon against God’s people. But the enemy will fail; “he shall come to his end, and no one will help him” (*Dan. 11:45, NKJV*).

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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“In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 499, 500.

1. Daniel 11 displays God's detailed knowledge of future history. In what ways can God's foreknowledge strengthen your personal faith?

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2. Daniel 11 (*especially Dan. 11:40–45*) has been the subject of some speculative interpretations. How can the notion of recapitulation in apocalyptic prophecy (see lesson 1) help us to remain within the correct interpretative bounds for understanding this chapter?

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3. Having learned about the great controversy as reflected in the prophecies of Daniel, what should we do with such knowledge (*Dan. 11:33*)?

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