

The Blank Page In Your Bible
Midweek Teaching Series

Part 3 - The Bible Through Daniel's Eyes

Old Testament Prophecy

The prophetic Scriptures in the Old Testament contain the strongest language from God to his people. The prophets spoke the word God gave to them to challenge, rebuke, punish and restore the Children of Israel. They were also words of condemnation against those who rose up against God's people. Most of the prophets spoke into the state of the society of that time and how the sins of the people would be punished. Some prophets were given messages that would foretell the shape of human history and so allow people to know that God was the one who would work all things as Paul rightly affirms in Romans 8:28,

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

As we have seen in parts 1 and 2 of this series, Daniel was given a particular prophetic vision regarding world history following the return of the exiles and the rebuilding and dedication of the walls of Jerusalem. Daniel's prophecy is dated as late as 536 BC which is 90 years before the completion of the walls in Jerusalem. The majority of Daniel's prophecy focuses on the second century BC.

Read: Daniel 11: 1-19.

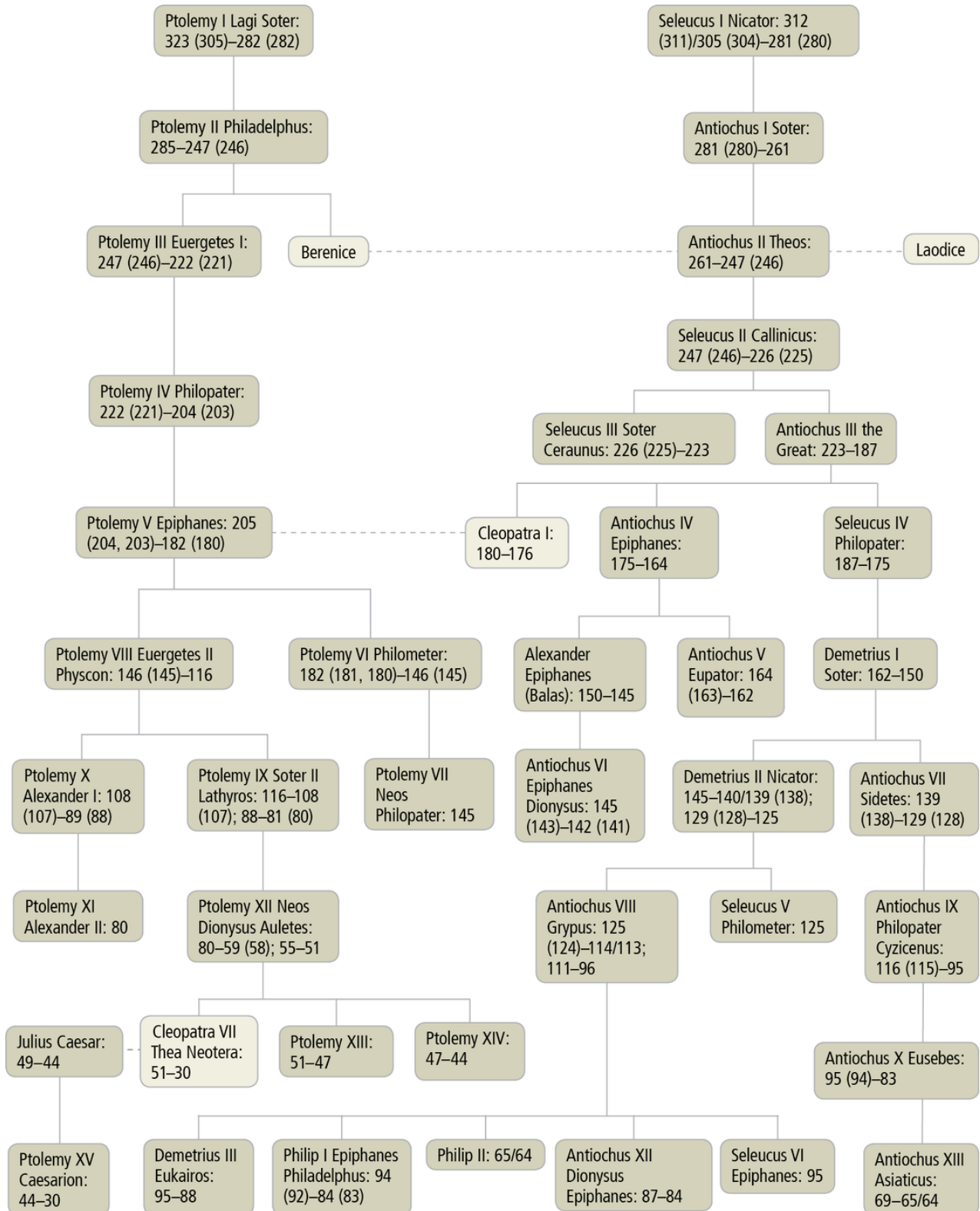
The Empires of Daniel's Vision



It would be so easy to get lost in the detail and complexity of the intertestamental period and so our aim in part 3 is to gain something of an overview. The prophecy of Daniel 11 will allow us to plot the major moves in the history of the second century BC.

What will be helpful to us is to see the lines of succession so that you can easily navigate who was related to who and which empire they came from. The following diagram has been taken from the ESV Study Bible (2001, Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, page 1612).

The Rulers of Syria, Judea and Egypt after Alexander the Great



‘The Kings of the North’ and ‘The Kings of the South’

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.

Daniel 11:6

After the second Syrian war (260-253 BC) Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) arranges for his daughter Berenice to marry Antiochus II (Theos), the King of the Seleucid empire. But before he could he first had to be persuaded to put aside his first wife Laodice and promise that the new line of succession would be traced through Berenice, the Ptolemy.

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. 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.

Daniel 11: 7-8

After the death of Antiochus II (247 BC), his first wife Laodice fights over the succession with Berenice. The forces of Laodice are victorious at Antioch and Berenice and her son are executed. The new king of the Seleucid empire is Seleucus II (Callinicus).

The New King of the North

To avenge the death of his sister, Ptolemy III launches a very successful campaign against Syria known as the Third Syrian War (246-241 BC), also known as the Laodician War. This campaign takes Ptolemy III deep into Mesopotamia.

By 241 BC there was again peace between the north (11:8b) and the south but over the next few decades a dramatic change would take place. The north and the south would again battle for control over what was known as Coele Syria. This portion of land would be taken from the Ptolemies (Kings of the South) and put in the hands of the Seleucids (Kings of the North) around 200 BC.

Antiochus III - The Seleucids Take Control

Ruled: 223 - 187 BC

Gradually the Egyptians (Ptolemy dynasty) were losing control and their grip was to be broken by the powerful Seleucid Antiochus III. It was to take three attempts to gain full control:

- 219 BC - defeated at Raphia
- 202 BC - partially successful
- 200/199 BC - defeats the Ptolemies at Panion near the source of the Jordan (fifth Syrian War).

By 199 BC Coele Syria, including the city of Jerusalem, was definitely lost to the Ptolemies. Daniel states in verses 15-16,

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. 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.

Antiochus III now wanted to consolidate his position and the time tested method of doing this was by marriage. He arranges for his daughter Cleopatra to marry the current Pharaoh and king of Egypt, Ptolemy V, as seen in Daniel 11:17.

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.

Cleopatra is a Seleucid name that becomes an Egyptian name. From this point onward the queens of Egypt will be known as Cleopatra.

In the background at this time we must also take note of the emerging power of Rome. Despite his achievement in taking over Egypt, Antiochus III was actually defeated by the Romans in 198 BC at Magnesia. While Judea was now under Seleucid rule any understanding of the wider context must take the emerging Roman Empire into account. From a Biblical perspective the next major Seleucid ruler was perhaps the most notorious.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes

Ruled: 175 - 164 BC

In Daniel 11: 29-32 we get to see the acts of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before. 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. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. 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. He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.



Antiochus IV called himself Epiphanes which means *the manifest of god*. The abomination to which Daniel refers is most probably the statue of Zeus he had erected in the temple in Jerusalem. As part of his conquest he had dedicated the temple to the Greek deity. Events during the reign of Antiochus were to provoke a vigorous backlash from zealous Jewish monotheists and lead to the development of various religious and political groupings that have become established and powerful during the time of Jesus.

But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.

Daniel 12:13

Questions

1. What does Daniel's vision teach you about God and his plan of salvation?
2. Why are these events important in how they shape the society and culture into which Jesus comes to bring the good news of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15)?
3. How can this be a message of hope to our own hearts and a reason for our hope that we can share with others?