

The Wars of the Seleucids and Ptolemies

📖 Daniel 11:2-20

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Q: You mentioned that Islam will be dealt with by the Ezek 38-39 battle in the first half of the tribulation. I read that and it seems to refer to Armageddon in the second half of the tribulation.

A: That is one view of Ezek 38-39. Keil and Delitzsch held that view and later Colonel Thieme but I don't think it pans out because Armageddon occurs in the second half of the Tribulation when Israel is under persecution whereas Ezek 38-39 describes Israel as living in unwalled cities in peace. The period of Israel's geopolitical peace is the first half of the Tribulation so that's when I place the battle. Some say the battle could happen before the rapture and that Israel is presently living in peace. But the hundreds of miles of security fence around Israel show that to be an illusion. They think this has to be because the aftermath of the battle says that Israel will be burning the weapons for seven years and burying the bones for six months and they can't be doing that during the second half of the tribulation because they'll be at war. I agree with that but I think they will burn the weapons and bury the bones during the early years of the millennium as part of the transitional issues that will have to be dealt with at that time. We already know that transitional issues like the removal of the abomination of desolation will occur 30 days after the second coming and judgment of living Jews and Gentiles will occur during 75 days after the second coming. So to have the bones being removed to cleanse the land for six months and to have free fuel from burning of weapons for seven years doesn't pose a problem to me. They are just additional transitional issues. In any case, my point was that God will resolve the Islamic problem and I think that occurs during the first half of the tribulation with the aftermath being resolved during the initial days of the millennium. So the world will have to continue to suffer under Islam until that time. No nation or alliance of nations is going to deal with them but God will deal with them.

Today we come to Daniel 11 and we want to make five introductory points. First, this is a continuation of Daniel 10 so the year was 536BC. Cyrus had already issued the decree permitting the Jews to return to their land and rebuild the temple. Most did not return because they had established a life in Babylon. Daniel remained in Babylon in order to work inside the administration on behalf of the Jewish people. Those who did return were demonstrating trust in the Lord and they began to rebuild the temple under Zerubbabel.

Second, the vision that caused Daniel so much distress reveals details about the Medo-Persian and Greek empires. These are kingdoms two and three in Daniel's framework of the times of the Gentiles. Kingdom one is Babylon, kingdom two is Medo-Persia, kingdom three is Greece and kingdom four is Rome in two phases. After the four have run their course kingdom five is God's kingdom. Today more details about kingdoms two and three; Medo-Persia and Greece.

Third, these two kingdoms occur, for the most part, during the intertestamental period. The intertestamental period is the space of 400 years between Malachi and Matthew. This is known as the 400 years of silence because there were no living prophets during this time. But the details of the two kingdoms that were fulfilled during that time were prophesied in the Book of Daniel and so while we have no inspired accounts of the fulfillments of these kingdoms they can be read in secular histories such as Herodotus and Jewish histories such as 1 and 2 Maccabees and later Josephus.

Fourth, there are so many details revealed in this vision that the liberal critics of the Bible say this cannot be prophecy; it must be history. They claim it was written by a later Daniel after 165BC. One problem with that is there are many prophecies in the Book of Daniel that occurred after 165BC and so they can't explain that. It's better to just admit that there is a God who stands outside of time and has a plan for time and revealed a part of that plan through Daniel.

Fifth, some conservative scholars think this the most difficult prophecy in the entire Bible because of the number of details. There are over 130 individual prophecies in these chapters that paint a very complex picture. Rather than try to memorize all the details if you can keep in mind the general idea you'll be doing well. In Daniel 10 the vision is of the early phases of Persia and then the "great warfare" during the reign of the Greeks. The Greek empire was established as the world's superpower by Alexander the Great but he died young and his kingdom broke into four branches; north, south, east and west. Israel was sandwiched between the north and the south and so the vision pertains chiefly to them. The northern branch was known as the Seleucids and the southern was known as the Ptolemies. They constantly warred with one another and Israel got caught up in that war because their land is at the center of the world and every major trade route passes through their land. The Ptolemies and Seleucids warred for control over that land and eventually, out of the Seleucid branch came Antiochus Epiphanes IV who is a foreshadowing of the anti-Christ. So we are to see that God controls history and God has given a foreshadowing of the anti-Christ in Antiochus Epiphanes IV.

11:1 remember is a continuation of Daniel 10; so don't put hard and fast lines between Daniel 10 and 11. Daniel 10, 11 and 12 all go together as a single unit. In Daniel 10:21 the angel says to Daniel, **I arose to be an encouragement and protection for him.** He's saying he arose to be an encouragement and protection for Michael. Michael is the guardian angel for Israel and so he has his work cut out for him. These two angels were working together at this time in an angelic combat in the air space over Iran. This is to open your eyes to the complexity of factors involved in history. History is more than the seen humans and nations coming up with

ideas and trying to implement them. History includes the unseen angelic conflict behind nations and all of this is part and parcel of the plan of God which is over and above all. But here we get a little peak into how angels and demons influence political rulers and nations.

This shouldn't be much of a surprise because in Genesis 3 Satan comes in the form of a serpent and deceives Eve into eating the forbidden fruit who in turn gives it to her husband who was king of the earth. And when he ate he gave up his rule over the earth to Satan and ever since Satan has been known as the god of this world and the prince of the power of the air. So it should be no surprise that he continues manipulating and deceiving the nations to build his kingdom as we speak. To do this he has strategically assigned demons to each nation in order to influence them toward evil and to guard them against good angels entering to help believers within those nations influence the nation for good. This order of operations will continue until the Son of Man comes and regains dominion by defeating Satan and the fallen angels and restoring rule to man. The point is that history is much more complex than human ideas and strategies. It involves the unseen angelic and demonic activity going on all the time. This is where I link Ephesians 6 into the picture because it says that believers can enter into the angelic conflict in the heavenly places by putting on the instruments of warfare daily with prayer. Prayer is the means by which we take up our arms and put on our armor so that we can stand against the forces of darkness that persist. Prayer is to take a prominent place in the life of the Christian warrior.

Daniel we saw had been praying for twenty-one days, entering into that heavenly conflict, and at last the angel breaks through and in Daniel 11:2 he begins to explain to him the vision. Now as he explains the vision understand that the angelic conflict behind these kingdoms continues and so all of that is involved here as well; stirring up chaos, wars, political turmoil, etc., all that is heavily involved and yet the humans involved and the decisions they make, though heavily influenced by demons, are still their decisions and they are held responsible. The angel says, **And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece.** Refer to the insert in your bulletin for these identifications. There are to be three more kings arising from the dominant branch of Medo-Persia which was **Persia**. Persia was stronger as represented in Dan 7 by the bear raised up on one side. **Three more kings were going to arise** from that branch. Who are these three kings? Cyrus was already king so he is not one of the **three**. History reports that the first of the three, which you can see on your chart there is Cambyses II, son of Cyrus, who reigned from 530-522BC. He is prophesied to come and rule and he did. Now while he was away from the capital waging war against Egypt, trying to expand his kingdom, a second king came and usurped the throne. He was named Guamata and he posed as Cambyses II brother, Smerdis. So he seized the throne and took it briefly in 522BC. For some reason we don't know Cambyses II committed suicide. Then the third king was Darius son of Hystaspes, different from Darius the Mede we met earlier in the book because this one is Persian. And he easily removed Guamata and took the throne from 521-486BC. So the **three more kings** are Cambyses II,

Guamata and Darius, son of Hystaspes and you have their years on the chart so you can see this prophecy spans 44 years so far.

Then a fourth the angel says, **will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece.** The rich fourth ruler of Persia is Xerxes the Great, also known as Ahaseurus. He's the king in the Book of Esther who replaces Vashti with Esther who wins the beauty contest. Xerxes is a very famous king. You know him from secular history as the one who waged the famous battle at Thermopylae against the renowned Spartans who served under Leonidas of Sparta. He went all the way to Athens, captured the city and burned it, forcing the Greeks to retreat to the Isthmus of Corinth. Xerxes was **arousing his whole empire against Greece.** And of course the Greeks didn't like it too much. They hated the Persians. And it's that hatred that you see in Daniel 11:3 with Alexander the Great, the **mighty king.** This was about 140 years later but the hatred had festered and so when Alexander came against the Persians one of his great motivators was hot anger and that is why in Daniel 8 Alexander is portrayed as rapidly shattering Persia and then trampling it down. The Greeks utterly hated the Persians.

So verse 3, **And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. 4But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.** Alright we already identified this **mighty king** as the first and greatest ruler of the Greeks, Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great had already been predicted in Daniel 7 as the leopard with four wings and in Daniel 8 as the buck-goat with one giant horn between his eyes that utterly defeated Medo-Persia. There's no doubt the **mighty king** is Alexander. It says **he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases.** Nobody was able to defeat Alexander. It's really a marvel of history that a 21-year old king could wage a continual eleven-year campaign and utterly destroy the Persians. He conquered more territory than any king had ever conquered. It stretched from Greece in the north to Egypt in the south and all the way to India in the east.

But, verse 4, **as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.** Alexander died when he was just 32 or 33. He had conquered and conquered and just **as soon as he had** maximized his kingdom he was in Babylon and caught a fever and died. He died so fast he did not have time to confer kingship on any one of **his own descendants.** There were three possible descendants that would have been in line for receiving the kingdom. His half brother, Philip Arrhidaeus but he was murdered in 317BC. His son Alexander but he was murdered in 310BC. And his illegitimate son, Hercules who was murdered in 309BC. So the kingdom was not given to any of **his own descendants** as the text says. Rather there was a twenty-two-year period of struggle

between Alexander's four generals for power. Eventually the kingdom was divided up into four according to **the four points of the compass**.

Now we should already know this from the Daniel 7 where the leopard with four wings had four heads and that also signified the four divisions of Alexander's kingdom. And this is well-known from history. Casander, Lysimachus, Seleucus and Ptolemy were the four generals. So Alexander's dynasty came to a rapid end and sovereignty came to his four generals, none of which was his blood relative and none of which had the kind of authority he had. All these guys wanted to be Alexander but nobody in history could replace Alexander. He was a one-man dynasty, a powerful but short dynasty that was uprooted and **given to others** besides his descendants.

Alright there were four others but verses 5-35 are only interested in two of the four. The kings of the South in Egypt which are the Ptolemies and the kings of the North in Syria who are the Seleucids. All this was fulfilled during the intertestamental times. So don't get lost, I know it's very detailed, but certainly it gives you a precedent for literal interpretation of prophecy. The details are not to be interpreted as allegorical or spiritual for we know they were fulfilled literally and this is how we know we are to interpret prophecy literally, even when symbols are used there is a literal referent under the symbols.

To help you understand I've broken this down into three sections. First, in Daniel 11:5-20, a series of wars are fought between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kings. The Jews get caught up in those wars because they lived right in between them. Second, in Daniel 11:21-35 a Seleucid king arises who is known as the contemptible Antiochus Epiphanes IV. He is really nasty and becomes a foreshadowing of the anti-Christ. Third, Daniel 11:36-45, should be no surprise as it moves ahead all the way to the anti-Christ himself who was foreshadowed by Antiochus. So there are your three divisions and today we'll work on the first division which happens to be the most detailed; a series of battles between the Ptolemaic kings in the South and the Seleucid kings in the North over the course of more than a century that gives rise to Antiochus Epiphanes IV.

Verse 5, starting in 323BC. **Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his dominion will be a great dominion indeed.** On your chart **the king of the South** was Ptolemy I Soter. He was one of Alexander the Great's generals and after twenty-two years of fighting he became king in 304BC over Egypt. That was the period during which he **grew strong**. Then we have one of **his princes**. This is Seleucus I Nicator and during that twenty-two years of struggle he was satrap over Babylon. But Antigonus, one of Alexander's generals came and took over Babylon. Seleucus I fled to Egypt and served as one of the **princes of Ptolemy I**. But as soon as Antigonus was defeated he went back to Babylon where he set out to increase his strength. In fact, the verse says he **will gain ascendancy over him**, that is, over Ptolemy...**and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed**. What it's saying is his kingdom grew much greater than Ptolemy's and in fact Seleucus I added Media and Syria to Babylon. So the

stage is set for Israel to get caught up in the fray because it's located right between Syria to the North of Israel and Egypt to the South of Israel.

Then verse 6 and you see the passing of some time. **After some years they will form an alliance.** These are other kings and this alliance was attempted about 250BC. So what happened was Ptolemy I Soter died in 285BC and his son Ptolemy II Philadelphus came to rule in the south. He's the king of the South who is involved in the **alliance**. Whereas in the North Seleucus I Nicator died. Then his son Antiochus I Soter came to rule but he died too and so the throne came to Antiochus II Theos. He's the king of the North that made an **alliance** with Ptolemy II. Now apparently these two kings hated one another but after several years they formed **an alliance**.

Now, in the ancient world the way you formed these alliances was by marriage. One king would send his daughter to marry another king. That forms a pretty strong alliance because if the king's daughter is mistreated you know what that means. War. And so the leverage in these alliances was a daughter. And the daughters in these arrangements used their position as leverage to get whatever they wanted. And here in verse 6, **the daughter of the king of the south will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement.** How did this work out? Apparently not so good according to the rest of the verse. It's a little vague but obviously the short story is it was a failure. **But she will not retain her power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in and the one who sired her as well as he who supported her in those times.** A lot of people get the raw end of the deal on this one. The long story is that the daughter sent to marry Antiochus II was named Berenice. But before Antiochus could marry her he had to divorce his former wife, Laodice. That didn't go over so well. Laodice turned out to be a woman you didn't cross. The first thing she did was have Berenice murdered. That's what it means where it says **but she will not retain her power**. The second thing she did was poison her ex-husband the king, Antiochus II. That's what it means where it says **nor will he remain with his power**. The third thing she did was make her son king in his place, his name was Seleucus II Callinicus. The fourth thing she did was kill all the attendants of Berenice. That's what it means where it says **she will be given up, along with those who brought her in**. And the fifth thing she did was have **the one who was sired from her**, that is the one infant child of Berenice murdered. And the sixth thing she did was have the one who supported Berenice murdered. He's the one referred to as **he who supported her in those times**. So this Laodice was not a woman you crossed, she sort of cleaned house there and needless to say the peace alliance didn't work. This fueled a disaster in verse 7.

Berenice's brother back in Egypt gets the news and he's angry so he's going to get revenge. Observe, **But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place**, that is, in her father's place, he will become king after Ptolemy II who tried to broker the alliance. So now Berenice's brother Ptolemy III Euergetes comes to the throne of Egypt, and he wants revenge for what this Laodice did to his sister and everyone else. So the verse says **he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength. Also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and**

gold he will take into captivity to Egypt. Ptolemy II defeated the armies of the north, he put Laodice to death and took the spoils of war back to Egypt. He shut that problem down. Now the power pendulum is swinging to the south, the Ptolemies are gaining the upper hand.

The end of verse 8 indicates they had a temporary cease fire, as always in the Middle East, it's only temporary.

And he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years. So a temporary peace. The North couldn't do anything at the time because they had to regain their composure and rebuild the army. But they had plans.

Now I know this is a lot of detail and it's impossible to keep up, it's hard for me to keep up, but all this detail is precisely why the critics say Daniel could never have written this in advance. This Daniel isn't even the Daniel from the 6th century BC but a much later Daniel from the 2nd century BC. A Daniel who is reflecting on history. But all that criticism tells me is that their basic presupposition is that there is no personal God outside of history Who has a plan for history. And I cannot buy that presupposition because if there is no personal God outside of history with a plan for history then all that's left is impersonal chance. And I do not see how impersonal chance can account for the reality we live in. I do not see how it can account for love, for morals, for ethics, for gravity, for anything. It's a faulty presupposition. The Christian presupposition can account for those things because the God of history who is outside of history is the root and ground of all of them. Looked at from His perspective this is not much detail at all. It is just a tiny, tiny glimpse of all that God already knows. Try to get the big picture: God has a plan for history and He knows every tiny detail of that history and the nations as they effect Israel are at the center of that picture.

Now verse 9, Ptolemy III in Egypt has gained power but Seleucus II is bent so verse 9, **Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land.** Seleucus II tried to invade Egypt to regain power but he failed. He goes on to fall off his horse and die. So verse 10, **His sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress.** Now Seleucus II had two sons, the first to rule was Seleucus III Soter. He mobilized his army and went into Asia Minor trying to extend the kingdom but he was conspired against and killed. So his second son, Antiochus III the Great came to rule at the age of just 18 and he mobilized the army, assembled a great force and went after the Ptolemies. Now he was up against the wall, the Ptolemies had extended their borders all the way to Syria now and thus controlled the land of Israel. Antiochus III wants to push them back because he who controlled the land of Israel controlled the trade routes. So he mobilized his army, a great force and he went after them and he kept on going after them and he overwhelmed them all the way to the southern border of Israel. So Antiochus III took charge of the land of Israel. And the Jews are getting caught up in all this, back and forth the power struggle, all these wars, all this intrigue, all this conflict.

Now this obviously angered the Ptolemaic king who was Ptolemy IV at the time. So verse 11 he's going to do something about it. **The king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the**

North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former. So Ptolemy IV goes up to wage war against Antiochus III. They waged war right at the southern border of Israel. But despite Antiochus III's coming to war with a **great multitude...that multitude** was given **into the hand of** Ptolemy IV. So it seems the power is shifting to Ptolemy in the South but verse 12, **When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up,** he gets arrogant, like so many Gentile kings he gets prideful, **and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail.** Pride cometh before the fall and verse 13 recounts the fall. **For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment.** So the **king of the North** is going to retain the upper hand, the pendulum of power stays with the Seleucids.

Now again, I know this is detailed and I don't expect you to remember it all. What I expect is you to be impressed with the God of history; that He would reveal these coming events out of His omniscience. These aren't just vague notions; they involve marriages, intrigues, wars, very detailed stuff. Angels are involved, both good and evil and God is over it all so that even though demons do what they will and influence powerfully the humans involved who make the decisions are still responsible and God. This is a picture of divine sovereignty and creature responsibility in real history.

Now verse 14, and here we see that the Ptolemies had many enemies, not just the Seleucids, they'd formed a lot of enemies over the years. **Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down.** Observe the **violent ones among Daniel's people.** Obviously these are Jews who are sick and tired of this and they want independence, probably from both the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, so they join the Seleucids to fight off the Ptolemies hoping for some reprisals, but **they will fall down.** That plan won't work. See Israel is always trying to team up with some country so they can get security. It has never worked, it will never work, the only one they can team up with and get security is God. And until they team up with Him and stop trying to rely on gimmick nations like the United States, they will not get true and lasting security. God is watching over that nation and He rules them providentially and no one can destroy the Jews but ultimate security and rest on all sides is contingent on their dependence upon Him and not another treaty, not a two-state solution or any other gimmick that manifests unbelief.

Alright verse 15, **Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand.** Look at the detail of this. The king of the North will come up and capture a well-fortified city. We have a good idea this is Sidon up along the coast of Phoenicia, north of modern Beirut in Lebanon. The year this was fulfilled was 203BC. And it's at that point that you see Antiochus is beginning to expand his territory. He has dreams of becoming the next Alexander the Great.

Verse 16, **But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand. The one coming** is Antiochus and he went against several Egyptian generals, most notably Scopas, but three others and none of them could do anything to stop Antiochus. At this time, he took his stand in **the Beautiful Land**, which is the land of Israel. He took firm control of Israel and from this time on the land of Israel remained under Seleucid control and authority.

Verse 17, having taken control of the land of Israel he now tries to broker a peace deal with Egypt so that he can control it too and keep his southern border peaceful so he can turn his attention to Rome. The king at the time was a new Egyptian king, a young boy of just ten named Ptolemy V Epiphanes. Verse 17 says, **He will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it.** In other words, here we have another attempt at a marriage alliance that goes south. Antiochus had two reasons for this. First, to have peace on the southern border so he could turn his attention to conquering Asia Minor and Greece and in doing so hopefully have Egypt's favor. Second, to try to get his hand into the Ptolemy family with his daughter and eventually take over Egypt himself. The daughter at the center of this plan was Cleopatra but the verse says, **she will not take a stand for him or be on his side.** In other words, she would not remain loyal to her father and his plan but became a loyal wife to her Egyptian husband. So the peace alliance was unsuccessful and this hindered Antiochus III plans.

Nevertheless, verse 18, **Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn.** When Antiochus the Great turned his attention to Asia Minor in 197BC and Greece in 192BC he did not succeed because a commander by the name of Cornelius Scipio was dispatched from Rome to stop him. And stop him he did. Antiochus returned in 188BC. Verse 19 records his death in 187BC. **So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more.** Antiochus the Great was a great conquering ruler, the greatest since Alexander the Great, but his dream of recapturing Alexander's empire was never realized.

So verse 20, he has two sons that come to rule, the first of which is Seleucus IV Philopater. He's mentioned in verse 20, **Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle.** What happened was Seleucus IV owed a lot of money for his father's expensive wars. So he sent out his treasurer Heliodorus to tax people heavily, in particular mention is made of the Jewel of his kingdom which refers to the Temple in Jerusalem. So Heliodorus went to take the riches of the Temple treasury. It was not long after that he was killed, quite mysteriously. It appears that his treasurer Heliodorus aspired to the throne and poisoned him. Actually this man

was poisoned by his treasurer. He was an oppressor, heavily taxing the people to pay Rome but he didn't last long, he died in 176BC.

Alright, so vv 5-20 the big idea is wars, wars, and more wars between the Ptolemies and Seleucids; the Jews getting caught up in the middle of these wars. For over 100 years the Jews had to suffer under this situation.

In verse 21 we come to the second son of Antiochus the Great, Antiochus Epiphanes IV and he will be the subject of next weeks' lesson. He is the most despicable person up to this time in history and the foreshadowing of the anti-Christ.

But this week what can we learn? First, that Israel would remain under divine discipline for an extended period of time. Israel's exile would span for centuries and would be characterized by Gentile powers fighting for control of Israel. War is one of the chief characteristics in the times of the Gentiles and the Jews get in the middle of it disproportionately. Second, I think we need to learn to interpret prophecy literally. These many, many prophetic details were all fulfilled quite literally. Therefore, all future prophecies should be interpreted exactly the same way. There is no biblical justification for interpreting prophecies allegorically or spiritually or tropologically or according to any other method. The way to interpret prophecy is literally, even when symbols are used because we find that the symbols have literal referents. Third, God is sovereign over all of history, not just broadly but specifically, and yet the angels and men involved in these decisions are responsible for their choices. God is sovereign over people and alliances and marriages and intrigues and all these people do exactly what the text says they will do and yet at the same time they do exactly what they wanted to do. This shows you the proper understanding of God's sovereignty and creature responsibility. God sovereignly planned for these creatures to do all that they did and yet each of them did exactly as they wanted to do. Next time the despicable Antiochus Epiphanes IV and what he will do.