

**Daniel**  
**Chapter 11:21-35**  
**(Part 3)**  
**Antiochus Epiphanes**

**Introduction**

Upon the utter defeat of Antiochus The Great by the Romans, near Ephesus in 190 B.C., the Romans deemed it necessary to give the Syrian King a strong incentive to never again invade territory held by Rome. As we have previously discussed, the Romans imposed heavy war reparation taxes upon Antiochus, which left his kingdom in serious financial distress. As if this weren't enough, they decided to take Antiochus' youngest son, Mithradates, along with other captives to Rome in order to insure the Syrian King's total compliance. Mithradates, who was only 25 years old at the time would be held as a Roman captive for approximately fourteen years. This is a possible explanation for the deep seated anger and cruelty that were to become ingrained into the character of the young Syrian prince, for he would one day return to his homeland and take out his uncontrollable rage on any who dared to defy his will. In short, he became a monster, a psychopathic tyrant with all of his fathers ambition for power, coupled with a sadistic compulsion to revel in the suffering of his enemies.

After the death of Antiochus the Great in 187 B.C., his son Seleucus IV Philopater (known as the "Tax Collector" due to his father's war debts) became Syria's King. Seleucus was extremely unpopular, as most leaders are when they are forced to levy heavier taxes. In hopes of strengthening his grip on an ever restless Syrian populace, Seleucus arranged a prisoner exchange with Rome offering his own son Demetrius, in the place of Mithradates. He was confident that with his younger brother by his side, he would be able to quash any rebellious uprisings that might occur within the unstable kingdom. While Mithradates was in route back home to Syria, news reached him of his brothers assassination at the hands of his own prime minister Heliodorus, who had assumed the throne of Syria. Mithradates decided to take whatever action was necessary to take back the throne of Syria in the name of his father. All he would need was a powerful ally and a kings title. He quickly entered into a treaty with the king of Pergamum, who agreed to give him the troops and the moneys needed to unseat Heliodorus. The throne was quickly secured and Heliodorus executed. Mithradates assumed power and gave himself a new name; Antiochus IV Epiphanes meaning "Antiochus the visible god". A madman had come to power in Syria, by "deceit, intrigue, and with the help of a few others" (**vs. 21-23**). His evil reign would bring a shadow of death over the land of Israel. The darkest days of the tiny nation's history were now being visited upon her. These were the days of the vicious king the Jews would rename "Antiochus Epimanes", meaning "Antiochus the madman".

**Verse 21. The Contemptible Person**

**He will be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue.**

Antiochus IV Epiphanes was never supposed to be king. His older brother Seleucus had the rightful claim to the throne. His father Antiochus the Great's over ambitious attempts to conquer the Roman coastline had placed Seleucus in an untenable position with the people of Syria. The newly crowned king was forced to impose higher taxes upon the populace in order to pay off Antiochus' war debt. As rival factions within the kingdom could see his ever weakening position, it was only a matter of time before someone tried to usurp the throne. When this was done by Heliodorus in 175 B.C., it opened the door just wide enough to give young Antiochus (Mithradates) the opportunity to take the crown that was never intended for him. Instead of just becoming a footnote in history, Antiochus Epiphanes became the Antichrist of *The Old Testament*.

### **Verse 22-23. The Overwhelming Army & The Prince of The Covenant**

**Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed. After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully, and with only a few people he will rise to power.**

In one of his first acts as king, Antiochus signed a treaty with Ptolemy Philometer (the son of Antiochus' older sister, Cleopatra, who was given in marriage to Ptolemy V by Antiochus' father) to settle the land disputes between the two kingdoms. Coelo-Syria, a valley that lay between the two countries, had been the object of many violent struggles between the Syrians and the Egyptians, with each trying to lay claim on this region, most likely in the hopes of making their respective borders easier to defend against attack. The small stretch of land had passed back and forth between the two several times in the past, and Antiochus wanted to give the king of Egypt a false sense of security by signing a peace treaty that he never intended to keep. While the naive young King of Egypt believed he had found a lasting friendship with his uncle Antiochus, the latter began a series of military campaigns that would take more Egyptian territory than all of his predecessors combined. Antiochus was great at making treaties, but equally great at breaking them. His deceptions of peace and declarations of friendship were only a ruse to give him the element of surprise as he ordered attack after attack. Because the king of Egypt had fallen for his schemes, Antiochus was able to conquer much of the Egyptian territory with little effort, which is why the prophecy states that he would **"rise to power, with the help of only a few people" (vs.23)**. His continued military successes brought him very close to taking the whole of Egypt, but God would eventually frustrate the schemes of the wicked king, allowing him to go no further. Antiochus' visions of becoming another Alexander The Great were never to be realized. The frustration of his lofty ambitions would only serve to make Antiochus even more brutal to those he ruled, especially the Jews.

### **Verse 24. The Days of Conquest**

**When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers, nor his forefathers did. He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses—but only for a time.**

Antiochus had tremendous success, capturing city after city within Egyptian borders. Under the guise of a false security brought on from treaties of peace, the vile Syrian despot even managed to bribe some of Ptolemy's trusted advisors to aid in his spoiling of Egypt. King Antiochus intended to dismantle every Egyptian stronghold one by one, distributing the spoils of war to secure more and more military advantage over the king of Egypt.

It seemed inevitable that Antiochus would rule all of Syria and Egypt, which would give him enough might to resurrect the ambitious scheme of his father; to conquer Rome. This fact did not go unnoticed by the Romans however, and just when Antiochus was so very close to conquering the whole of Egypt, he was forced to retreat upon threat of a Roman invasion. God was beginning to raise up the Roman empire just as he had told Daniel in his dreams. Rome would see to it that Antiochus IV Epiphanes would go no further in his endeavors to rule Egypt. Antiochus turned and headed for Palestine, for false rumors of his death have been spread among the Jewish people, and he had heard that the news had brought great celebration in Jerusalem. He retreated from the Egyptian battlefield filled with fury. Laden with the spoils of war from his Egyptian conquest the wicked king returned to his homeland to regroup, for he was completely unwilling to give up his designs to rule his Egyptian counterparts. The seeds of a fresh hatred were rising up within his blackened soul, the hatred of the Jews who were filled with Joy at the thought of his demise. Antiochus had a twofold plan for the immediate future; re-invade Egypt and punish those wretched Hebrews for their treachery.

**Verse 25-26. Antiochus Strikes Again**

**With a large army, he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him. Those who eat from the king's provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away, and many will fall in battle.**

Trouble begins to brew in Egypt as Ptolemy Philometer found himself in a power struggle against his brother Ptolemy Physcon. The weakness of Philometer against the wiles of Antiochus had severely eroded the confidence of the Egyptians, and a rebellion had begun among those who were closest to him. Most likely this was viewed by Antiochus as the perfect time to strike against the Egyptians, for they no doubt would be caught up in their own rebellion, and therefore, be distracted from the powerful invasion that would come from the north. Antiochus amassed a large army and advanced. He proclaimed loyalty to Philometer and attacked the armies of Physcon, who were unable to withstand the onslaught. Antiochus took the city of Memphis and laid siege to Alexandria. Physcon's fellow supporters betrayed him in fear of Antiochus, leaving Ptolemy Philometer as the sole ruler of Egypt once more. The time had come for another of Antiochus' infamous peace treaties.

**Verse 27. The Lying Treaty**

**The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time.**

Antiochus met with Philometer and pledged his support of him against his brother, Physcon and his band of conspirators. It was Antiochus' desire that out of loyalty Philometer will become a vassal to the Syrian king and oversee the rule of Egypt as a subordinate to the crown of Syria. After all, the young king was in fact Antiochus' nephew and had fallen for his lies before. This time however, Philometer wasn't fooled, and he simply told Antiochus what he wanted to hear in hopes that his vicious uncle would return to Syria thinking all was well, giving Philometer a chance to regroup and rebuild his fighting forces. Upon Antiochus' return home, Philometer reached out to his rebel brother and the two formed an alliance in their struggle against Antiochus, and the war resumed.

**Verse 28. Revolt in Jerusalem**

**The king of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country.**

Upon returning from his newly signed treaty, Antiochus found there was rebellion in Jerusalem. Antiochus had removed Jason, the high priest, and replaced him with Menelaus, who had bribed Antiochus for the position. Jason had amassed a force of mercenaries in an attempt to regain the priestly position. Antiochus, who was already furious with the Jews, took this as rebellion against him and decided to demonstrate his power and cruelty to any who would oppose his will. He attacked the city, killing forty thousand people and sold another forty thousand into slavery. He then plundered the temple treasury. Jason fled for his life, and Menelaus was publicly declared high priest in Jerusalem. After his infamous sacrifice of a pig upon the altar (discussed in our study on **Daniel Chapter 8**), Menelaus was given strict orders that all Jews were to be Hellenized and submit to Greek customs and mythology. Antiochus would have his way or many would suffer the consequences.

**Verse 29. The Romans Draw a Line in the Sand**

**At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before.**

Antiochus would twice more invade Egypt, and he would have taken the whole of it, for the armies of the two united brother-kings in Egypt did not have the power alone to stop the forces of Antiochus. On his final assault in 168 B.C., the Egyptians had a surprise awaiting for the Syrian madman. Rome had come to the rescue! A fleet of Roman ships were dispatched, and the Romans met Antiochus a few miles north of Alexandria. He was ordered to evacuate immediately. Antiochus told the Roman envoy that he would first need to consult with his advisors before making a decision, to which the Roman General, Popilius Laenas responded by drawing a circle in the sand around Antiochus. The Syrian was told that he must make his decision before stepping out of the circle. Humiliated, Antiochus left Egypt and headed for home. The uncontrollable fury within him would be taken out on the people he had come to despise....The Jews.

**Verse 30-31. The Abomination of Desolation**

**Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant. His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.**

Antiochus vented his rage upon the Jewish people by completely sacking Jerusalem and putting an end to all sacrifice. He placed an image of Zeus (made to look like himself) in the holy temple and demanded that the Jews worship it. He issued a decree that anyone found with a copy of the scriptures or found to be in observance of Jewish law was to be killed without mercy. His brutality was meant to quash any thought of further Jewish resistance. Antiochus had lost in his quest to become king of the known world, so he chose Jerusalem as a designate for his tantrums. In his childish rage, Antiochus believed that he could break the covenant that God Himself had made with His holy people. Many Jews would willingly embrace the Hellenistic mandate given by Antiochus, but God ALWAYS preserves a remnant of those who will remain faithful to Him. Many devout Jews refused to be forced into Hellenization. They would not give up their devotion to God without a fight. The battle in Egypt was not the only battle Antiochus was to lose. A "hammer" of vengeance was coming to Jerusalem to strike a blow of justice for the people of the holy covenant.

**Verse 32-35. The "Covenant People" Rise Up**

**With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him. Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them. Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.**

As we have previously discussed ([Daniel Chapter 8](#)), the brutality of Antiochus IV Epiphanies would cause a Jewish resistance led by a group of guerrilla fighters known as the Maccabees. They were led by a man named Judah, the son of a priest who came to be called "*The Maccabee*", which comes from the Hebrew word "*makkevet*" meaning "*hammer*". Judah would lead his rebel forces against the Syrians in a three year campaign of military strikes against Syrian outposts. The rebels were relentless in

their attacks, always escaping into the hills and hiding in caves after each strike. When the armies actually squared off after wearing down the Syrian resistance, the Maccabean freedom fighters won stunning victories over the Syrian army, once more gaining control of Jerusalem. The schemes of Antiochus had been thwarted, but the cost had been high. Many Jewish freedom fighters had lost their lives in the struggle against the cruel madman of Syria.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes died of a horribly painful and debilitating disease in 164 B.C. The time of judgment had finally come to "The Antichrist of *The Old Testament*". He was arguably the vilest man who had ever lived, but he was only a mere shadow of the wicked ruler who is to come in the last days of this earth. While Antiochus Epiphanes was unable to conquer the world, one day a king will come who will display the character of Antiochus, but will in fact succeed in ruling the entire globe. He will be a source of extreme hardship for the chosen people of God. The Antichrist will be able to accomplish all that Antiochus ever dreamed about and more. He will be the vilest of the vile, showing no regard for anything but himself. He is the next shadowy figure in Daniel's troubling vision. He is simply described, as **"The King who does as he pleases." (vs.36).**