

“Of Men and Nations” 3

Daniel 11:9-19

Hello friend and welcome to *Hope for Today*. My name is J. Mark Horst; I’m your friend and Bible teacher. The program you’re listening to is produced by Heralds of Hope, an international Gospel radio and literature ministry. Thousands are tuning in each week to receive spiritual nourishment and blessing. Like this listener from Morocco who sent this text message in response to our Arabic language broadcasts.

I have noticed that the words in each episode shine into my darkest days and the words are heavenly, and that’s why I’m sending you this message. First, to say thank you and then ask, how can I follow Jesus and know how to gain His love and peace. I’m a Muslim, would He accept me? Would He heal my heart like you say with His hope and love? Please help me know more.

What a joy to be able to respond to this man and reassure him, “yes, God is ready and waiting to heal your heart with His love.” And then, to teach him from the Holy Scriptures what it means to become a follower of Jesus. My friend, there is no greater privilege than to share this amazing Good News!

For the past few weeks on *Hope for Today* we’ve been studying from Daniel chapter eleven. Our study is titled “Of Men and Nations.”

This chapter covers the major rulers of the Persian Empire, followed by a brief record Alexander the Great who led the Greek Empire. The third empire, the one following Alexander, is described in great detail and concludes with Antiochus Epiphanes. Then, the time period from his death until the last Gentile ruler, at the end of the age, is completely skipped over.

Now, let’s resume our study of the struggle of the two major kingdoms, simply designated as the kingdom of the north and the kingdom of the south. To begin I will read the text, **Daniel 11:9 to 19**.

The end of verse 9 has Seleucus (the king of the north), invading Egypt again, but being repelled. The previous verses are background material for what is prophesied next. In verses ten through nineteen, the Seleucids conquer the south and return control of the Holy Land to Syria. This sets the stage for the persecution of God’s people under Antiochus Epiphanes. He, Antiochus Epiphanes, becomes the main focus of verses 21 to 35.

While Seleucus Callinicus was unsuccessful in his attempts to subjugate Egypt, one of “his sons” (verse 10) had greater success. Antiochus III (Antiochus the Great) reconquered Syrian territory as far south as Gaza. This action aroused Ptolemy Philopater (feelop`ater) of Egypt. He had a reputation for being habitually lazy, but this incursion was so close to home that he responded in force. The two armies, each composed of about 70K men met at Rafia. Verses 11 and 12 outline the total victory of the Egyptians. Antiochus was almost captured, and he lost his whole army!

But once, again, because of his habitual laziness, Philopater didn’t follow up on his victory. He failed to completely crush Antiochus. The result was a temporary truce between the two powers. After this defeat, Antiochus turned his attention elsewhere and began to amass territory and wealth. He advanced eastward to the borders of India and northward to the Caspian.

In 201 BC Antiochus the Great assembled another huge army and launched a series of attacks on Egypt. *The violent men* are a reference to men who violate law and justice. These “robber” Jews entered into a treaty with Antiochus, and attacked the Egyptian citadel, Scopas, in the fortress city of Sidon. This was a cowardly betrayal of the many benefits earlier Ptolemies had granted to the Jewish people. Antiochus was successful in his siege of Sidon, even though Egypt launched three counterattacks.

Notice with me verse 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.* The word, “destruction,” actually means “completeness.” In other words, Israel was completely under Antiochus the Great’s power. Surprisingly, he treated the Jews well, cancelling their taxes for 3 years and making contributions to the Temple.

During this time period of the early 190s BC, Rome was a rising power which threatened Antiochus. Egypt attempted to take advantage of the situation and attacked Syria. The Egyptians were soundly defeated by Antiochus the Great and the result was that the Syrians occupied all of Palestine as far south as Gaza. Verses 15 and 16 indicate that Antiochus’ power was absolute.

Following this there were at least 3 unsuccessful attempts by Egyptian generals to take back lost territory. Because he was threatened by Rome, Antiochus entered into a treaty with Egypt, by giving his daughter, Cleopatra, in marriage to the young Egyptian king. But this stratagem failed because Cleopatra constantly sided with her husband against her father. This was prophesied in verse 17 that *she would not stand on his side or support him.*

Eventually, Antiochus III begins to suffer significant reversal of his fortunes. The ruler who was reproached is the Roman consul, Lucius Scipio Asiaticus (verse 18). The reproach mentioned was Antiochus' scornful treatment of the Roman ambassador in Lysimachia.

After defeating the Egyptian armies under Scopas, Antiochus turned his attention to Greece. He was defeated at Thermopylae in 191 BC, and again in 189 BC near Ephesus. This was the fulfillment of verses 18 and 19 and removed Europe from the control of Asian powers and paved the way for later expansion of the fledgling Roman Empire.

If Antiochus the Great would've been satisfied to leave Greece alone, he would've gone down in history as one of the great conquerors of the ancient world. **His defeat was important in Jewish history because he was followed by Seleucus IV Philopater, who was then succeeded by Antiochus IV Epiphanes.** This man became the notorious persecutor of the Jewish people.

The Seleucid king ruling between Antiochus the Great and Antiochus Epiphanes is mentioned here for his oppressive taxation of the Jewish people. Because of the rising power of Rome, he was forced to pay tribute of 1,000 talents annually. He levied a special tax on the Jews and instructed his tax collector to take treasures from the Temple so he could pay Rome. Soon after this plundering was carried out, the king mysteriously died, possibly by poisoning.

This fulfilled Daniel's prophecy that his reign would be short and that he would die an unusual death. This set the stage for the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes and his terrible persecutions of God's people.

In all of this back and forth struggle of the nations, I'm reminded of the words of Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the United States of America. He said, "*I have lived... a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth - that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an Empire can rise without his aid?*" In all the things Daniel was prophesying, God is behind the scenes, using the free choices of men to accomplish His sovereign plans!

The Kingdom of Antiochus IV

As I mentioned near the beginning of this study in chapter 11, there are more verses (21 to 35) that deal with this next ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, than any of the other rulers mentioned. It's amazing that an historically obscure Syrian ruler would generate so much interest. He's previously mentioned in Daniel 8 as *the little horn* and he ruled from 175 to 164 BC.

But our study of Antiochus Epiphanes will have to wait until next time, because we're almost out of time for today's broadcast. Lord willing, we'll be back in one week to continue this study. If you'd like an audio CD or a printed copy of this complete teaching, just request it by its title, "Of Men and Nations."

The quickest way for you to contact me is to send an e-mail to mail@heraldsofhope.org. That e-mail address is mail@heraldsofhope.org. Or you may write to *Hope for Today*, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania 15533. Remember, you can request a printed manuscript or an audio CD of this teaching, "Of Men and Nations." I'd be happy to send one to you.

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Now friend, I urge you to tune in next week as we continue our study, "Of Men and Nations." from Daniel chapter eleven. And until then, keep looking for that blessed HOPE.