Daniel 11

History Written in Advance: The People Who Know Their God

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

History is not random; it is written in advance. Kings rise, scheme and fall exactly as God said. In the worst days, the people who know their God stand strong and teach others — and the last proud king who does as he pleases will come to his end with no one to help him.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

Scripture in the text and key-verse cards: King James Version (public domain). Quotations in the notes: New American Standard Bible® (NASB 1995), © The Lockman Foundation; used by permission. Commentary sources: David Guzik, Enduring Word.

00 The Text

DANIEL 11 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions | Green Command / instruction | ⇄ Sky Key repeated word

⚠ Rose Sin / warning | ★ Violet Promise / blessing | ◷ Amber Time / place / contrast

1 Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him.

2 And now will I shew thee ▲ the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.

3 And ◷ a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.

4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward ◷ the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.

5 And ⇄ the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.

6 And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to ⇄ the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times.

7 But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of ⇄ the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail:

8 And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than ⇄ the king of the north.

9 So ⇄ the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land.

10 But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress.

11 And ⇄ the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with ⇄ the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand.

12 And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up ; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it.

13 For ⇄ the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.

14 And in those times there shall many stand up against ⇄ the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall.

15 So ⇄ the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand.

16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed.

17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.

18 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him.

19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.

21 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant.

23 And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.

24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time.

25 And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him.

26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.

27 And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief , and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.

28 Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.

29 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.

30 For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.

31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.

32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.

33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.

34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.

35 And some of them of understanding shall fall, ★ to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to ◷ the time of the end: because it is yet for a ◷ time appointed.

36 And ⚠ the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and ⚠ magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for ▲ that that is determined shall be done.

37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.

38 But in his estate shall he honour ⚠ the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.

39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.

40 And at ◷ the time of the end shall ⇄ the king of the south push at him: and ⇄ the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.

41 He shall enter also into ◷ the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.

42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.

43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.

44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.

45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and ▲ none shall help him.

Marked in the text

- **v2** ▲ the truth
- **v3** ◷ a mighty king
- **v4** ◷ the four winds of heaven
- **v5** ⇄ the king of the south *(every occurrence)*
- **v6** ⇄ the king of the north *(every occurrence)*
- **v16** ◷ the glorious land *(every occurrence)*
- **v21** ⚠ a vile person
- **v21** ⚠ flatteries *(every occurrence)*
- **v27** ◷ time appointed *(every occurrence)*
- **v28** ★ the holy covenant *(every occurrence)*
- **v31** ⚠ take away the daily sacrifice
- **v31** ⚠ the abomination that maketh desolate
- **v32** ★ the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits
- **v33** ▮▮ they that understand among the people shall instruct many
- **v35** ★ to try them, and to purge, and to make them white
- **v35** ◷ the time of the end *(every occurrence)*
- **v36** ⚠ the king shall do according to his will
- **v36** ⚠ magnify himself above every god
- **v36** ▲ that that is determined shall be done
- **v38** ⚠ the God of forces
- **v45** ▲ none shall help him

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. KJV "a vile person" is the NASB95's "a despicable person"; "the glorious land" is "the Beautiful Land"; "the abomination that maketh desolate" is "the abomination of desolation"; v37 KJV "the God of his fathers" is NASB95 "the gods of his fathers."

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 11:31–32 (KJV)

31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall ⚠ take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place ⚠ the abomination that maketh desolate. 32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by ⚠ flatteries: but ★ the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.

Setting

The heavenly messenger of chapter 10 keeps speaking. He had helped in "the first year of Darius the Mede" (v1), and now he gives Daniel "what is inscribed in the writing of truth" (10:21): "And now I will tell you the truth" (v2). This is the most detailed prophecy in the Bible — about 375 years of Middle Eastern history, king by king, written ahead of time, and then a leap to the end.

Structure

- vv1–2 — **Persia:** "three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them," and he will "arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece" (v2).
- vv3–4 — **Greece:** "a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases" (v3). "But 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" (v4).
- vv5–20 — **the kings of the South and the North:** a long tug-of-war between "the king of the South" and "the king of the North" — alliances, a royal marriage that fails (v6), invasions and counter-invasions (vv7–13), the "Beautiful Land" caught in between (v16), another marriage plot (v17), a defeat in the coastlands (v18), and a tax collector king who dies "within a few days" (v20).
- vv21–35 — **the despicable person:** "In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue" (v21). He breaks alliances and deceives (vv22–27). "His heart will be set against the holy covenant" (v28). "Ships of Kittim" turn him back from Egypt (v30), and he takes out his rage on Jerusalem: "Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation" (v31). "But the people who know their God will display strength and take action" (v32). Those with insight teach many, though many fall by sword, flame and captivity (v33) — "in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time" (v35).
- vv36–45 — **the king who does as he pleases:** "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done" (v36). He disregards "the gods of his fathers or … the desire of women" (v37) and honors "a god of fortresses" (v38). "At the end time" he is attacked from South and North (v40), enters the Beautiful Land (v41),

takes Egypt's treasures (vv42–43), is troubled by rumors from the east and north (v44), and sets up his royal tents "between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him" (v45).

Repeated words

king of the South (vv5, 6, 9, 11, 14, 25, 40); king of the North (vv6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 40); stand / arise (throughout); do as he pleases (vv3, 16, 36); the Beautiful Land (vv16, 41; compare v45); the holy covenant (vv28, 30); intrigue / smooth words / hypocrisy (vv21, 32, 34); appointed time (vv27, 29, 35); the end time (vv35, 40); fortress (vv7, 10, 19, 31, 38, 39); heart(s) (vv12, 27, 28).

Contrasts

kings who "do as they please" (vv3, 16, 36) ⟷ "that which is decreed will be done" (v36). Those who "act wickedly toward the covenant" (v32) ⟷ "the people who know their God." Smooth words and intrigue (vv21, 32) ⟷ those with insight who teach the many (v33). The despicable person's power (v21) ⟷ "he will come to his end, and no one will help him" (v45). The saints falling (v33) ⟷ refined and made pure (v35).

Chapter theme (my words)

History is not random; it is written in advance. Kings rise, scheme and fall exactly as God said. In the worst days, the people who know their God stand strong and teach others — and the last proud king who does as he pleases will come to his end with no one to help him.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 11:36 (KJV)

36 And ⚠ the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and ⚠ magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for ▲ that that is determined shall be done.

Why so much detail?

Guzik notes the chapter predicts some 375 years of history so precisely that critics insist it must have been written after the events (in the 160s BC). Baldwin, in Guzik, observes that most critical scholars treat it as history written in the form of prophecy. Guzik answers: if that's true, the whole vision of chapter 10 is fiction. Jesus Himself called Daniel a prophet and treated this prophecy as future (Matt 24:15). The detail is the point: God knows the end from the beginning (Isa 46:9–10).

Persia (v2)

After Cyrus, three more kings (Cambyses, the impostor Smerdis or Gaumata, and Darius I), then a fourth, very rich: Xerxes (486–465 BC), who threw the whole empire against Greece and was defeated

at Salamis in 480 BC. He is the Ahasuerus of Esther.

Alexander (vv3–4)

The "mighty king" is Alexander the Great, who conquered the Persian empire. He died in Babylon in 323 BC at about 32. His sons were murdered, and his empire was divided among four generals — "toward the four points of the compass" (compare 8:8, 21–22).

The South and the North (vv5–20)

From here the prophecy follows two of those four kingdoms, because they fought over the land of Israel: the **Ptolemies** in Egypt (the South) and the **Seleucids** in Syria (the North). Historians match the details closely:

- **v5:** Ptolemy I (South) and Seleucus I, once his general, who became even stronger (North).
- **v6:** Ptolemy II gave his daughter Berenice to Antiochus II. The alliance failed; Berenice and her son were murdered.
- **vv7–9:** Her brother, Ptolemy III, invaded the North in revenge and carried off treasure and idols to Egypt.
- **vv10–19:** Antiochus III ("the Great") fought for decades — beaten at Raphia (217 BC, v11), victorious at Panium (about 200 BC, vv15–16), taking the Beautiful Land. He gave his daughter Cleopatra I in marriage to Ptolemy V, hoping to control Egypt, but she sided with her husband (v17). Rome defeated him in the coastlands (v18), and he died plundering a temple in his own territory (v19).
- **v20:** Seleucus IV sent a tax collector (Heliodorus) through the kingdom — even attempting to seize the temple treasury in Jerusalem — and was soon assassinated.

The despicable person (vv21–35)

This is Antiochus IV, who called himself *Epiphanes* ("God made manifest"); his enemies nicknamed him *Epimanes*, "the madman." He seized the throne by intrigue (v21), removed the high priest (likely "the prince of the covenant," v22), and invaded Egypt (vv25–27). On his second campaign "ships of Kittim" — the Roman fleet — met him. Guzik tells the story: the Roman envoy drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus and told him to decide before stepping out of it. Humiliated, he withdrew (v30) and vented his fury on Jerusalem. In 167 BC his forces stopped the temple sacrifices and set up an altar to Zeus on the altar of burnt offering — "the abomination of desolation" (v31; 1 Macc 1:54). Jews who compromised were flattered and rewarded (v32). But "the people who know their God" resisted — the Maccabees and many faithful Jews, some of whom died for their faith (vv32–35; Heb 11:35–38). In December 164 BC the temple was cleansed and rededicated — the origin of Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication Jesus attended (John 10:22).

The shift at v36

Verses 36–45 don't fit Antiochus's history: he did not magnify himself above every god in this way, and his death doesn't match vv40–45. And the angel says it is "the end time" (vv35, 40). So, like Guzik, most futurist interpreters see a jump to the final world ruler — the Antichrist. Guzik's picture: Antiochus is the "trailer," the Antichrist is the "feature." Paul describes the same figure: he "exalts himself above every so-called god … displaying himself as being God" (2 Thess 2:3–4). John calls him the beast who speaks "arrogant words and blasphemies" (Rev 13:5–6). Jesus pointed to a future "abomination of desolation" (Matt 24:15) — two centuries after Antiochus.

Who is the final king? (vv36–39)

He "will do as he pleases" — a law to himself. He rejects the religion of his fathers, disregards "the desire of women" (some see a total lack of natural affection; others, the Messiah, the one Jewish women longed to bear; compare Hag 2:7), and worships "a god of fortresses" — military power. Guzik cautions that much speculation here is uncertain. But the headline is clear: "he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done" (v36). Even the worst tyrant runs on God's clock.

The last campaign (vv40–45)

Kings of the South and North attack him; he sweeps through the Beautiful Land and Egypt; news from the east and north troubles him (compare Rev 16:12); he sets up his headquarters between the seas and Mount Zion. Guzik admits the details are hard to map. But the ending is certain: "he will come to his end, and no one will help him" (v45; 2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:20).

Word study (Hebrew)

- **truth — *ʾemeth* (H571):** firmness, faithfulness, truth.
- **arise / stand — *ʿamad* (H5975):** to stand, take a stand, arise — the chapter's most repeated verb.
- **do as he pleases — *ʿasah kirtsono* (H6213 + H7522):** literally "do according to his will."
- **king of the South — *melek ha-negeb* (H5045):** the Negev, the south — Egypt.
- **king of the North — *melek ha-tsaphon* (H6828):** the north — Syria.
- **Beautiful Land — *ʾerets ha-tsebi* (H6643):** the land of beauty, the glorious land — Israel.
- **despicable — *bazah* (H959):** to despise, hold in contempt.
- **intrigue / hypocrisy — *chalaqlaqqoth* (H2519), vv21, 34:** slipperiness, flattery; compare "smooth words," *chalaqqah* (H2514), v32.
- **covenant — *berith* (H1285):** the covenant (vv22, 28, 30, 32).
- **Kittim — *Kittim* (H3794):** Cyprus and the western coastlands — here Rome.
- **abomination — *shiqquts* (H8251):** a detestable thing, an idol.
- **desolation — *shamem* (H8074):** to make desolate, appall.
- **know — *yada* (H3045):** to know intimately, by experience.
- **display strength — *chazaq* (H2388):** be strong, hold firm.
- **insight — *sakal* (H7919):** to be wise, have insight — the same word as "those who have insight" in 12:3.
- **refine, purge, make pure — *tsaraph*, *barar*, *laben* (H6884, H1305, H3835):** to smelt, to purify, to make white.
- **fortresses — *maʿoz* (H4581):** a stronghold, place of safety.

Cross-references

Isa 46:9–10; Dan 2:39–40; Dan 7:7–8, 24–26; Dan 8:3–14, 20–25; Dan 9:26–27; Dan 12:1, 3, 10–11; Hag 2:7; Mal 3:2–3; Matt 24:15–21; Mark 13:14; John 10:22; 2 Thess 2:3–12; 1 Pet 1:6–7; 1 John 2:18; Rev 13:1–18; Rev 16:12–16; Rev 19:19–20.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · DANIEL 11:32–33 (KJV)

32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by ⚠ flatteries: but ★ the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. 33 And 👥 they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.

Command to obey — know your God

"The people who know their God will display strength and take action" (v32). Not those who know *about* Him — those who know Him. Strength in the evil day comes from relationship built in ordinary days. I'll spend time this week simply knowing Him: reading, listening, praying, obeying. For the men I disciple, this is the whole goal — not religion, but knowing God.

Sin to confess — bought by smooth words

Antiochus didn't conquer all of Israel by force; he flattered and rewarded the compromisers (vv21, 32). Where have I been bought by praise, comfort or advantage to quietly give up a conviction? I'll confess it and ask God to make me immune to flattery (Prov 29:5).

Warning to heed — doing as I please

Three times the chapter describes a king who "does as he pleases" (vv3, 16, 36). Each one falls. The spirit of Antichrist is self-will crowned as god (1 John 2:18). It starts small: my way, my will, my rules. The cure is daily surrender: "not My will, but Yours be done."

Promise to trust — "that which is decreed will be done."

Hundreds of years of kings, wars and marriages happened exactly as God said. If He kept every detail of history, He will keep every promise to me. The tyrant prospers only "until the indignation is finished" (v36), and then "he will come to his end, and no one will help him" (v45).

Example to follow — those with insight teach many

In the darkest days, the wise "give understanding to the many" (v33), even at the cost of their lives. That's my calling — to teach the men God gives me, through books, studies and conversations, so they can stand when the pressure comes (2 Tim 2:2).

Worship

God wrote history before it happened. Persia, Greece, Egypt, Syria, Rome — all came and went at His word. The final tyrant will fall the same way. My times are in His hand (Ps 31:15).

Prayer

Sovereign Lord, You know the end from the beginning, and what You decree will be done. Let me be among the people who know their God. Guard me from flattery and from doing as I please. Refine me through trials, make me pure, and use me to give understanding to many until the end. Amen.