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A Note on Daniel 11: 40-45

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One of the most controversial parts of the book of Daniel is the last section (verses 40 to 45) of the eleventh chapter. It is almost universally acknowledged that verses 3 to 35 are an extraordinarily accurate and detailed account of the Greek empire from the time of Alexander to Antiochus Epiphanes. It is less universally, but also quite widely agreed that verses 36 to 39 continue to describe Antiochus Epiphanes, tyrant king of the Syrian part of the Greek empire. Regarding the last six verses of the chapter, however, there is total confusion. On reading them, the superficial impression one receives is that they continue the description of Antiochus—yet they bear no relation whatever to his actual career. Critical scholars point to *this as* major evidence for a second-century, B.C. date of authorship, during the reign of Antiochus. This, of course, rejects the book's claim that it was written by Daniel in the sixth century before Christ. The critics inform us that the book of Daniel was produced by an unknown author during the terrible persecutions of Antiochus with the purpose of encouraging the Jews to remain faithful to their religion. They point out that in the earlier chapters the author has painted a glowing picture of the Messiah's triumph over Antiochus and the Greek empire. The last part of chapter eleven is said to be the author's hopeful, but inaccurate prediction of the future career and eventual destruction of Antiochus—the first part of the chapter being, of course, an accurate description of *past* history. Conservative scholars are apparently equally unable to find any satisfactory fulfilment of verses 40 to 45 so they throw them forward (usually with verses 36 to 39) hundreds of years into the distant future as a prophecy of the 'Antichrist'. Reading the chapter, however, there is little reason to suspect that this extraordinary gap exists between verses 39 and 40 for 35 and 36). The last section of the chapter has every appearance of being a direct continuation of the earlier part. In the following paragraphs it will be shown that there is a fulfilment to be found in past history and that it is both accurate and contextual.

The prophecy was revealed in the third year of Cyrus, founder of the Persian empire. Verse 2 appears to deal with the first four (and most important) kings of the empire; that is, Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes—Smerdis being merely a short-lived imposter. In verses 3 to 20 we are given an history of the Greek empire from Alexander to Antiochus Epiphanes. In verses 21 to 39 we have an account of the activities of Antiochus: A good many conservative scholars, as has already been mentioned, believe that verses 36 to 39 apply not to Antiochus, but to the Antichrist. However, for certain excellent reasons which will not be explained later, these verses more probably continue to describe Antiochus.

Let us now concentrate on the controversial last section of the chapter. We must ask what is meant by 'the time of the end' in verse 40. A strong clue is found in chapter 8 where we find the vision of the ram and the he-goat. We are specifically told that this vision concerns 'the time of the end' and that the he-goat represents Greece (vv. 17, 21). This indicates that 'the time of the end' is in some way connected with the Greek empire and Antiochus Epiphanes (who is described in this vision in some detail). This further suggests that the primary goal of Daniel's prophecies could be the first coming of Christ, in view of the fact that He was born soon after the fall of the Greek empire. This is supported' by the New Testament writers because they tell us we are now living in 'the last days' 'at the end of the ages' and that these

last days were ushered in by the coming of Christ and were looked forward to by all the prophets (Mt. 5: 17; Lk. 16: 16; 18: 31; 21: 22; Acts 2: 15-17; 3: 24; Heb. 1: 1, 2; 9: 26; 1 Pet. 1: 20; 4: 7.) Therefore, in Daniel 11: 40 the words 'at the time of the end' may carry us nearer the time of Christ's first coming and yet not take us out of the period of the Greek era. This is supported by the fact that before revealing the prophecy, Daniel's informant says (10: 24), 'now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I go forth, lo, the prince of Greece shall come.' Taking all this in conjunction with chapters II and VII and assuming

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that 'the fourth kingdom' of those chapters is the Greek empire (reasons for doing this will not be entered into here), we may gather that the sign of Christ's imminent arrival was to be the destruction of the Greek empire and that this destruction was to date from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. In fact the Greek empire did begin to crumble at this time. Rome began her conquest by defeating Macedon in 168 BC and the Jews began their successful war of independence in 167 BC, all during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. The last vestiges of the Greek empire vanished when Egypt became a Roman province in 27 BC. Shortly afterwards, Christ entered the world to set up His kingdom. In chapter 7 this is symbolized by the simultaneous death of the little horn and the fourth beast (Antiochus and the Greek empire), *followed by the destruction of the body of the beast* and then the taking of the kingdom by the Messiah and His saints. In verses 21 to 39 of chapter 11, Daniel has described the career of Antiochus, 'the beginning of the end'. so starting at verse 40 he now goes straight on to describe the final destruction of the Greek empire (the destruction of *the body of the fourth beast*).

The Romans began their conquest of the Greek empire during the reign of Antiochus by defeating Macedon in 168 BC they made it a Roman province in 148 BC). Rome was now the paramount power in the East, but she did not proceed to annex any land there until 65 BC when Syria was absorbed into the Roman empire, Jerusalem being taken by Pompey in 63 BC. Egypt was more or less at the mercy of Rome, but was not made an imperial province until 27 BC. Verses 40 to 43 provide an excellent description of the arrival of Rome in the East. Young translates, in verse 40, 'a king of the south' and 'a king of the north'. Thus we are told that at the time of the end a king of the South (Egypt) will contend with him (the king of Syria), and a king of the North (Rome) will come against him (the king of Syria) like a whirlwind, etc. In the first part of verse 40. then, the central figure is the king of Syria, as in the preceding passage; but the words 'at the time of the end' have transported us on a number of years to the closing years of the Greek empire. The king of Syria is no longer Antiochus Epiphanes—he is now Antiochus Asiaticus, the last of the Seleucid monarchs. The rest of the passage graphically describes the progress of Rome. Pompey's legate, Seaurus, arrived in 65 BC and annexed Syria. Pompey himself came on the scene later and started out on a campaign against the Nabataeans in 63 BC. The Nabataeans were a powerful Arab tribe which had occupied the old kingdoms of Edom to the south, Moab to the southeast and Ammon to the north-east of the Dead Sea. Pompey, however, did not complete the campaign. He postponed it (indefinitely) in order that he might settle the quarrels of rival Jewish leaders. Thus the Nabataeans retained their independence and Edom, Moab and most of Ammon remained outside the Roman empire (a small section of Ammon lay within the Roman territories of Peraea and Decapolis). Pompey proceeded to Jerusalem and captured the city without much difficulty; and so the Jews were again under foreign domination after only a few short years of independence. As has already been mentioned, Egypt lay within the power of Rome, but

was not made an imperial province until 27 BC. Libya and Ethiopia, both of which bordered Egypt, were indeed 'at the steps' of Rome.

Verses 44 and 45 must refer to the ever-present threat to the Roman empire from the Parthians in the north-east. In 54 BC Crassus undertook a campaign against the Parthians (he, Pompey and Julius Caesar were the members of the first triumvirate); but before the campaign he took over the province of Syria and pillaged it very thoroughly, also plundering the treasures of the temple in Jerusalem. Doubtless he pitched his tents between the Mediterranean and Mount Zion at some stage. His campaign was unsuccessful, however, and he was killed by the Parthians—thus, did he 'come to his end'.

We can see, therefore, that verses 40 to 45 are a perfect description of the arrival of the Romans and the destruction of the Greek empire. This interpretation is so accurate and so thoroughly in context, that it must surely be the correct one. After Pompey and Julius Caesar had died, Augustus finally became emperor. It was during his reign that Jesus Christ was born.

It can be seen, then, that history is being described almost up to the time of Christ, and that events taking place after the reign of Antiochus are depicted in just as accurate detail as events before and during his reign, even the lapse of time between Rome's conquest of

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Macedon and the rest of the Greek empire.

Critical scholars have assumed that the 'king of the North' of verses 40 to 45 is the same 'king of the North' as that of earlier verses, but there are at least two very excellent reasons why this should not be so:

(1) The exploits of the 'king of the North' of verses 40 to 45 are precisely those of Rome.

(2) A careful examination of the structure of verse 40 will show that the most reasonable interpretation is that the 'king of the North' of the previous verses (Syria) squabbles with the 'king of the South' (Egypt), but *another* king of the North descends upon Syria like a whirlwind and engulfs it. This is, of course, an absolutely perfect description of what did take place.

The fact that history is described from about 600 BC right up to the time of Christ is rather strong evidence that the divine author's primary purpose is to predict accurately the date and historical setting of Christ's first coming. The existence of such a clear and reasonable interpretation of the latter part of chapter eleven strikes at the very roots of the case for a second-century BC date of authorship. More than this, it further confirms the truth of Christ's claims and attests the divine inspiration of the scriptures.

Although Daniel does seem to be looking forward primarily to the first coming of Christ, the events he describes may well typify certain events yet to come. For example, Antiochus may well typify some future antichrist; and the destruction of the image (Dan. 11) certainly typifies Christ's eventual destruction of all His enemies (Matt. 21: 44).

The revelation of chapter 11 is continued in chapter 12. If indeed chapter 11 does bring us up to the time of Christ's first coming, we should expect to find some evidence of this in chapter 12. This is, in fact, what we read in the first 4 verses:

‘And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.’

The interpretation of this passage will not be undertaken here; but a few references are appended which suggest (1) that it speaks of the coming of the Messiah; and (2) that it speaks of the coming of Jesus Christ. The rule of Christ will be consummated by the second advent, but it was initiated by the *first* advent. His kingdom has already been set up.

‘And at that time shall Michael stand up; the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people’—*cf.* Revelation 12: 7-10; John 12: 31.

‘And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time’—*cf.* Jeremiah 30: 5-9; Luke 21: 20-24; Matthew 24: 15-21.

‘And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book’—*cf.* Jeremiah 23 : 5, 6; Luke 1: 68-70; Isaiah 4: 2-4; Hebrew 12: 22-24.

‘And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake’—*cf.* Isaiah 26: 19; John 5: 25; Matthew 27 51-53; 1 Peter 3: 19; Revelation 3: 21; 20: 4-6; Luke 23: 43; ‘some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever’—*cf.* John 5: 28-29; Mark 13 41-43; 1 Corinthians 15: 51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17; Matthew 24: 30-31; 2 Thessalonians 1: 7-10; Matthew 25 31-46; 2 Peter 3: 3-13; Revelation 20 7-21: 1.

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