

#7 – THE KING OF THE NORTH IS BABYLON AND REMAINS CONSISTENT THROUGHOUT THE PROPHECY

Who is the 'king of the North'? In the opening verses of the prophecy, if we have identified the 'king of the south' as Ptolemaic Egypt, then the 'king of the north', with whom the Ptolemies fought would be the Seleucid kings, or the kings of Syria just as Uriah Smith concluded. However, while the author certainly agrees that the power denoted by 'the king of the north' in these verses is the Seleucid kingdom, he does not believe 'the king of the north' refers to the power that controls Syria – but rather the power that controls Babylon.

As one examines the exilic literature of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah, with which Daniel was a contemporary and would have been familiar, it is clear that Babylon is identified as the northern power. Consider the following scriptures:

(NKJ Jer 25:8-9) ⁹ ...I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the LORD, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land...

(NKJ Eze 26:7) ⁷ "For thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon...

(NKJ Jer 16:13-15) it shall no more be said, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' ¹⁵ "but, 'The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north...

(NKJ Zec 2:6-7) ⁶ "Up, up! Flee from the land of the north," says the LORD...⁷ "Up, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon."

These verses tell of the punishment God will bring upon Judah and the surrounding countries through Babylon. Babylon besieged and subjugated many of the countries in the middle east including the city of Tyre. God predicts through Jeremiah and Zechariah that He will recover His people from the land of the north – from the 'daughter of Babylon' and return them from their captivity back to their own land (BC 535). In each of these texts, Babylon is described as the "families of the north" or the "land of the north" or simply "from the north" over whom Nebuchadnezzar was king.

These texts lend a strong weight of evidence to the idea that the 'king of the North' is Babylon in the prophecy of Daniel 11. Daniel would have understood the 'king of the North' to be a reference to Babylon based on the current situation in the middle east and the writings of his contemporaries (Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah). In light of this, some may ask 'Was the Seleucid kingdom considered 'Babylonian' or connected with Babylon?' This is an important question and must be carefully considered.

When Alexander's kingdom was being divided up by his generals, Seleucus received the satrapy of Babylon, rich in wealth, but weak in power. He was soon run out of Babylon by a usurper and went to serve Ptolemy in Egypt as the admiral of his navy. But it wasn't long until he returned to Babylon and began to reestablish himself as master of the eastern portion of Alexander's empire, and although he would push west and would establish new capitals – Seleucia and Antioch – Babylon

remained the heart of the Seleucid empire. Although the Seleucid kings forced many cities to adopt Hellenistic thought, religious sentiments and politics, the Seleucids themselves incorporated Babylonian religious tenets to gain needed support from their eastern conquests (*The Akitu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia*, Julye Bidmead, Gorgias Press LLC, 2014). Thus the Seleucid kings often used Babylon as their base for conquering the eastern portion of Alexander's territory and by incorporating Babylonian government and religious tenets, their kingdom being the eastern portion of Alexander's king may rightly be referred to as the "king of the north" in this prophecy.

The very title that Alexander and a number of other Seleucid rulers adopted is further evidence of this fact. Alexander is remembered in history as Alexander *the Great*, but the full significance of this title is lost to modern readers who assume this title refers to his accomplishments. In reality this title refers the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian monarchic titles (See 2 Kings 18:19; Isa 36:4) that were eventually taken and used by the Persian monarchy. When Alexander conquered Babylon and Persia, he inherited the title *Great-King*, used by the previous monarchs to indicate their rulership over the territories surrounding Babylon. Just as "Pharaoh" is a monarchic title for the lands of Egypt, so is *Great-King* a title for the ruler of the Babylonian lands. It is for the same reason that Antiochus III of the Seleucid line also received this title of *Great-King* when he reconquered Babylon. This title carries with it the significance of "holding the chief power in that group of lands which centered in Babylon" (E. R. Bevan 'Antiochus III and His Title 'Great-King', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol 22 (1922) pp. 241-244). Thus, the title of Alexander, Antiochus III, and Antiochus VII of *Great-King* specifically denotes master of Babylon and its nearby territories and connects the Seleucid empire directly with Babylon. This explains why the prophecy uses the term 'king of the north' to describe the Seleucid kingdom. Thus, the titles "king of the north" and "king of the south" refer to Babylon and Egypt throughout the prophecy of Daniel 11.

The fact that the term "King of the North" is given with respect to God's people is clear from the division of Alexander's empire. Daniel 8:8 and 11:3 tell us that Alexander's kingdom would be divided up "toward the four winds of heaven" – North, South, East and West. The Seleucid kingdom would rightly be called the "King of the East" if this kingdom was named with respect to Alexander's kingdom because it was the eastern most portion of Alexander's conquests. But when the Bible gives it the title "King of the North" – it is denoting its connection with Babylon as well as its location with respect to Judah.

This consistency of associating the "king of the north" with Babylon and the "king of the south" with Egypt allows for consistency of interpretation with other portions of prophecy as well as within Daniel 11 itself. For instance, in Daniel 11:40 the "king of the south" goes the "king of the north" at "the time of the end". Interpreting this scripture typologically or spiritually brings it in perfect agreement with the prophecy of Revelation 11 and with Great Controversy chapter 15 where the atheism of France (Spiritual Egypt, Rev 11:8) delivers a mortal wound to the Papacy (Spiritual Babylon, Rev 17:5) in 1798. Thus the information given to us in Daniel 11:40 is consistent with the witness of Revelation 11 and with the chapter *The Bible and the French Revolution* from Great Controversy, and by the word of two of three witnesses every word is established.