

Daniel 11:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The prophecy shifts from Persian period to specific Hellenistic predictions: '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.' This refers to Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 BC), one of Alexander the Great's generals who controlled Egypt ('king of the south' from Israel's geographical perspective), and Seleucus I Nicator, who was initially Ptolemy's subordinate officer but became independent ruler of Syria, Mesopotamia, and the eastern territories ('king of the north'). Seleucus ultimately wielded greater power than Ptolemy—his empire at its zenith stretched from Syria to India. The remarkable precision of this centuries-old prophecy demonstrates divine foreknowledge. The phrase structure contrasts the two: Ptolemy 'shall be strong' while Seleucus 'shall be strong above him'—accurately predicting the Seleucid Empire's eventual superiority over Ptolemaic Egypt. Reformed theology emphasizes that such detailed predictive prophecy validates Scripture's divine origin and inspiration; only God possesses exhaustive foreknowledge and can reveal future events with such specificity and accuracy.

Historical Context

After Alexander the Great's sudden death at age 33 (323 BC), his vast empire—stretching from Greece to India—had no clear successor, as his sons were too young. The resulting power vacuum led to the Wars of the Diadochi (Successors) among Alexander's generals. Eventually the empire divided into four main

kingdoms (fulfilling Daniel 7:6, 8:8, 8:22): Ptolemy I took Egypt and Libya; Seleucus I took Syria, Mesopotamia, and the eastern provinces; Cassander took Macedonia and Greece; and Lysimachus took Thrace and Asia Minor. Seleucus initially served under Ptolemy as a general but fled to Egypt after losing his position, later returning with Ptolemy's help to establish his own dynasty—the Seleucid Empire (312-63 BC). At its peak under Seleucus I and Antiochus III, the Seleucid Empire exceeded the Ptolemaic kingdom in both territorial size and military power, controlling vast regions from the Mediterranean to India. Geographically, Israel (Judea) lay directly between these two major powers—Egypt to the south, Syria to the north—making it a contested buffer zone repeatedly affected by their conflicts throughout the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. Daniel's detailed prophecy covering these conflicts (verses 5-35) provided Jewish readers with a historical roadmap demonstrating God's sovereignty over Gentile powers and His protective oversight of His covenant people during this tumultuous period.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does fulfilled predictive prophecy (written c. 536 BC, fulfilled 323-285 BC and beyond) validate Scripture's divine origin and authority?
2. What does God's revelation of specific geopolitical details about Gentile kingdoms teach about His comprehensive sovereignty over all history?
3. Why would God give such remarkably detailed prophecy about conflicts between pagan kingdoms, and how would this have encouraged Jewish exiles and returnees?
4. What does Israel's geographical position between 'north' and 'south' powers teach about God's people often being caught between opposing worldly forces?
5. How should the precision of historically-fulfilled prophecy strengthen our confidence in yet-unfulfilled eschatological prophecies?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּהְיֶה קָ and he shall be strong H2388	מֶלֶךְ And the king H4428	הַנָּגִב of the south H5045	וּמִן H4480	שָׂרֵי יו and one of his princes H8269
וַיִּהְיֶה קָ and he shall be strong H2388	עָלָיו H5921	וּמִשָּׁל ל above him and have dominion H4910	מִמֶּשָׁל ל dominion H4474	
בְּ shall be a great H7227	מִמֶּשָׁלָתוֹ: his dominion H4475			

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 11:11 (Kingdom): 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.

Daniel 11:14 (Kingdom): 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.

Daniel 11:25 (Kingdom): 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.