

The Reign of Rebellion, Part 2

Scripture: Daniel 11:36–45

Code: 27-29

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 11 describes God's chastening of His people Israel. Because of their sinfulness Israel was taken captive into Babylon for seventy years. God sent an angel to show Daniel that that chastening will continue through the reign of the Antichrist to the return of the Messiah. Daniel 11:1-35 details the oppression of the land and people of Israel during the Persian and Greek eras.

God desires the spiritual purification of His people (Dan. 11:35). He uses suffering to accomplish that. The apostle Peter told his readers that the Lord would perfect them after they had "suffered awhile" (1 Pet. 5:10). James said that the testing of our faith produces patience, which perfects us (James 1:3-4).

REVIEW

I. AHASUERUS (v. 2)

II. ALEXANDER (vv. 3-8)

III. ANTIOCHUS THE GREAT (vv. 9-20)

IV. ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES (vv. 21-35)

LESSON

V. THE ANTICHRIST (vv. 36-45)

Between verses 35 and 36 of Daniel we leap across centuries of persecutors to the final persecutor of Israel: the Antichrist. He will reign over the final form of the Roman Empire and preside during the final chapter of God's chastisement of Israel.

The Antichrist will be all the evil power of Ahasuerus, Alexander, Antiochus the Great, and Antiochus Epiphanes combined into one person. He will be a counterfeit Christ who will make a treaty with Israel. But in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period he will break the treaty, desecrate the Temple, forbid the practice of Judaism, blaspheme God, and precipitate the holocaust of Armageddon that will end with the return of Jesus Christ.

A. The Timing of His Coming

The sharp break in the flow of history that occurs at verse 36 is introduced in verse 35: "Even to the time of the end. " Up to this point Daniel 11 deals with what to us is past history. Verse 36 on reveal events that are yet future.

Some Bible commentators disagree. They believe verses 36-45 refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, not the Antichrist. Because they refuse to accept that the Bible predicts future events, they are forced to explain those verses as past history.

There are several reasons to suggest that a king yet future is spoken of in Daniel 11:36-45.

1. "The time of the end"

"The time of the end" (v. 35, cf. v. 40) is an eschatological term that points to the last days of the present age.

2. The scope of the prophecy

The scope of the prophecy goes beyond the Persian and Greek eras. In Daniel 10:14 the messenger angel tells Daniel, "I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days. "

3. The historical record

We can substantiate the historical accuracy of the prophecy in Daniel 11 up to verse 35. After that we have no historical data to explain Daniel verses 36-45. Also, there is no indication that the events recorded in those verses were fulfilled during the life of Antiochus Epiphanes.

4. The timing of God's final judgment

Daniel 11:36 says the king "shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished. " When the term "indignation" is used in the Bible in a prophetic context, it is used almost synonymously with the tribulation period--the final outpouring of God's wrath in the last days.

5. The similarity of description

The ruler described in this passage is similar to other scriptural accounts of the Antichrist. Daniel 12:1 says he will reign during "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. " It will be worse than any other time in the history of man. Verse 2 tells us it will be followed by the resurrection, which is at the end of the last days.

6. The prophetic context

The previous three prophecies in the book of Daniel all speak of the Antichrist. It makes sense that the final prophecy in Daniel would follow the same pattern.

B. The Circumstances at His Coming

1. His character (vv. 36-39)

"The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all. "

This king has been called "the willful king" since he will operate "according to his [own] will. " He is identified by several descriptive titles in the Bible: the "little horn" (Dan. 7:8) , the "king of fierce countenance" (Dan. 8:23) , "the prince that shall come" (Dan. 9:26) , the "man of sin . . . the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3; a Hebraism meaning he is doomed to destruction) , and "a beast" (Rev. 13:1).

a) His power (v. 36a)

"The king shall do according to his will. "

The Antichrist will make his decisions as an absolute sovereign and with self-centered motives. Because he will be empowered by Satan he will give the world the baptism of hell. Because he will have demonic cooperation he will be able to establish an absolute world monarchy. His will have credibility because he will be able to do miraculous signs and wonders that deceive people. Under his rule the western world will become the protector of Israel against those who desire to control it--the Soviet Union, the East, the Arab nations, and a coalition of African nations.

During the Antichrist's reign there will be other rulers, but he will be supreme over all. Revelation 17 mentions ten other kings who will be puppet kings under the Antichrist. Revelation 13 indicates he will be aided by a "false prophet" who will do his bidding. The kings of the south, north, and east will attempt to revolt against the Antichrist only after his sovereignty is established. But his power to make decisions will be absolute. His influence in the world will be so complete that he will cause all mankind to bear his mark to function in society (Rev. 13:16-17).

b) His pride (v. 36b)

"He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god. "

Antiochus Epiphanes was proud but he never magnified himself above every god. He religiously worshiped the gods of the Greeks and tried to force the Jews to do the same. But the Antichrist will be atheistic--setting himself above every god. The apostle Paul said he "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:4). While there have been many egoists in history, the one who will sit in the Temple claiming to be God will be the greatest of all. He will be the epitome of pride. Paul appropriately identified him as an opposer or adversary (2 Thess. 2:4) --a common description of Satan that directly links the Antichrist to the evil power behind him.

The verb used in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 is translated "exalted above measure" in 2 Corinthians 12:7. The Antichrist will exalt himself above all that is worshiped--whether deities, shrines, images, or altars. He will initially tolerate religion, but at a given time he will destroy the false church (identified as "the great harlot" in Revelation 17:1). He will let the Jewish people worship in their Temple until

the middle of the tribulation but then he will desecrate it--committing the abomination of desolation after the pattern of Antiochus Epiphanes and slaughtering so many Jewish people that two-thirds of them will die (Zech. 13:8).

c) His blasphemy (v. 36c)

"[He] shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods. "

The Antichrist will be a blasphemer without equal. Revelation 13:5-6 says, "There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. . . . And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. " His will be the mouth of hell, and he will try to change God's moral laws (Dan. 7:25).

The Hebrew text of Daniel 11:36 indicates that the "marvelous" or astonishing things the Antichrist will speak will be unbelievable. In effect, that means the intensity of his blasphemy will be unparalleled in human history.

Why Will God Allow the Antichrist to Reign?

God will tolerate the Antichrist's atrocities because they are part of the process God is using to purify Israel. And they will last only a short period of time! Revelation 13:5 states that the Antichrist will be given power for only forty-two months (three- and-a-half years). He will exalt himself as God for the last half of the Tribulation, until God's wrath is completely poured out. His blasphemy and oppression will finally lead the nation of Israel to recognize Jesus Christ as its Messiah and turn to Him. Nothing short of the Antichrist's reign and persecution will do that.

d) His perversion (v. 37a)

The angel told Daniel that the Antichrist will be perverted in three ways.

(1) Of tradition

"Neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers. "

The King James Version translates that as "the God of his fathers," but it is better translated with the plural "gods" because the singular form of the Hebrew word is used twice in the immediate context. That means the Antichrist will not respect traditional religion of his fathers.

Paul said that in the last days men will be "without natural affection" (2 Tim. 3:3). Families will fall apart because people will no longer care about their family members. There will be no respect for parents, heritage, or family tradition. While people normally respect the beliefs of their ancestors, the Antichrist will not.

(2) Of love

"Nor the desire of women. "

That's a very difficult phrase to interpret. It could mean that the Antichrist will be a homosexual because he will lack the normal capacity to love a woman. Some think it means he will lack the gentleness and graciousness characteristic of women. Others conclude it means he won't care for

the Messiah, "the desire of women" being interpreted as the hope of Jewish women to give birth to the Messiah. But in context that last interpretation seems forced since many people don't have that desire and thus it would not sufficiently distinguish the Antichrist. I believe the phrase indicates that he will not have a normal affection for a wife, mother, or sister.

(3) Of religion

"Nor regard any god. "

Most people believe in some kind of god. When getting into trouble they usually turn to a higher source of power than themselves for help. Men invent religions because they naturally believe in the supernatural. But the Antichrist will be completely irreligious.

Our world seems ready for that kind of leader. Many today aren't bothered by a man in leadership who doesn't have normal family relationships, though fifty years ago no one would have considered him. Few now seem to be bothered if a man has a perverted sexual life--homosexuality is often presented merely an alternative lifestyle. Nor is belief in God thought to be important in our society. Probably most would accept an atheist in power, especially if he pretended to be religious.

e) His idol (vv. 37b-39)

(1) The god he will honor (vv. 37b-38a)

"He shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate [lit. "in its place"] shall he honor the god of fortresses. "

The Antichrist will worship "the god of fortresses" in place of the normal human affections for family, women, and God. The Hebrew word translated "fortresses" is used six other times in Daniel 11 (vv. 1, 7, 10, 19, 31, 39). In each instance it refers to a strong place or fort, and always deals with military power. Daniel 7:23 says the fourth and final form of the Roman Empire under the rule of the Antichrist "shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. " Such incredible military power means he will be able to magnify himself above all else. He will have the intimidation of nuclear weapons or whatever other weapons of mass destruction are fashionable at his time.

(2) The offering he will make (vv. 38b-39)

"A god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the strongest fortresses with a foreign 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. "

The text assumes that the Antichrist's forefathers would offer anything valuable to their deities--whether gold, silver, precious stones, or other desirable items. But the Antichrist will offer his precious metals and stones to acquire a war machine, "a god whom his fathers knew not. " Because war is so expensive he may seek to capture the world's wealth to buy armaments.

The Antichrist will attack the strongest fortresses with his "foreign god" (war machine). Once he obtains control of the earth he will honor everyone who honors him with land, a leadership position, and limited independence. To insure political control he will obligate those he conquers to obey him. That kind of control has been seen in our time in atheistic communism--a militant philosophy of world

domination.

2. His conflict (vv. 40-45)

During the first three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation the Antichrist will obtain world dominion. During that time he will let the false church coexist with his atheistic government. He will also allow Israel certain freedoms while he honors his treaty of protection with them. But that will change.

a) The cause (v. 40a-b)

(1) Invasion from the South (v. 40a)

"At the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him. "

A revolution against the Antichrist will erupt. Holding a global empire together is an impossible task and even hell won't be able to do it. The empire the Antichrist obtained peacefully by solving some problems in the Middle East will begin to fall apart. "The king of the south" will bring an army out of Africa in an attempt to control the strategic Middle East. The Hebrew word describing that attack as a "push" comes from a word meaning "to push like a goat. "

(2) Invasion from the North (v. 40b)

"The king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind. "

At the same time an army more powerful than the southern army will attack from the north. The Antichrist will be in control of the Middle East so those two attacks will be against him. "The king of the north" refers to the area now occupied by the Soviet Union or Russia, which desires control of the Middle East.

Ezekiel 38-39 contains important evidence indicating a Russian army that will invade from the north:

(a) Israel will be regathered

Ezekiel 38:8 says, "After many days, thou shalt be visited; in the latter years thou shalt come into the land. " When the king of the north attacks, Israel will be regathered in its land (cf. v. 12).

(b) Israel will be at peace

The king of the north "shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwallled villages; I will go to those who are at rest, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates" (v. 11). Israel will be at peace. That's precisely the nature of the first three-and-a-half years of the tribulation. The Antichrist will become the protector of Israel by making a pact with them for seven years (Dan. 9:27). The resulting peace will cause Israel to lower its defenses in misplaced reliance on the power of the Antichrist.

(c) Israel will be in its latter days

"In the latter days" (Ezek. 38:16) is an eschatological expression that indicates the events described in Ezekiel 38 will take place during Israel's seventieth week (the Tribulation).

(d) Israel's enemy will be far north

Ezekiel 38:2 says, "Son of man, set thy face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. " Meshech and Tubal are the names of ancient peoples who lived in northern Mesopotamia and the Caucasus region of modern Russia. The people of the northern king are described as "Gomer, and all its hordes; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters . . . from the north parts" (Ezek. 38:6; 39:2). The Hebrew word translated "north" in those verses refers to the far north. The only country far north of Israel is Russia.

According to Ezekiel 38:5 when Russia attacks it will be joined by Persia (Iran) , Cush (Ethiopia) , and Put (Libya) --representatives of an Arab alliance that will chafe under the power of the Antichrist and the western alliance. They will unite with Russia and attack his interests in the Middle East.

b) The chariots (v. 40c)

"[The king of the north will attack] with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships. "

The king of the north will attack with the modern counterparts of chariots, horsemen, and ships--everything they've got. But according to Ezekiel 39 God will give victory to the Antichrist. Apparently five-sixths of the Russian army will be destroyed by supernatural intervention (vv. 2-5). Thus the Antichrist will win not by his own power but because God will exercise His power.

c) The conquest (vv. 40d-43)

(1) Of north and south (v. 40d)

"[The Antichrist] shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass through. "

The Antichrist will decimate the forces of Russia and those confederated with it. Only one-sixth of the northern army will survive to retreat back to its land. This is history--though it hasn't happened yet, it will.

(2) Of the Arab states (v. 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. "

After defeating the kings of the south and the north (the African army, the Russian army, and the Arab allies of Russia) , the Antichrist will enter into Israel ("the glorious land"). He may wonder how he won since Ezekiel 38-39 indicates it's divine intervention that will destroy the northern and southern armies. After entering Israel the Antichrist's forces will devastate the southern territory (v. 42). But verse 41 indicates that Edom, Moab, and Ammon (to the southeast of Israel) will escape his depredations. That's because He will be busy to the southwest with the African army. He won't be concerned about the southeast because it is of minimal strategic value, being mostly desert. The angel's revelation to Daniel concerning the future was remarkably specific.

(3) Of the Africans (vv. 42-43)

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

The Antichrist will destroy both the Russian army and its Arab allies from the north, as well as the

African army from the south. By those conquests he will become the master of the world. He will thus pass the first great test of his ability to subdue revolution. It's at this time that he will truly begin to sense his power. He will destroy the false church and begin to persecute Israel. He'll call for the whole world to worship him and abolish all other religions. He'll set himself up as God, tolerating no other authority and ruling in absolute supremacy. All the allies of Russia will be "at his steps" (v. 43; lit. , "in his train") , meaning they will follow him subserviently.

d) The cataclysm (v. 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 sweep away many. "

At this point in the tribulation the events described in Revelation 6-18 begin to unfold. God will pour out His wrath: the seven seals will be opened, the seven trumpets blown, and the seven bowls poured out. His wrath will engulf the earth while the Antichrist reigns as God.

The one-sixth of the Russian army that God spared from destruction will regroup for a second attack on the Antichrist. The "tidings out of the east" (Dan. 11:44) are explained in Revelation 9:13-16: at the blowing of the sixth trumpet the apostle John "heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, Loose the four angels who are bound in the great River, Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, who were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand. "

That passage describes an army that will come from the east of Israel. It may be a demonic host or it may be a human army, perhaps from communist China. Back in the May 22, 1965 edition of Time magazine (p. 35) it was reported that the Chinese standing militia numbers over 200 million--an army that has been ready for a long time and ironically knows little of the book of Revelation. The eastern army will move toward Israel desiring to gain control over the Middle East and throw off the rule of the Antichrist.

According to Daniel 11:44 the Antichrist will triumph again in a second great battle. That's not surprising because he will have Satan and hell on his side helping him.

e) The climax (v. 45a)

"He [the Antichrist] shall plant the tabernacle of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain. "

Mount Zion lies between the Mediterranean and Dead seas. In the Temple of Jerusalem the Antichrist will set up his base of operations and declare himself God. That will occur near the end of the tribulation. Israel will lie devastated as a result of war and persecution. Two thirds of the people of Israel will be killed (Zech. 13:8). But that is not the way history ends.

f) The condemnation (v. 45b)

"He shall come to his end, and none shall help him. "

Just when he seems invincible the Antichrist will come to his end. When he thinks he has won the Battle of Armageddon the Lord Jesus Christ will descend with a sword from the sky and slay him (Rev. 19:11-21; 2 Thess. 2:8). The Antichrist will be no match for God's true King.

Just prior to Christ's return Israel will reach its deepest point of sorrow, suffering, and humiliation. As He comes to their rescue they will look upon Him "whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12:10) , and they will be redeemed. They will already have been evangelized by the 144 thousand Jewish witnesses during the second three-and-a-half years of the tribulation (Rev. 7:4-10). At their lowest point they will finally accept the gospel they have heard.

CONCLUSION

There are three major lessons in the eleventh chapter of Daniel:

A. God Is in Control

Every detail of history is under God's control. Every ruler--Ahasuerus, Alexander, Antiochus the Great, Antiochus Epiphanes, the Antichrist, and anyone in between--has carried out His will. It's a comfort to know that history is His story. All is in His hand and there's no need to worry about the future.

B. God Is Purging His People

God continues to purge Israel. That purging will end in an incredible day of testing for Israel. In Luke 21:28 the Lord warned, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth near. "

C. God Will Triumph over Evil

The world's godless system will end in a holocaust and Christ will triumph over it. For those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ that will inaugurate a blissful future that will last forever! I hope you know Him.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What does God use suffering to accomplish in the lives of His people (Dan. 11:35)?
2. How do some commentators view the events of Daniel 11:36-45 in the chronology of history? What do they refuse to accept?
3. Why is it probable that Daniel 11:36-45 is speaking of the future?
4. List the titles in Scripture that describe the Antichrist.
5. Why will the Antichrist be able to do everything "according to his will"? Who will empower and cooperate with him?
6. Why will it be necessary for the western world under the Antichrist to step forward as the protector of Israel?

7. In what way will the Antichrist be the epitome of pride?
8. Although he will exalt himself above all, what will the Antichrist tolerate at first?
9. Why will God tolerate the atrocities of the Antichrist? What will his blasphemy and oppression lead Israel to do?
10. In what three ways will the Antichrist be perverted (Dan. 11:37)?
11. Why may it be said that the world today is ready for a leader like the Antichrist?
12. Instead of God or people what will the Antichrist worship (Dan. 11:38)?
13. How will the Antichrist convince people to recognize his authority and persuade them to be loyal to him?
14. What will erupt against the Antichrist's world rule (Dan. 11:40)?
15. Identify the country that the phrase "the king of the north" represents. What evidence exists to identify it?
16. Describe the conditions in Israel when the "king of the north" will attack (Ezek. 38:11).
17. What nations will help the "king of the north" in its attack on Israel (Ezek. 38:5)?
18. Whose power is responsible for the Antichrist's victory over the armies of the north and south?
19. What will the Antichrist do after he defeats the northern and southern armies (Dan. 11:41)?
20. What tidings from the east and north will trouble the Antichrist (Rev. 9:13-16)?
21. Why isn't it surprising that the Antichrist will triumph in the second great battle predicted in Daniel 11:44?
22. When will the Antichrist finally meet his end? What will happen to Israel at that point?

Pondering the Principles

1. God will tolerate the atrocities of the Antichrist because they will be part of the process of purifying Israel. It's the incredible blasphemy and oppression of the Antichrist that will finally bring Israel to recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah. Meditate on Isaiah 1:24-26, Malachi 3:1-4, Ephesians 1:4, and 1 Peter 5:8-10. The purity of God's people is a priority in His plan. Are you working with God in purifying your life (cf. 1 John 3:3)? Are you sensitive to His leading and pliable to His correction? Or does it require extreme measures (like it has for Israel) for you to respond in accordance with His will?

2. It's a great comfort to know that God is in control of history. When Gog, the northern prince, brings his army out of the north to gain control of Israel, it will be supernaturally destroyed by God. Read through Ezekiel 38:18; 39:7. God will be glorified by destroying forces that oppose Him and seek to destroy His people. At that time those who wondered about or denied God's existence will clearly see His power displayed (Ezek. 38:23). Though we don't see such massive demonstrations today, there are other miracles that are no less dramatic. Have you recently witnessed the transformation of someone who has received a spiritual rebirth through faith in Christ? That is no less a demonstration of God's sovereign power. Praise the Lord who someday will be known by everyone for His great power and majesty (Rev. 15:3).

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