

## **“OF WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS, III.”**

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**Scripture Texts: Daniel 11:36-45**

### **Introduction.**

Our text is one of those that have divided the scholarly community for centuries. Who is it talking about? Is this an extension of the previous section about Antiochus IV or is this someone new?

The previous text ended with:

**Daniel 11:35** and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, *until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.*

This appears to mark the end of a period of persecution, and end of this phase of history. Clearly by the time we get to Daniel 12:1 we know we are talking about the end of time and a resurrection. So the question becomes when in this text did the leap take place from Antiochus IV to the anti-Christ?

The answer to this question in the minds of many Bible scholars lies in verse 11:36.

### **Antiochus IV or Anti-Christ I, 11:36-40, rise and success.**

Something changes here in chapter 11, something that doesn't match up with the history we have already covered.

**Daniel 11:36** And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done.

A first glance it does seem to continue the previous history of Antiochus, but verse 35 spoke of “the time of the end” marking an end to that part of the prophecy.

Furthermore we know that he couldn't just do as he pleased, he was hindered by the Romans. We know that once Rome told Antiochus to stay out of Egypt, he didn't attempt to return.

History says Antiochus didn't exalt himself above other gods, he may have rejected his father's god, but he didn't worship unknown gods. He worshiped the Greek gods of his culture like Zeus. Nor did he have the military dominance or control of Egypt suggested in verses 40-44, nor did he meet his end in Israel the way verse 45 suggests.

Given how historically precise the language of this prophecy has been up to this point, it is hard to defend that this text is about Antiochus IV. So this seems to be about someone else.

The similar but not identical language of our text to last week's texts is meant to show us a parallel between Antiochus and this king who is to come. Antiochus is a foreshadowing of a greater, far worse final enemy of God and God's people.

This king is a larger version of Antiochus, sort of Antiochus 2.0. Antiochus is used as a pre-cursor to a future kind of king, a far more wicked person like what the NT refers to as the "man of lawlessness" (II Thessalonians 2:3). Antiochus persecuted God's people before the first coming of Christ. This new person will persecute the church before the second coming of Christ. Antiochus is a pale reflection of the anti-Christ.

It is interesting to note that there are several individuals in the OT who pre-figure or foreshadow Christ in some way, Melchizedec, Joseph, Moses, Samson, David, Solomon. We can see something of Christ in them.

But there is only one person in the whole OT who pre-figures or foreshadows the anti-Christ and it's Antiochus Epiphanes IV, the wicked enemy and persecutor of God's people. As contemptible as Antiochus was, the anti-Christ will be far more contemptible, worse than any figure in human history.

This last section reveals the character of this false prophet, the false Messiah.

One of the chief characteristics of the anti-Christ is he will think he is god or like God. The words you will be like God echoed in the garden and will echo to the very end of time. He will have utterly no regard for God or religion, he will promote atheism in the culture, a kind of secular humanism.

Another characteristic of the anti-Christ is blasphemy and inhumanity. He will speak blasphemies against the God of gods, he will despise God and all religion related to God.

The desire of women is a bit hard to decipher. Some think it refers to a goddess. But others take it more literally as referring to the love of women, meaning their deep affection and devotion for home and family. The anti-Christ will have no regard for

home and marriage and family, and tear down the fabric of society. In Revelation he is depicted as a beast and a devourer of children.

Having sought to destroy religion, he will go after the very foundations of marriage and family. We see this already in the killing of millions of children in the womb and the destruction of marriage through divorce, adultery, pornography, same-sex unions and every other abomination under the sun.

A fourth characteristic of the anti-Christ is violence and love of war, a god of fortresses. He will honor a god of fortresses. War will be his god and religion. This is the god he sacrifices to and makes offerings to, bringing gold and silver. This is the antithesis of gentleness and all things Christ-like.

### **The Final Battle, 11:40-45, conflict and oppression.**

Nothing in these verses matches anything we know in history. Everything before 11:35 matches with what we know in history, times, dates, places and names. But not this, so it must point to a time yet to come, a time yet far in the future.

As this king is seen in comparison to Antiochus, so the struggle to come is foreshadowed by and compared to Antiochus' struggles between the kings of the north and the kings of the south.

The end will be characterized by a great conflict, symbolized by Edom, Moab, and Ammon and take place in the Glorious Land.

The nations who are with him are the old enemies of Israel, Edom, Moab and Ammon. The nations against him who are defeated are the allies of Israel, Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia.

His dominance is so superior that all fall down before him.

Then he shall come to his end, with none to help him.

Yes, there will be great troubles and trials in life, and yes the enemy is a very great enemy. But don't tremble, don't fear, don't think too highly of him. Here he is dismissed in a dozen words, six in Hebrew. And according to Martin Luther one little word will fell him.

His end will be anticlimactic, Christ will simple blow him away with the breath of His mouth. In the end God always prevails, He rescues His people and delivers them from all evil and the Evil One.

**Revelation 20:9-10** They marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

This is an important word to anyone who must face the final great battles of history. The anti-Christ will not be destroyed by might or power but by the Spirit of God.

Remember the lessons of last week. Keep the faith, believe in God, hold fast to His sovereignty, resist and stand firm in the face of evil, and be wise, passing on the wisdom of God to the next generation. The Bible is the survival manual for all that lies in the future.

The most important is weapon of our warfare is prayer. God is answering a prayer here. God is showing Daniel and us today that the real weapon of the church is prayer.

God gave this prophecy to His people long before the rise of Antiochus to prepare them for what was to come. And God gives these prophecies of the end of time to prepare us. Just as there were wars and rumors of wars before Antiochus, so there will be wars and rumors of wars before the anti-Christ.

It should be a comfort to know that God knows and is in control, that the times of trouble will be severe but limited, so don't lose heart or faith or grow weary in well-doing. This knowledge is meant to keep us faithful, strong and courageous.

### **Human History as Scaffolding.**

Consider that the Bible makes no mention of the history and civilizations of the Inca people of Peru or the Mayan people of Central America or the great dynasties of China or India. Why not? Are they unimportant, are they inferior, did nothing of significance happen in those places?

The Bible contains the history of redemption and how God came to a chosen people and made them a holy nation to carry out His redemptive purposes and then how God sent His only Son to be the Savior of the world, born a Jew of the tribe of Judah, in the royal line of David.

The OT records God's purposes concerning His holy people and the Holy Land. The history related in Daniel 11 seems long ago and unimportant to us, but it all related directly to God's people and God's land.

With the NT God's redemptive purposes stretch out to touch all the nations of the world.

Now the church is the center of God's plan and all of history relates to His plans for His kingdom. Whatever happens in history is what God has ordained to happen for the sake of His building His kingdom.

The Jews who returned from Babylonian exile found Jerusalem in ruins and they set about rebuilding the walls and the temple, a history that is recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. Despite setbacks and persecution and great hardship and discouragement they persevered, they were part of God's unfolding redemptive plan for the world. They were rebuilding the temple for when Christ would come.

Paul and the disciples in the NT went out into a broken and sinful world, and despite great persecution and hardship and resistance planted churches as they built up the great church of Jesus Christ, the new spiritual temple.

What is really important in our world, of truly lasting significance? Where would you start looking to find what is truly of most vital importance on our planet? Washington DC, London, Moscow, Jerusalem, Beijing? Would you follow the reporters and news teams to find what is most important, would you look at the biggest and boldest headlines?

No, you should look at where God is at work, where the church is being built, where the redemptive purposes of God are being carried out with greatest vigor. And most likely there won't be any reporters or news teams in those places. In the jungles of SE Asia, in the bush country of Africa, in the urban slums of India and the underground churches of China.

The church of Jesus Christ is the center point of history. Everything that happens is for the sake of the church, that's how important the church is, nothing is more important. For the sake of the church Christ came and died. For the sake of the church Christ rose again and ascended to heaven and ever lives to intercede for the church. Everything revolves around the church.

The glory of God and the glory of His Son and the glory of His Son's Church, the Church of Jesus Christ, are the object of all God's activity in the universe. The redemption of millions for the glory of Jesus is the goal behind the design of creation and history.

**Ephesians 3:8b-11** ... to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God,

who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God is building His holy, spiritual temple, the church of Jesus Christ and all *the rest of history is just the scaffolding for what He is building*. Everything in history happens for the sake of the building of the Church of Jesus Christ. When the last living stone is in place then Christ will come again and the scaffolding will no longer be needed.

God will no longer need the kings of the north and the kings of the south, He won't need Alexander the Great or Antiochus Epiphanes or Hitler or Putin or Trump or Islam. Nor will He need preachers and missionaries. When Christ comes the new heaven and the new earth will be established. When God's work is done, history will cease.

Human history is just scaffolding for God's work. The world is just the great quarry, the great forest, the great mine where the building materials are gathered for God's work.

If you have ever traveled the world and visited some of the great sites you are disappointed if you get to one and it is covered in scaffolding while it is under renovation or restoration. The beauty and magnificence of Westminster Cathedral or Notre Dame or St. Peters is hidden.

What is truly beautiful and glorious in history is hidden behind the scaffolding of God's great redemptive works. Its true glory will be revealed when Christ comes again and removes the scaffolding. Scaffolding is temporary, the Church of Christ is permanent, eternal.

**I Corinthians 2:9** No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.

Everyone thinks history and what is happening now is important when all they are doing is starrng at scaffolding.

Our glorious future in heaven is our hope and our help in the face of Satan's temptations to compromise or give in or give up. The anticipation of seeing the goal of all history, the completion of our salvation is our joy, and for the joy set before us may we by God's grace and strength endure whatever is our cross.