

The End-Times Message

Daniel 11:36-45

Our world is changing. Where is it all heading? As human beings, we have a natural curiosity to know the answer to that question. There's much we don't know about the end times. We can be thankful, however, that God has told us exactly what He wants us to know about what's going to happen to this world in the future. And although the Bible is realistic in its view of this world and its end, it is not cynical. It is hopeful. And so should we be. I pray that are encouraged with faith and hope in God and His sovereign plans for the world and for you today.

We have been studying Daniel's final vision in chapters 10-12. In Daniel 11 the angel tells Daniel what was going to happen from Daniel's day in the 6th century B.C. to the climax of the end time. The first section of chapter eleven (1-20), though future for Daniel, is actually history for us now, and is the prophetic record of what happened from roughly 535 B.C. to 175 B.C. It covered the time of the Persian empire into the time of the Greeks. In the second section (21-35), we find a detailed prediction of the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the wicked God-hating, Jew-hating, Syrian ruler who plagued the world in the second century B.C. So far most scholars agree on the interpretation of these verses.

Now today we come to the final section of the message of chapter 11 (36-45). It is both climactic and controversial. We're told about a ruler in verse 36, a king, **"Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done."** Who is this king?

Before looking at the text, I want you to realize biblical scholars offer different interpretations of this section. The question of verse 36 which all of the commentators recognize as an issue is this: Does this king in verse 36 still refer to Antiochus Epiphanes who has been the focus of the last 15 verses? And if it doesn't, does it refer to someone else? And if it refers to someone else, to whom does it refer?

The three most common interpretations of Daniel 11:36-45 are:

1. *The wicked ruler described in these verses is Antiochus Epiphanes.* That is, like the section above it, the verses merely record a historical event for us. It's already happened.
2. *The king is a future ruler.* This view says the section refers not to a historical figure at all, but to a future character. Thus, many who take this view see in these verses the coming Man of Sin or the Antichrist spoken about in the New Testament. This second view say it's yet to happen.
3. *It mingles the past and the future.* Remember, we're using the term "past" relatively, since it was all "future" to Daniel. Antiochus was a historical, evil leader. He was also a foreshadowing of the yet future, evillest-of-all leaders, the Antichrist.

Here's where the confusion enters. Verse 35 is clearly talking about events during the days of Antiochus. And verse 36 seems to continue speaking of him, "**Then the king shall do according to his own will.**" Who is this king?

Antiochus? Some commentators see in these verses a summary of the character and exploits of Antiochus but without the detail of the previous verses about him. Some of the details in this section sound like him, but many do not.

For instance, verse 36 says '**he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god.**' Antiochus, though a blasphemer, did not place a statue of himself but of Zeus Olympius in the Jerusalem temple. And though Antiochus would think of himself as God manifest and his coins depicted him as such, it really cannot be said of Antiochus that, "**He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all,**" (Dan. 11:37). To the contrary, Antiochus's policy was to force his Jewish subjects to worship the god of his fathers or be killed.

Also, the war described in verses 40-45 does not really fit the final campaigns of Antiochus either, certainly not with the precision and detail of the prophecies that we had in verses 21-35. Antiochus did not meet his end in the land of Israel as verse 45 implies but he died from disease in Persia.

Also as we go forward into chapter 12, which is a continuation of this same message from the angel to Daniel we find that these verses usher us into the very end. In Daniel 12:1 the angels tells Daniel "**At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.**" Jesus quotes this verse in Matthew 24:21 and Mark 13:19 as He prophesies about a future time of great tribulation. So it I cannot see how we can find its fulfillment in the time of Antiochus in the second century B.C.

Furthermore, Daniel 12:2 carries us directly into the end of the age when it speaks about the resurrection: "**And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.**"

So what's going on in Daniel 11 then? The answer, apparently, is that it combines the past and the future. Commentator Joyce Baldwin remarks (202), "*Biblical prophecy regularly exhibits this characteristic of telescoping the future, so that the more distant event appears to merge with the nearer so as to become indistinguishable from it.*" The best-known passage in which we see such "telescoping" is Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 where Jesus speaks both of the coming fall of Jerusalem (which occurred in 70 A.D.) and of the end of the world (which obviously is removed by at least 1900+ years to date), and He does not clearly distinguish the two events, but merges them together.

So although some of Daniel 11:36-45 can serve as a summary or a characterization of Antiochus Epiphanes, I believe it also points us forward to the evil ruler of the end times, the antichrist.

The point for us is this. Daniel 11 contains an important message about where the world is heading. Here's what we learn. From the prophecy revealed in Daniel 11:36-45, God informs us of two end-time conditions.

I. End-Time Conditions (36-39).

A. There will be a final world ruler (36).

Notice again his description in verse 36, **"Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done."**

This final world ruler we have already seen in Daniel 7 as the "little horn" that comes up from the ten kings of the final world empire. We saw a type of him in the description of the king of fierce countenance in Daniel 8 (Dan. 8:23-25). In Daniel 9 he is **"prince who is to come"** whose people **"destroy the city and the sanctuary."**

In the New Testament, John calls him the Anti-Christ in his epistles (1 John 2:18) and the beast from the sea in Revelation 13:1 and 17:1-18. Paul refers to him as **"the man of sin," "the son of perdition"** and **"the lawless one"** (2 Thes 2:3, 4, 8-10).

What kind of man will this coming ruler be? We learn two of his characteristics here.

1. He is arrogant and self-willed.

He will **"do according to his own will,"** (v. 36). He will **"exalt and magnify himself above every god,"** thus asserting himself to be God.

By the way, Genesis 3:5 reveals that this is at the root of all human sin. We sin because we want to call the shots, to be "god" in life. The difference between us and this ruler is that he will have the power to work out his egotistic pretensions.[3]

2. He will blaspheme God.

He will promote an anti-God campaign. In fact, he will **"speak blasphemies against the God of gods."**

3. He will prosper for a time.

Verse 36 says he **"shall prosper."** You say, "That doesn't seem right. How is it that an ungodly, God-defying ruler like this fellow can prosper in his wicked pursuits?" The answer is the same one the Bible gives as to why ungodly people prosper in our day. Their day is coming.

Verse 36 makes that very clear. This coming ruler's heyday will come to an end. He will only prosper **"till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done."** This ruler will be limited by God. He will only be accomplishing the will of God in pouring out God's wrath on the unbelieving world. God alone is sovereign. God has determined exactly how long he will prosper and exactly when this wicked one shall come to his end.

The truth is, God will use the Antichrist in that day, just like He used Antiochus Epiphanes in the past as verse 35 said, **“to refine them, purify them, and make them white,”** to chasten His wayward people. God's plan is certain.

The end times will bring this final evil ruler. We learn of a second end-time condition beginning in verse 37.

B. There will be a final world religion (37-39).

What exactly will this final world ruler do? He will have a final world religion which is described in verses 37-39.

(Dan 11:37-39) **37 "He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above *them* all. 38 "But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. 39 "Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, *and* advance *its* glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.**

The reign of this final world ruler will have religious overtones to it. What kind of final world religion will he promote?

1. It will be an abandonment of traditional religion (37).

Verse 37 says, **He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god.**

We are not sure what the phrase, **“the desire of women”** refers to. John Walvoord suggests that the natural desire of Jewish women was to become the mother of the promised Messiah, the seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3:15. So expression, **“desire of women,”** becomes a symbol of the Messianic hope in general. In other words, the Lord Jesus is in view here.

This future leader will not only hate God, he will also hate God's Anointed One, His own Son. His will be a Christ-less, man-centered religion.

2. It will be characterized by militarism and materialism (38-39). **“But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. 39 "Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, *and* advance *its* glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.”**

This verse describes a man who will eliminate all previous gods save his own, the "god of fortresses." The only thing this ruler trusts in is himself and his own military power. As John Walvoord observes (276), “This is blasphemy to the ultimate, the exaltation of human power and attainment. He is Satan's masterpiece, a human being who is Satan's substitute for Jesus Christ, hence properly identified as the Antichrist.”

Those will be the end-time conditions. There will be a final world ruler and a final world religion characterized by military might and material gain.

Lest we be unnerved, may I remind you that God is not intimidated by pagan leaders, nor will He be by this final one.

Beloved, the good news today and for all eternity is this. God is in control! So much so that 25 centuries ago, He revealed to Daniel what in the world is going to happen! We've learned about the end-time conditions from verses 36-39.

Now, we learn about,

II. The End-Time Conflict (40-45).

Verse 40 begins, **"At the time of the end."** The final verses of Daniel 11 describe the end-time conflict. They give us a picture of the strategy of the coming Antichrist.

These verses describe a series of military maneuvers that will take place during the last few years of the Tribulation. Keep in mind that in Daniel geography is figured from Jerusalem as the starting point, so the "King of the South" and the "King of the North" are south and north of the land of Israel. Many have speculated as to the identities of these powers and how all this will play out. I will not do that today. What I want you to see here is their aggression and how the land of Israel is caught up in the middle of it all. Listen to the angel describe the conflict:

(Dan 11:40-44) **40 "At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm *them*, and pass through. 41 "He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many *countries* shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. 42 "He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 "He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians *shall follow* at his heels. 44 "But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.**

These verses give us a very compressed account of what we might call the Armageddon Campaign spoken about in Revelation 16. As the Antichrist prepares to go to war, he sets up his military headquarters as verse 45 says, **"between the seas and the glorious holy mountain."** As the mightiest armies on earth converge on Israel, the stage is now set for the final act in human history.

III. The End-Time Collapse (45)

Verse 45 tells us nothing about how the Antichrist will be defeated. It simply tells us, **"yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him."** Evidently his end

will be sudden, swift, and unexpected. This fits with the picture given in other passages in Daniel regarding the suddenness of Christ's coming. It is like ...

The Rock that hit the Statue in Daniel 2

The Court that passes judgment in Daniel 7

The end that comes without human power in Daniel 8

The end that is decreed in Daniel 9.

Daniel 7:11 adds this important fact. After the “**little horn**” (who is the Antichrist) is judged, Daniel records, “**I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame.**” 2 Thessalonians 2:8 describes the final end of the Antichrist this way: “**And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.**”

Why does God tell Daniel and us about these things?

May I suggest three reasons for our application?

1. God has a plan for the world. He wants us to know He has determined these things ahead of time. He prophesies these things so we wouldn't be surprised or alarmed. In His plan, He said He would use wicked rulers, and even the ultimate wicked ruler to accomplish His purposes. He warned us that things will get bad, but we need not lose heart. Jesus said that he who stands firm to the end will be saved (Matt 24:13).

2. He wants us to live in light of His plan.

Brace yourself. The world is not getting better. No matter how good the world seems to be in terms of technology, the moral compass is pointing in the wrong direction. So be alert. Don't be sucked in by the spirit of Antichrist that is already in the world. That spirit tries to make us think that sin isn't really sinful and that there is no such thing as right and wrong. It also seduces us into silence when we ought to be speaking out.

So be Bold. This is no time for compromise. In the days to come we will see persecution grow worse as those who know Christ are ridiculed for their faith. That is happening already in many places around the world.

But be encouraged. When Jesus Christ returns, He will bring salvation for those who have believed in Him...and judgment for those who have rejected Him. Today is the day of salvation.

There never has been a better day to become a Christian. Eventually the whole world will have to make a choice—Christ or Antichrist. Why not come to Christ now? Today is the day of salvation. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then run to the cross. Lay your sins on Jesus. Believe that he died for you and that he rose again on the third day. Open your heart to him. Trust Christ as your Lord and Savior. Then no matter what the future holds, you will have nothing to fear.