

# THE WORSE OF TWO EVILS

DANIEL 11:29-45    APRIL 10, 2019

If you were a fan of the innovative television show *24*, you got used to a pattern that seemed to emerge, at least to my recollection. The season would start, you'd get introduced to the bad guy. You'd get to know him a little, see the bad guy stuff he did. Then, at about the 12 hour mark, he'd get killed or captured and then the REAL villain would show up. And, man, if you thought the *first* guy was bad, buckle up!

The last quarter of the book of Daniel, chapters 10, 11 and 12, are the record of the last great vision he received. In this vision, God takes Daniel from his current day, through the end of the Persian empire, through Greece, then Rome and ultimately to the Great Tribulation, under a *revived* Roman empire, culminating in the return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

We're in chapter 11, which thus far has covered the decline of the Persian empire, the rise and fall of Alexander the Great, and then the decades of war between the Ptolemys of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria. The vision then zooms in on one particularly evil king of the northern empire, Antiochus Epiphanes.

We highlighted the fantastic accuracy with which all of these things have been fulfilled. In fact, Dr. John Walvoord points out that, in the first 35 verses of the chapter, there are "approximately one hundred and thirty-five prophetic statements, all now fulfilled."<sup>1</sup>

We're picking up in verse 29. We've seen Antiochus Epiphanes' rise to power and his great success. Tonight we continue to learn about what he would do, but we won't stop there. By the end we will have vaulted over the millennia to a time yet future for us, when the Antichrist steps onto the world stage. The first bad guy (Antiochus) gives way to the ultimate villain (Antichrist).

**Daniel 11:29-30 - <sup>29</sup> "At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. <sup>30</sup> For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do *damage*. "So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.**

Antiochus had been very successful against the Egyptian empire. However, on this campaign he was opposed by the Romans, who had come to the aid of the Egyptians. Rome was a fledgeling power, but effective in driving out the Syrians from the north. Angry and embarrassed, Antiochus turned toward home, with his tail between his legs. On his way, he'd stop off in Jerusalem to vent his frustrations against the defenseless Jewish people.

You can read about his dealings with Israel in the books of First and Second Maccabees. If you have YouVersion's Bible app, select the King James Version with Apocrypha, American Edition and you'll be able to read those books. You can also read about the period in H.A. Ironside's *The 400 Silent Years*. You can find that for free online.

**Daniel 11:31 - <sup>31</sup> And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily *sacrifices*, and place *there* the abomination of desolation.**

---

<sup>1</sup> John Walvoord Daniel: The Key To Prophetic Revelation

Antiochus issued a command throughout his kingdom that everyone should abandon their own religions and, instead, follow after the Greek gods. He outlawed sacrifices, observing the Sabbath, circumcision and topped it off by setting up a statue of Zeus in the Temple and offering a pig on the altar, fully desecrating it for the Jewish people.

When reading prophecy it's key to try to keep things that need to be separate in their proper place. There are *two* abominations of desolation in the Bible. You have this one, which took place in 167 B.C. and then you have one which Daniel will reference in the *next* chapter. It's still the same vision, but the angel who is speaking to Daniel says that the sacrifices will *again* be taken away and another abomination of desolation will be set up. It's that *second* abomination that Jesus talks about in the Olivet Discourse and is described in the Revelation.

**Daniel 11:32 - <sup>32</sup> Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.**

When Antiochus came to Judea, there was a group of Jews that were happy to join him in his cause. They were apostates who were ready to throw off Judaism for the Greek culture. But, like you see in the book of Exodus when many Israelites were worshipping the golden calf, there remained those who were faithful to God, no matter what. A priest named Mattathias and his sons followed in the footsteps of Phinehas, who fought against the pagan evil of the golden calf incident. This group of zealous men became known as the "Maccabees" and they lead a remarkable revolt against the forces of Antiochus. Judas Maccabeus, in particular, was amazingly successful in the fight, bringing his people, "great honor" while fighting "with cheerfulness the battle of Israel."<sup>2</sup> It's written that "in his acts he was like a lion...wherefore the wicked shrunk for fear of him...because salvation prospered in his hand."

**Daniel 11:33-35 - <sup>33</sup> And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. <sup>34</sup> Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. <sup>35</sup> And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.**

Faithful Jews were mercilessly brutalized during this time. For a time, the Jews refused to fight or defend themselves on the Sabbath and the Syrians took advantage of this<sup>3</sup> until the rabbis ruled that the people could, in fact, defend themselves on the Sabbath. Jews who were found with circumcised sons or not obeying Antiochus' command were killed immediately and savagely. Even still, there were many faithful believers who chose to suffer and die rather than disobey God.

At the same time, we're told in verse 34 that hypocrites were joining the cause as well, not out of faithfulness, but for other reasons. Ultimately, the believing remnant would be purified.

Now, at the end of verse 35 there's a big shift. So far, all the verses of this chapter have corresponded to events that have *already* happened. Now, in verses 36 through 45 we will be introduced to the ultimate villain of history: The Antichrist, for whom Antiochus Epiphanes was just the opening act. He was the preview before the movie.

---

<sup>2</sup> 1 Maccabees 3

<sup>3</sup> John Phillips + Jerry Vines Exploring The Book Of Daniel

The question that arises is: On what basis do we say that verse 35 is about a *past* Syrian king and verse 36 is about a *future* world ruler? That's a fair question and a good question to ask. We want to be careful and thorough as we interpret this stuff. There are 3 major reasons why we see a shift here. First of all, at the end of verse 35 there's that telling phrase: "until the time of the end." Remember, chapters 10, 11 and 12 are all *one* vision. And this vision, we were told in chapter 10 verse 14, ultimately has to deal with what is going to happen "in the latter days." So, in verse 35 we see "until the time of the end." 36: "till the wrath has been accomplished." Verse 40: "at the time of the end." The language highlights the finality and culmination.

Second reason why we recognize this verse as a shift from 167 B.C. to the future Tribulation: The details discussed in the rest of the verses of chapter 11 simply haven't happened yet. If you were here with us last time, we saw how each and every element was fulfilled meticulously in history. Those events are undisputed history. Once you set in on verse 36, what is described hasn't happened. It wasn't Antiochus and it hasn't been anyone else since. Arno Gaebelein writes: "*While there is no difficulty to prove the historical fulfillment of verses 2-35, it is impossible to locate anything in history which corresponds to verses 36-45.*"<sup>4</sup>

Third reason why we recognize a shift to the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation is how the descriptions line up with what we read in the rest of the vision (chapter 12), and the rest of Bible prophecy, particularly the Revelation.

So let's get into it.

**Daniel 11:36 - <sup>36</sup> "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.**

So, first clue here: Antiochus didn't do this. He set up an idol of *Zeus* in the temple. He demanded everyone worship the gods of the Greeks. The king of verse 36 behaves differently.

The Antichrist will arrive on the global stage with great charisma and effectiveness. He'll be a genius. He'll figure out a way to bring peace to the middle east, guaranteeing it in a 7 year treaty with Israel. But, at the midpoint of that treaty, he will enter the Temple, declare *himself* to be God, set up the *second* abomination of desolation and make war against God's people. As we've seen in earlier visions of Daniel, he's characterized by blasphemy and pompous words. Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:4:

**2 Thessalonians 2:4 - [he] exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**

**Daniel 11:37 - <sup>37</sup> 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.**

Interpreters pull big conclusions from this verse. It has to do with the first 2 phrases. Some feel that, when it says "he shall [not] regard the God of his fathers" this is proof that the Antichrist *must* be Jewish. They also feel this is a logical conclusion because, so the reasoning goes, the Jews would 'never' accept a Messiah who wasn't Jewish in heritage. There are a couple problems with the

---

<sup>4</sup> A.C. Gaebelein The Prophet Daniel

insistence that the Antichrist must be a Jew. One is textual, one is logical. First of all, when it says “the God of his fathers” Daniel specifically did *not* use the word Jehovah. Rather, the more generic term “Elohim.” Some commentators say, “The phrase ‘God of his fathers’ is a Jewish way of talking about Jehovah.” We’d agree...*when the Bible uses the name Jehovah!* Which is often does. But it specifically doesn’t here. Walvoord writes, “*For Daniel to omit the word Jehovah or Lord in a passage where a specific name for the God of Israel would be necessary, becomes significant.*”

The *logical* issue with the insistence that the Antichrist be a Jew is that, in this very passage we see many Jews embracing a ruler who was *not* Jewish! So, the argument goes, “they’d never accept a Roman Messiah.” But right here in chapter 11 we saw how many of the Jewish people turned to *Antiochus* and said, “Yes, we accept you, we accept your rule over us, we accept your gods.”

The other phrase that is often seized upon here is that the Antichrist will not “regard...the desire of women.” There are a variety of interpretations here. One is that this is referring to some deity that was, historically, sought after by women. Scholars reference Diana of the Ephesians or Venus of Rome.<sup>5</sup> Another interpretation is that it is saying that the Antichrist will be *homosexual*. However, that’s a pretty far leap. First of all, it doesn’t fit the context of the sentence, which is all about God and worship. But, even if the Antichrist *isn’t* romantically attracted to women doesn’t by nature make him a homosexual. A third interpretation of this phrase points out that “the desire of women” to a Jew would have been a reference to the *Messiah*. Faithful Jewish moms were all hoping they would be the ones to birth the Savior, so in this interpretation it’s saying that Antichrist rejects the God of the Bible and His Son, Jesus Christ, instead seeing himself as god.

**Daniel 11:38-39 - <sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> 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 Antichrist will dominate the world through force and conquest. In the short term he’ll reward some of his followers with material spoils. Remember: Satan is always seeking to counterfeit the work of God. When the *true* Christ returns he doesn’t give us some spit of war-torn land. He rewards us with eternal riches and a place in His *everlasting* Kingdom.

But the good times for the Antichrist will be short-lived. By verse 40 he’s going to have some real problems to deal with.

**Daniel 11:40 - <sup>40</sup> “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.**

It’s not altogether clear who these 2 new kings are. There are those who believe that the Antichrist is *not* the beast of Revelation, but that there is, in fact, 3 prominent figures in the Tribulation: The Antichrist, the Emperor of the Revived Roman empire and then this King of the North seen here in verse 40. Their reasoning is complicated and, to me, creates more problems than it solves. While we can’t be specific, what we know is that many of the subjugated nations of the world will not be happy with the Antichrist’s rule and will mount revolts against him. A coalition from the south and

---

<sup>5</sup> Phillips + Vines

forces from the north will make their stand against the Antichrist, but they won't be successful. He will crush their attempt at independence.

**Daniel 11:41-43 - <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. <sup>43</sup> 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.**

One geo-political problem follows another for Antichrist. But his strength will hold. He will decimate many foes, killing many and plundering their wealth. Jordan will be spared, we don't know why. Egypt's allies will abandon her and instead give allegiance to the Antichrist. And it will seem like he's unstoppable.

**Daniel 11:44-45 - <sup>44</sup> But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. <sup>45</sup> And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.**

A huge army from the east will come to challenge the Antichrist. More opponents from the north also, and they will all gather together to wage the final world war in the valley of Megiddo. But before they can finish their fight, Jesus Christ will return to earth in His second coming, destroy these armies and cast the Antichrist and his false prophet into the lake of fire. The villain who seemed so powerful and so unstoppable will be helpless and defeated in the presence of the rightful King. These prophecies are just as sure as the 135 found in the first part of chapter 11. We can count on the power of God and the truth of His word.

But before we close tonight, one small devotional thought for us. There in verse 32 we have that wonderful descriptor of faithful believers. It says "*the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.*" They are contrasted with the wicked who turn their backs on God and, instead, choose the path of least resistance - those who choose flattery over integrity. It's true that those who decided to follow the Lord paid a great price, but their lives were of great value. They carried out great exploits! Not just Judas Maccabeus, but those who gained wisdom and preached the truth and honored the Lord, even in martyrdom. They *kept* the covenant and, as a result, were found pure, refined and exalted by God. They shine like stars, the world was not worthy of them.

And we see there *how* they were able to withstand the intense trials they found themselves in: They *knew* their God and were strong as a result. The term "to know" here has to do with mental knowledge, of course, but it also means "to regard, recognize, pay attention to." It's a word of intimacy. Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary says, "Essentially *yada* means: to know by observing and reflecting (thinking), and to know by *experiencing*."

It is through this intimate, personal knowing of God that we are strengthened to honor God and serve Him, no matter our circumstances. That's what gave these Jews in Daniel 11 the ability to walk out of their houses with a book of the testament under their arm, knowing it would probably mean death for them. While we don't want those kind of *circumstances*, we *do* want that kind of strength, don't we? We want to be people who are carrying out exploits for the Lord? That's the life He's sent us out on. But it's not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit. As we draw near to our God and *know* Him, experiencing His leading and His filling and His strengthening all the days of our lives.