

“The Future Man of Sin” (part 2)

Daniel 11:36-45

Turn with me in your Bible to the eleventh chapter of Daniel where we have been the past couple of weeks. These last three chapters of Daniel are a prophetic vision of the future that is given to Daniel for the sake of God’s people. The prophecy that is revealed in this section provides a detailed glimpse of future history from the time of Daniel all the way up to the end of the world when Jesus returns to establish His kingdom. While this chapter may be tough to read, it is important to keep in mind that the details aren’t meant to confuse us. Instead, they are meant to assure us of God’s sovereign control over history. This is a truth that would have been very important for God’s people in Daniel’s day.

Having been in exile for seventy years, the Jews were on the verge of returning home. God had orchestrated the events in keeping with His promise to Jeremiah. However, the remnant that had returned found life to be difficult. The rebuilding process would be opposed by their enemies. On top of that, there would be long decades of political transitions and conflict that would make life hard for God’s people who would be caught up in the middle of it. This is one of the reasons why Daniel 11 is so important. It would prepare the people of God for future hardships, yet it also reveals how God is sovereign over it all. He will accomplish His purposes for His people.

For the most part, this chapter contains information that is now in our rearview. What was future in Daniel’s day is now ancient history, at least until we get to verse 36. From verses 1-20, the prophecy covers 355 years of history from the fall of the Persian empire to the rise of Alexander the Great. It foretold of how his empire would be parceled out to his four generals, two of whom become subject of focus in the text—Ptolemy and Seleucus. Their successors then will fight one

another over control of territory which included the land of Israel. From verses 21-35, the prophecy zooms in on one of those Seleucid kings whom history knows as Antiochus Epiphanes.

Throughout our study of Daniel, one thing I have pointed out to you is that within the field of biblical prophecy, there is what is known as ‘dual’ or double fulfillment. Dual fulfillment of prophecy is that which anchors an event in the past by presenting a type of that which will happen in the future. Certain prophecies are usually connected to an immediate fulfillment in the lifetime of the prophet while also being connected to a more distant fulfillment in some future time.

Such dual fulfillment is found throughout the Bible:

- Deuteronomy 18:15—prophet like Moses
- Joel 2:28—pouring out the Spirit on all flesh
- Matthew 24:2—the destruction of the temple

This same double nature of prophecy is seen in what is revealed to Daniel here. If we were to go back to the vision in chapter 7, we’d see that the ‘little horn’ referred to is the future man of sin who will be leader of a final world system in the last days. But long before he ever steps on to the scene, there is going to be someone else who, in many ways, will typify what he will be like in terms of the difficulty he will bring to God’s people. And so the ‘little horn’ of chapter 8 is both historical and prophetic. Antiochus is the ‘little horn’ who came out of what was formerly a Greek empire. For a period of 12 years, he presented a real crisis for the Jewish people. We have noticed from verses 21-35 how Antiochus Epiphanes and his antagonism toward the Jews provides a prophetic preview of the future Man of Sin and his opposition to God—crisis, courage, comparison.

When we get to the end of verse 35, there is a transition in the biblical text as the angel tells Daniel of something that will happen at the time of the end. Daniel is then shown something that will be fulfilled in the distant future, but it will foreshadowed by the figure we have already considered from the previous verses. (read)

Notice several things about the man of sin, beginning with:

1—His CHARACTER (11:36-37)

“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. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.”

Beginning with verse 36, there is a break. It is introduced to us in verse 35 with that phrase ‘time of the end.’ Up until this point, the prophecy has involved events that have been fulfilled in history. In verse 36, Daniel is taken much further into the future where he is given a glimpse of what the end will involve for the people of Israel who will face an even greater crisis under the Antichrist. Verses 36-37 give some insight into his character.

He will do as he wills

“And the king shall do as he wills...”

The ESV uses the word ‘and’ there, but it literally reads this way—*“Then the king will do according to his will.”* For this reason, one of the titles that is given to the man of sin is ‘willful king.’ There are a number of titles that are given to him

throughout the Bible—the little horn, the king of fierce countenance, the prince to come, man of lawlessness, the beast. Now, it may come as a surprise to you to learn that the word ‘antichrist’ only appears five times in the Bible, each of which is found in the epistles of John. It is the apostle John who describes for us what the antichrist is all about, and it has to do with denial of the faith:

1 John 2:18—“Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.”

1 John 2:22—“Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.”

1 John 4:3—“Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.”

2 John 1:7—“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.”

There is a lot of fictitious superstition that is attached to the identity of the antichrist, and we want to separate fact from fiction. A biblical understanding of the antichrist recognizes that it is both a spirit at work in the world, a system, and a someone who will embody evil. From multiple passages in Scripture, we’re able to get a sketch of his personality and agenda. Daniel is told here that he is someone who will do as he pleases. His own will and his prerogative is the only thing that he will be about. The antichrist will be a leader who is all about self-will. The ideology that he will possess is one in which man is at the center rather than God.

He will deceive the world

Part of his strategy will involve deception. Daniel 8:24 says, “His power shall be great, but not by his own power.” It means that there is a demonic quality about him that leads others to get behind him and his agenda. Paul writes about this in the New Testament:

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10—“The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and be saved.”

Through demonic influence, this coming man of sin will deceive people into embracing his agenda. He will be skilled in the art of deception. Daniel 8:25, “By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper in his hand.” He will be calculating and will understand the issues that make people tick. He will have a way of talking around a subject in order to advance his ideals. Through lies and deception, he will make promises to people in an effort to win them over through his charisma. It should come as no surprise to any of us that he will amass a great following for himself. Even today, we can see how quickly people gravitate to a charismatic personality. If you give them an attractive candidate who has an uncanny ability to enthrall them with vague rhetoric, they’ll follow him like sheep all while the media bleats his praises. Totally overlooked are the issues and the substance of the man himself. We very much live in a personality-driven world. Social media has made this phenomena much more pronounced. This future man of sin will set himself up as savior. But he will be inspired by Satan who is a master counterfeiter. Deception will be his chief tactic. Many will swept up in his deception. Again, the apostle Paul says:

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12—“Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleased in unrighteousness.”

The idea is that discernment will be absent in the last days as people buy into the lie. What began as a whisper to Eve in the garden will be mainstream as political policy and cultural currency. At the heart of the lie is that man is the center of all things.

He will deify himself

Verse 36 says, “He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods.” In keeping with a totally secular ideology, the man of sin will exalt himself and be full of self-aggrandizement. Daniel 8:23 describes him as being a king of bold face, or a king with a fierce countenance or features. The idea is that he presents himself in a proud, haughty manner. Verse 25 says, “In his own mind he shall become great.” It means that he magnifies himself above everything else. In fact, it is stated in the NASB—“And he will magnify himself in his heart.” Paul says of him:

2 Thessalonians 2:4—“He opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.”

John writes in Revelation 13 that the world will worship the beast and say, “Who is like the beast?” Antiochus referred to himself as ‘Epiphanes’ which means ‘manifest one.’ The future antichrist will do the same thing as he leads the world to worship himself. In chapter 7, Daniel sees the little horn described as having the eyes of a man and mouth speaking great things. In Revelation, the apostle John is shown this same thing:

Revelation 13:5—“And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words...”

He will speak astonishing and blasphemous things against God.

Matthew 12:34-37—“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word that they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

What have your words consisted of lately? The mouth of the antichrist will be full of blasphemy. Lies and deception, falsehoods and untruths. Ideas that are rooted in a hatred of God's truth. Let's not speak his language!

Verse 37 says, “He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.” The idea seems to be that this man of sin will reject his ancestral religion. He will have no regard for the one beloved by women, perhaps reference to messianic hope held by Jewish mothers. It was the dream of every Jewish mother to give birth to the promised seed, so maybe that is in view here. Other translations say that he will not regard the love of women. Alistair Begg says that the language of the Hebrew text seems to include this idea that he will have no regard for the foundational elements found in God's original creative order as it relates to gender and sexuality. A secular ambition and worldview is what will drive him. He will embody the spirit of the age and will be its chief proponent and greatest poster child. What will that spirit be? Paul mentions it:

2 Timothy 3:1-3—“But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.”

I think one of the things that we often miss in the biblical teaching about the antichrist is the way in which he will seek to control how people think, what they believe, and who they worship. He will seek to subvert the kingdom of God through his own character and agenda. John says in Revelation 13 that it is the dragon who gives to the beast its power and influence. Satan will vicariously seek to be worshiped through the actions of this man of sin. We must be constantly on guard against the lies of the enemy. Deception is his number one weapon, and it will be abundant in the last days. This is why it is so very important that you and I put on the armor of God and stand firm. A tsunami of deception will one day engulf our world, and I believe that day is now fast approaching. God's people must be discerning.

2—His CAREER (11:38-43)

“He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He shall deal with the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price...”

If his character consists of pride and rebellion against God and the natural order, what kind of agenda do you think he will pursue? His career will involve remaking the world in his own image. Again, his agenda will be to carry out the desire of his father the devil.

He will desire power

Verse 38 says, “He will honor the god of fortresses instead of these.” In other words, raw power will be his number one objective. Power and control is what this irreligious man of sin will crave. Going to church would be a waste of time for him. Rather, in the place of God and family will be the pursuit of military strength. He will pay whatever price is necessary to have power. That’s the idea here.

Verse 39 says, “He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many...” In other words, power will be his god and through the pursuit of power he will become stronger and stronger. He will honor those who honor him and thereby prove their loyalty. He gives them political positions, etc?

He will divide the land

The end of verse 39 says that he will “divide the land for a price.” Keep in mind that the whole conflict being outlined in chapter 11 is over the ‘glorious land.’ What God gave to Israel is constantly coveted by others down through history. Somehow, the land always seems to be at the center of the conflict. Even in our day, much debate centers around who controls what territory in the middle east. Political leaders of every stripe have all looked to solve the problem to no avail.

Well, the antichrist will be the man who finally seems to be able to solve the problem. It will only lead to disaster.

Joel 3:2—“I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land.”

Daniel 8:24 says, “He shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints.” Then verse 25 says, “Without warning he shall destroy many.” Historically, this exactly what happened with Antiochus Epiphanes. In the future, the man of sin will come to power and unite the world under the pretense of peace and prosperity, but he will unleash a wave of persecution against believers unlike any other. He will betray the nation of Israel and attempt to destroy the Jewish people. Have you noticed how that seems to be the common theme of history? There is a common hatred of Israel, whether it be Pharaoh, Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, Hitler, or the Antichrist. Revelation 12 says the dragon attempts to destroy Israel.

He will dominate countries

Verse 40 says, “At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through.” He will be opposed by other geopolitical alliances, but will dominate them. It will seem that he and his government will be unstoppable, though the kings to the north and the south will try.

Verse 41 says, “He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the

main part of the Ammonites.” Again, it says he will stretch out his hand against countries. The land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler over all the wealth of the region. Even the ‘Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train.’ The nations associated with these peoples are the enemies of God’s people throughout the Old Testament. The picture is that of a western leader who heads up a world government that is opposed by an alliance of nations in the middle east, but he proves to be stronger. And we can see this type of thing easily coming to pass in our world today. Israel is surrounded by nations that hate her, and the entire middle east is a tinderbox. Antichrist will one day light the match.

3—His CONDEMNATION (11:44-45)

“But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.”

He will drag the world to war

How fitting it is that those who promise solutions to world problems only exacerbate those problems. Man looks to build a modern day Tower of Babel. His best attempt to unify the world without Christ will only lead to the brink of disaster. The antichrist will drag the world to Armageddon.

Our world is certainly no stranger to war. Going all the way back to the beginning of our nation in 1776, America has experienced war roughly every 25 years. From the War of Independence in 1776, to the War of 1812, the Civil War, or the Spanish-American War, two World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, war in the Persian Gulf, and the Iraq War. Hardly a generation has passed that has not seen its sons and daughters sent off to war of some kind. The last one

hundred years in particular have seen more bloodshed than the previous 20 centuries combined—the death toll is at 108 million people. I read something this week that sort of puts it in perspective...

“For a small amount of perspective at this moment, imagine you were born in 1900. Many would think that this was a simple time of life. On your 14th birthday, WWI starts and ends on your 18th birthday. Some 22 million people perish in the war, including many of your friends who enlist to defend freedom on the European continent. Later that year, the Spanish Flu pandemic strikes and continues to your 20th birthday. Approximately 50 million people die from it in those two years. On your 29th birthday, the stock market crashes on Black Tuesday, the Great Depression begins and unemployment hits 25% while the global GDP drops 27%. Things stay that way until you turn 33. The country nearly collapses along with the world economy. If you were lucky, you had a job that paid \$300 a year or barely a dollar a day. By the time you hit 39, WWII starts as Germany invades Poland. You aren’t even over the hill yet. If you lived in London or most of continental Europe, the bombing of your neighborhood or invasion of your country by foreign soldiers was a daily event. Between your 39th and 45th birthday, 75 million people perish in the war. When you are 50, the Korean War starts—5 million people die. At 55 the Vietnam War begins and goes on for 20 years—4 million people die. On your 62nd birthday there is a Cuban Missile Crisis, a tipping point in the Cold War. Life on our planet could have ended with a few nuclear launch codes in the hands of a few people.”

Is the 21st century set to travel the same bloody road? It sure would seem like it. British historian Paul Johnson, in his book *Modern Times*, has attributed the 20th century’s massive death toll to the immense growth of organized state power, the

decline of traditional religion, the rise of totalitarian ideology, and gangster-like statesmen.

Peace is sought after, but it proves so elusive. In the last days, the man of lawlessness will claim to be a man of peace but his lust for power will drag the world into war. At the time of the end, verse 44 says that he will go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. The prophet Ezekiel in chapters 38-39 says that God will bring the nations of the world into war together on the mountains of Israel at a place called Megiddo.

Zechariah 14:2—“I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.”

Verse 3 goes on to say that when it seems that all hope is lost for those in Israel, then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations when He fights on a day of battle. The skies will open up, the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven!

Zechariah 12:4-5—“On that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west...Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with Him.”

He will die with no help

The nations that have gathered against Israel at the end of the Tribulation will be thrown into confusion. And in their confusion, they will turn to fight against the Lord Jesus and His people who come with Him, but it will be no contest. Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 that the lawless one will be destroyed by the breath

of the Lord Jesus and will be brought to nothing. Daniel 8:25 says that he will rise up against the Prince of Princes, and he shall be broken but by no human hand. Or as Daniel 11:45 says it here, “He shall come to his end, with none to help him.” That is the destiny of the one who positions himself against God and His people. When Jesus comes, the rebellion will end!

Closing Application

We can't forget the fact that Daniel's overarching message is the sovereignty of God in raising up kings and removing them from power. There is not a king, dictator, or president who has ever been in power that was not ultimately subject to the rule of heaven. This will also be true of antichrist. It will not take God by surprise when the world gets behind a man like him. Rather, it will be part of the divine plan which involves allowing him and his followers to rule for a season in order to meet the judgment of God at the return of Jesus Christ. After seeing the vision of all this, Daniel asks a very appropriate question in chapter 12—“How long?” What will be the outcome of all these things? He wanted to know just how long such an evil would be allowed to persist before God brings it to an end. Why would God even allow something like this to happen in the first place? It is often this same question that we grapple with in our lives. Why does God allow evil to persist in the world? The psalmist wrestled with this question:

Psalm 13:1-2—“How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?”

He is burdened over life, concerned and full of anxiety, doubt fills his mind, but he's a man on his knees. And yet he still asks, “How long?” This is a question

that comes up a lot in our lives. When things happen around us that we can't process, we often want to know why. When the Lord permits unrighteous to occupy the halls of power, we groan in our hearts and wonder how long until He intervenes. We long for the day righteousness reigns supreme. When it comes to prophecy, there are a lot of things we are not told. But what God wants us to know, He has clearly told us in His Word. What should be our response be to a prophetic passage such as this?

- *To know Jesus Christ **personally***

Jesus is Lord! The fact that there is a coming end of all things should get us motivated as God's people. It is not something that we should be afraid of, neither should we spend every waking moment speculating over the timing of it all. Neither should we be afraid and retreat from the world.

Thomas Ice—“*Biblical teaching regarding the Antichrist is not given to make us anxious, but to make us aware. Awareness of God's victory over all evil gives assurance to believers that both the present and the future are firmly in the grasp of God.*”

Titus 2:13—“We are to live godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.”

- *To serve Jesus Christ **faithfully***

Daniel 11:32 says the people who know their God will stand firm and take action. God has something for each one of us to do, and we are to be occupied with it

until Jesus comes. We can be distracted and misuse time and squander the opportunity we've been given. We must be diligent.

Ephesians 5:16-18—“Make the most of your time, because the days are evil. Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

Matthew 24:46—“Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.”

The closer we get to the return of Jesus Christ, the more engaged we ought to be in the work He has given us to do. There is no time to waste. We must live with a sense of gospel urgency that loves people by pointing them to Christ.

- *To trust Jesus Christ completely*

Over and over again, I'm reminded as I read Daniel of how God determines the times and seasons. The God of the Bible is not a passive bystander when it comes to the details of human history. He is sovereign above all, and it this truth that helps us remain confident in the midst of the chaos. No matter how bleak circumstances may appear to be from our vantage point, God will never go back on His promise nor will He abandon His people. Christ was forsaken so that you can be forgiven and accepted. The message of Daniel compels us to live in a state of readiness. If you are not ready to meet the Lord, don't let another day pass you by not knowing if you are truly saved. Turn from your sin and place all of your faith in Jesus Christ. Don't assume that tomorrow you will have another opportunity. Trust Him now as your Savior and do not delay!

David Jeremiah tells the story of a man from Long Island who, more than a century ago, satisfied a lifelong dream by purchasing a high quality barometer. This was long before the days of Amazon prime or modern technology where we

can access the weather digitally right from a smart device. Well, when this man unpacked the weather instrument, he noticed that the needle appeared to be stuck, pointing to the section marked ‘Hurricane.’ After shaking it as hard as he could, he decided to write a letter to the manufacturer. He made the trip into New York the next day where he had some business to attend to, and he also mailed his letter. A day or two later, he returned to Long Island to find not only that his barometer was gone, but his house was too. The needle had been right all along —there was a hurricane on the way.

Truth is truth whether a person chooses to believe it or not.

“Our Father, we thank You for the truth of Your Word. Our world is in a mess. The nations are seething like a boiling cauldron, and the end of all things is nigh. Keep us from the deception that is engulfing our world. May we live in the light of Your truth, and may we be so bold to share the gospel in these days. For Jesus’ sake we pray, Amen.”