

Daniel 11:36-45 “Where Is the World Heading?”**[1]

Main Idea: From the prophecy revealed in Daniel 11:36-45, God informs us of two end-time specifics.

Possible Interpretations of Daniel 11:36-45...

1. It's already happened.
2. It's yet to happen.
3. It mingles the past and the future.

I. We learn about the end-time conditions (36-39).

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

1. He will be obsessed with himself.
2. He will blaspheme God.

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

1. It will be characterized by modernism (37).
2. It will be characterized by materialism (38).
3. It will be characterized by militarism (39).

II. We learn about the end-time conflict (40-45).

A. We see his aggression (40).

B. We see his anti-Semitism (41).

C. We see his ambition (42-43).

1. He desires power.
2. He desires money.

D. We see his alarm (44).

E. We see his abdication (45).

Application: Why does God tell us what's going to happen?

1. He wants us to know He has a plan for the world.
2. He wants us to know He has a plan for His people.
3. He wants us to live in light of His plan.

My grandmother was one of eight children. She used to tell me stories about her life as a child growing up on a farm in Guernsey County . No television. No car (not at first anyway). No telephone in the house (let alone a cellphone!). No electric or gas oven, and certainly no microwave. No pop tarts, frozen pizzas, or Raggu Spagetti in a

jar.

In her nine decades of life she saw a lot of changes occur on planet earth (some of our senior citizens here this morning can relate). By the time she died just a few years ago, she not only traveled out of Guernsey County, but even made a trip to Israel (on an airplane, no less!).

Yes, our world is changing. Where is it all heading? As human beings, we have a natural curiosity to know the answer to that question.

You know as well as I do that things are changing in the Middle East. In 1948 the nation of Israel was reestablished in the land after a 19 century diaspora. Since then the tension has only increased. Could what's happening today in the Middle East be evidence that we are living in the last days?

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 we find one of the most strategic, prophetic texts in the Word of God in the last section of Daniel 11.

The prophet Daniel was certainly a man of God, as we learn in the biographical section of chapters 1-6. He was also a man that God privileged to give a preview of world events, through a series of four visions which are recorded in Daniel 10-12.

In the fourth vision, the most detailed of the four, God revealed to 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. 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.

The final section of the vision (36-45) is both climactic and controversial. We're told about a ruler in verse 36, a king, "The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard of things against the God of gods." Who is this king? Before looking at the text, I want you to realize biblical scholars offer three different interpretations of the material.

Possible Interpretations of Daniel 11:36-45

1. *It's already happened.* That is, the wicked ruler described in these verses is Antiochus Epiphanes, and as such, the verses merely record a historical event for us.

2. *It's yet to happen.* This view says the section refers not to a historical figure at all, but to a future character, the coming Antichrist. Luther, for instance, identified him with the Antichrist. In fact, centuries ago (400 A.D.), Jerome commented, "The Jews believe that this passage has reference to Antichrist...We, too, understand this to refer to the Antichrist."[\[2\]](#)

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, vilest-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, "And the king shall do accordingly to his will [KJV]." Who is this king? Antiochus? Some of the details that follow sound like him, but many do not.

For instance, verse 36 says 'he will magnify himself above every god.' Antiochus, though a blasphemer, did not place a statue of himself but of Zeus Olympius in the Jerusalem temple. Another detail that doesn't fit Antiochus is seen in verse 37, "He will who no regard for the gods of his fathers." To the contrary, Antiochus's policy was to force

his Jewish subjects to worship the god of his fathers or be killed.

So what's going on in Daniel 11 then? The answer, apparently, is that it mingles 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 lumps them together.

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 specifics.

I. We learn about the end-time conditions (36-39).

Namely, two end time conditions.

A. There will be a final world ruler (36). Notice again his description in verse 36, "The king will do as he pleases [KJV 'according to his will']. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things [KJV 'marvelous things'] against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed [KJV 'and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished'], for what has been determined must take place."

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* (2 Thes 2:3, 4, 8-10). In Daniel 7:24 he is called *the little horn*, and in Daniel 8:23-25 *the king of fierce countenance*.

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

1. *He will be obsessed with himself.* He will do "as he pleases." He will "exalt himself." He will "magnify himself" to the point that in his presumption, he will claim to be 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 "against the God of gods."

Will Rogers once remarked that there are two eras in American history--"the passing of the buffalo and the passing of the buck." Someone else has said, "To err is human; to blame it on the divine is even more human."^[4] This coming ruler will not only blame it on the divine; he will blaspheme the divine!

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 be successful *until* the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place." This ruler will be living on borrowed time. God alone is sovereign. God has determined exactly when this wicked one shall come to his end. He shall prosper only until the end of the day of God's wrath, a period referred to as "the time of Jacob's trouble" in Jeremiah 30:7.

The truth is, God will use the Antichrist in that day, just like He used Antiochus Epiphanes in the past to scourge His wayward people, the Jews. God's plan is certain.

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 set up a final world religion which is described in verses 37-39. Here's how the LB paraphrases, "He will have no regard for the gods of his fathers, nor for the god beloved of women, nor any other god, for he will boast that he is greater than them all. Instead of these he will worship the Fortress god--a god his fathers never knew--and lavish on him costly gifts! Claiming his help he will have great success against the strongest fortresses. He will honor those who submit to him, appointing them to positions of authority and dividing the land to them as their reward."

The reign of this final world ruler will have religious overtones to it. What kind of final world religion will he install? It will be characterized by three things.

1. *It will be characterized by modernism (37).* Verse 37 says he will show no regard for the gods of his fathers. He will be like Stalin in this sense. Stalin began as a candidate for the priesthood in the Russian Orthodox church before defecting to Marxism and atheism.^[5] And his brutal oppression came next.

This coming ruler will be a non-traditionalist who will abandon the gods of his fathers and show no regard for the "desire of women." What does this latter phrase imply? One suggestion is that the "desire of women" refers to Tammuz, whose cult was popular in ancient Syria, especially among women. Another possible interpretation, especially in light of Daniel's Jewish background, is the one suggested by John Walvoord...

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. The 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. What's more, not only will he downplay the Messianic hope, he will seek to eliminate any honor given to the Messiah. His will be a Christ-less, man-centered religion. That's modernism.

2. *It will be characterized by materialism (38).* "Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts."

There is no evidence that Antiochus ever went this far. This verse describes a man who will eliminate all previous gods save his own, the "god of fortresses." The god of fortresses, it seems, is not a person but the power to make war, as symbolized by the term "fortress".^[6] Simply put, the only thing this ruler trusts in is himself and his own military power. As John Walvoord observes (276), "He is a complete materialist in contrast to all previous religions and all previous men who claimed divine qualities. 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."

3. *It will be characterized by militarism (39).* Verse 39 further describes his assault, "He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god [demonic assistance?] and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price."

The final world religion of the Antichrist, then, will be a combination of modernism, materialism, and militarism. His only god will be might. His will be a totalitarian rule in which might makes right. He will attack all who stand in his way, and reward those who side with him.

Those, my friends, will be the end-time conditions. There will be a final world ruler and a final world religion. Lest we be unnerved, may I remind you that God is not intimidated by pagan leaders, nor will He be by this final one.

An old music teacher was once asked in greeting, "What's the good news today?" The old man, without saying a word, walked across the room, picked up a tuning fork, and struck it. As the note sounded, he said, "That is A. It is A today, it was A 5,000 years ago, and it will be A 10,000 years from now. The soprano upstairs sings off-key, the tenor across the hall is out of tune." He struck the note again and said, "That is A, my friend, and that's the good news

today!" [\[7\]](#)

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 a second specific.

II. We learn about the end-time conflict (40-45).

Whereas we could conjecture that some of the references in verses 36-39 pertain to Antiochus, at least in part, most commentators agree that we see a definite transition in verse 40. Verse 40 begins, "At the time of the end." The final verses of Daniel 11 detail a massive end-time conflict. As well, they give us a picture of the strategy of the coming Antichrist. We can observe five phases which will characterize the conflict instigated by this wicked man.

A. We see his aggression (40). Remember, an angel sent from God has been speaking to Daniel since 10:20. In verse 40, he begins to describe a massive war effort that will occur in the end:

"At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle [in section one this 'king of the south' appears to be a reference to Egypt; perhaps here to a bloc of nations allied with Egypt, including Libya and Nubia (or Sudan) referred to in verse 43], and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships [this 'king of the north' perhaps refers to a Syrian coalition; Archer suggests a league of Middle Eastern nations, p. 147]. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood."

At this point, speculation begins to abound in the commentaries. One suggestion is that the "king of the north" points to a Russian leader, since Russia lies to the far north of Israel, with Moscow situated at nearly the same longitude (Wood). Another suggests there will be an Italian leader, the "little horn" who comes out of the Roman Empire mentioned back in 9:26.

Whoever it will be is uncertain to us, but there can be no denying his aggression. He will "invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood." The terminology reminds us of *blitzkrieg* warfare that brought the Nazis success early on in World War II.

B. We see his anti-Semitism (41). "He will also invade the beautiful [KJV 'glorious'] land ["the Beautiful Land" is a reference to Israel]. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand." The coming conflict will be horrible for the Jews. In fact, verse 45 reveals that the Antichrist will pitch his royal tents right in the midst of the Promised Land, "at the beautiful holy mountain."

In Daniel 12:1, we're given a specific indicator concerning the severity of the anti-Semitism in that day: "...There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered."

The Jews have incurred abuse from aggressors throughout history, from Haman to Hitler, from Antiochus to Stalin. And why? For two reasons. The first reason is that centuries ago, God chose this nation to be His peculiar people, but because of their waywardness He is now using the deeds of pagan nations to restore them. The second reason the Jews have suffered such abuse is this. A world that is hostile against God will naturally be hostile against God's people.

Anti-Semitism is a grievous thing. Sadly, this deadly cancer which will express itself fully under Anti-Christ is festering and spreading in our day...

E.g.—

C. We see his ambition (42-43). Charles Colson, in his book *Kingdoms in Conflict*, tells how he would influence diverse interest groups through White House visits to insure then President Nixon's reelection. He would escort guests

past saluting guards, down a long corridor with dramatic photographs of the President in action. Then he would pause at the executive dining room, point to the door at the right and say in hushed tones, "That's the situation room"--the legendary super-secret national security nerve center. (Actually it was just a crowded office. The real command center had been moved to the Pentagon.)

Next, if the visitors still seemed unsupportive of the President, Colson would treat them to a walk upstairs to the Oval Office. If the President was there, Colson would ask (always by pre-arrangement) if the visitor would like to see the President. Colson writes:

“Nixon was master at the game. He always gave his dazzled visitor gold-plated cuff links with the presidential seal. The person would be overwhelmed as he left, almost bowing, not more than sixty seconds later. It's not easy to resist the allure of the Oval Office....Invariably, the lions of the waiting room became the lambs of the Oval Office. No one ever showed outward hostility. Most, except the labor leaders, forgot their best-rehearsed lines. They nodded when the President spoke, and in those rare instances when they disagreed, they did so apologetically, assuring the President that they personally respected his opinion. Ironically, none were more compliant than the religious leaders. Of all people, they should have been the most aware of the sinful nature of man and the least overwhelmed by pomp and protocol. But theological knowledge sometimes wilts in the face of worldly power.” (p. 307)

Ambition is a blinding force. The coming Antichrist will be a master-manipulator. What will drive him? His ambition will be twofold.

1. *He desires power.* We're told this in verse 42, “He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape.” Yes, He will be driven by power. What's more...

2. *He desires money.* Verse 43 states, “He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission.” Power and money. Money and power. Those twins are what drive many a leader in our day, too. Sadly, those pursuits can grip our hearts, too, if we're not careful. Phase 4...

D. We see his alarm (44). The tide changes for the ruler in verse 44, “But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many.” John Walvoord suggests the tidings out of the east probably refers to the gigantic invasion described in Revelation 9:13-21, where an army of 200 million men cross the Euphrates and descend on the Holy Land. Lest the number stagger us as impossible, please realize that Red China alone claims to have a militia numbering 200 million today.

E. We see his abdication (45). The final words of verse 45 are telling, “He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. *Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.*”

Daniel 11 is not the only place in the Bible we are told about the Antichrist. As I mentioned earlier, the apostle John wrote, “You have heard that antichrist shall come (1 John 2:18).” Paul describes the same person in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, “Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction [KJV 'that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition']”.⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”

No mere man will be a match for the Antichrist, but the Lord Himself will bring him down. We're told this in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.”

Application: Why does God tell us what's going to happen?

May I suggest three reasons for our application?

1. *He wants us to know He has a plan for the world.* He told us ahead of time 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 know He has a plan for His people.* God is not done with the Jews. The time of the Gentiles will end with the destruction of the Antichrist.

God has a plan for you as well, my friend. In Daniel 11, He informs us what happens to those who live for themselves, who dishonor Him, and who resist His plan. May I ask you an important question? Are you honoring God in your life or living for yourself?

In order to honor God with your life, you must know and believe in Jesus Christ. God sent His Son into the world to rescue self-seeking sinners like us and reconcile them to Himself. That's what the cross is all about. At the cross, Jesus died in the place of sinners. On the third day He conquered death. Today God gives new and eternal life to any who will repent and place their trust in His Son.

3. *He wants us to live in light of His plan.* A general once sat at a table in a royal court, seated beside the court chaplain. In the course of the meal, the general turned to the chaplain and, to make conversation, asked, "Pastor, in this moment together here, could you tell me something about Heaven?" The court chaplain looked at him carefully and said, "Well, yes, I could. The first thing I would tell you, general, is that in Heaven you will not be a general."[\[8\]](#)

It will be different, then, for us too. 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.

-

Response: My friend, are you ready for the future? The apostle Paul revealed there is a special reward for people who long for Jesus' second coming. He wrote in 2 Timothy 4:8, "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto *all them that love His appearing.*"

Do you love His appearing? Do you desire for Jesus to come? We're going to sing to Him two songs that express our desire for His coming. The first is...

Hymn of Response: #243 "O Come, Messiah, Come Again"

Until Jesus comes, we have access to His presence and help through prayer. Over 200 hundred years ago, John Newton wrote this in one of his hymns:

"Come my soul, thy case prepare; Jesus loves to answer prayer;

He Himself has bid thee pray, Therefore will not say thee nay.

Thou art coming to a King; Large petitions with thee bring;

For His grace and power are such, None can ever ask too much."

Let's spend time reflecting on God's Word, in prayer. Let's ask the Lord to truly grip us with the reality of His plan for the world, and to help us live in light of His plan. Let's talk with Him now.

Are you sure you know Him? We've talked this morning about the self-focused character the Bible calls the Antichrist. He will take from the world. That's just the opposite of what the Christ did for the world 2,000 years ago.

He came to give. He gave His perfect life on a cross so that we might receive eternal life. Have you received Him as your Savior and Lord? If not, will you do so right now?

For those who know Christ, another question. Do you truly long to see Him? Then tell Him so now. He hears. He also sees. He sees whether we've been living like we're longing to see Him. He sees if we are hiding sin in our lives, and it grieves Him. Let's take time to confess and forsake any residue of sin in our lives.

Time for Response in Prayer

As God's people, we live with a tension. We long for Christ to come *now*, but until He comes, we must *wait*. Let's sing a song perhaps new to us in which we express this commitment to our Lord.

Worship through Singing: #242 "While We Are Waiting, Come"

Until Jesus comes, we walk by faith in this world. We're not alone.

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] This message has been adapted from a sermon delivered at WBC on 9/15/96.

[2] Walvoord, p. 270

[3] Baldwin , 197.

[4] as told by K. Hughes, 44

[5] Archer, 144

[6] As Walvoord suggests.

[7] K. Hughes, *James*, p. 55.

[8] told by K. Hughes, 36