

What in the world is going to happen? As human beings, we have a natural curiosity to know where we are heading.

This past Monday, while they were getting ready for bed, my daughters asked me an intriguing question, "Will there be war when Jesus comes again?" I answered that, yes, the Bible tells us there will be war in the world that will climax with Jesus' coming. To which they probed, "Will it be like the one that's happening in Iraq today (referring to the U.S. bombing of Iraq a couple of weeks ago for violation of no-fly guidelines)? Could that war be the one?"

What do you think? Could what's happening today in the Middle East be a pre-cursor of the inevitable final world conflict? I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, and recognize we must exercise caution when it comes to drawing conclusions about biblical signs of the end times. Yet, with the secular nation of Israel back in the land, with increasing hostilities towards God's people and a growing cry for world peace, it's hard not to ask, "What in the world is going to happen next?"

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.

We're nearing the conclusion of our study in Daniel, a trek we embarked on back in March. The prophet Daniel was certainly a man of God, as we learned 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. Last time, we considered the second section (21-35), which is the 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. 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 (Walvoord, 270), "The Jews believe that this passage has reference to Antichrist...We, too, understand this to refer to the Antichrist."

**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.

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. V 35 is clearly talking about events during the days of Antiochus. And v 36 seems to continue speaking of him, "And the king shall do accordingly to his will." Who is this king? Antiochus? Some of the details that follow sound like him, but many do not.

For instance, v 36 says "he shall 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 v 37, "Neither shall he regard 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, 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 what's going to happen to this world. Here's what we learn.

Proposition: 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).
 - 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.

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 his description in v 36, "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done."

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 "according to his will." He will "exalt himself." He will "magnify himself" to the point that in his presumption, he will claim 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 better work out his egotistic pretensions (Baldwin, 197).

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." (as told by K. Hughes, 44) 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.

V 36 is 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, "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer 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 v 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).* V 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 (Archer, 144). And we all know what happened after that.

The coming ruler will be a non-traditionalist who abandons the gods of his fathers and shows 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. The Lord Jesus is in view.

This future leader will not only hate God, he will also hate God's 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).* "But in his estate shall he honor the god of fortresses; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things."

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" (Walvoord). 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).* V 39 further describes his assault (NIV), "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. 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!" (K. Hughes, 55, *James*)

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 was 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--"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 v 40, he began to describe a massive war effort that will occur in the end, "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south [in section

one, a reference to Egypt; perhaps here to a bloc of nations allied with Egypt, including Libya and Nubia (or Sudan) referred to in v 43] push at him; and the king of the north [referring to a Syrian coalition; Archer suggests a league of Middle Eastern nations, p. 147] shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass through."

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 shall enter also into the glorious land [NIV, "the Beautiful Land," a reference to Israel], and many countries shall be overthrown..." The coming conflict will be horrible for the Jews. In fact, v 45 reveals that the Antichrist will pitch his royal tents right in the midst of the Promised Land.

In 12:1, we're given a specific indicator concerning the severity of the anti-Semitism in that day (NIV), "...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. Why? For two reasons. The first reason is that centuries ago, God chose this nation to be His peculiar people, and because of their waywardness, He is 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.

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 v 42 (NIV), "He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape." He will be driven by power, and...

2. *He desires money.* V 43 states, "But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt..." Power and money. Money and power. Those twins are what drive many a leader in our day, too. Phase 4...

D. We see his alarm (44). The tide changes for the ruler in v 44, "But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; therefore, he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to sweep away 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 v 45 are telling, "Yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." The Antichrist and his conquest will end.

Daniel 11 is not the only place in the Bible we are told about the Antichrist. 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, "That day shall not come except there come the falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he, as God, sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is 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 Thes 2:8, "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness 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 (Mt 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?

3. *He wants us to live in light of His plan.* A general (told by K. Hughes, 36) 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." It will be different, then, for us too.

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. We have intimate access to the presence of God the Father. To close our service, let's sing the prayer song we learned last week.

Closing Prayer-Song: #15 "Abba Father"