

"War is one of the constants of history, and has not diminished with civilization and democracy. In the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war." That chilling statement is taken from the book *The Lessons of History*, by historians Will and Ariel Durant.

War is a constant. It's true in our day, as it has been since the day man first shook his fist at God's good plan for this planet. But why is there war anyway? We could pose lots of reasons, but I want you to think about the issue from this slant.

There are two types of people in the world. There are self-pleasers and there are God-pleasers. There are the godless and the godly. War occurs when in one nation's attempt to please self, another nation stands in the way.

Our text this morning is Daniel 11, a prophetic passage which God foretold a series of wars. One aggressor that receives major attention in the prophecy was a man by the name of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. He was a horrendous self-seeker, and in fact, a hater of the true God. Ironically, we can learn from the negative example of this man.

How can you tell apart self-pleasers and God-pleasers? The answer is that trials reveal the difference, as we'll see this morning in Daniel 11. Trials reveal two types of people.

1. Self-pleasers: My world revolves around *me*.
2. God-pleasers: My world revolves around *God*. Let's explore further.

**Proposition: From Daniel 11:21-35, we discover two truths which will help us to distinguish the godly from the ungodly.**

- I. When trials come, the godless look *in* (21-32a).
  - Case in Point: Antiochus IV Epiphanes
  - A. He was a self-seeking man (21-24).
    1. He exhibited deceit (21).
    2. He exhibited aggression (22-23).
    3. He exhibited manipulation (24).
  - B. He had a self-seeking plan (25-28).
    1. Might makes right (25).
    2. Truth is relative (26-27).
    3. Enough is never enough (28).
  - C. He had a self-seeking response in defeat (29-32).
    1. He turned against God.
      - He desecrated God's reputation.
      - He desecrated God's worship.
    2. He turned against God's people.
- II. When trials come, the godly look *up* (32b-35).
  - A. They know God (32).
  - B. They teach God's Word (33).
  - C. When they stumble, they keep going (34).
  - D. When afflicted, they trust God (35).

Personal evaluation: Does my life revolve around Christ or myself?

Review from Last Week: Daniel 11 is full of prophetic details. In fact, Walvoord proposes it contains 135 prophetic statements that have already been fulfilled (269). It would be easy to get lost in the specifics of this vision, so I want to remind you of two helpful reminders we considered last time.

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\*\*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.

Reminder #1 is to keep in mind the following, three guidelines. First, it pertains to the future of the Jews (10:14). Second, it will not be understood entirely until the end (12:8-9). And third, the revealed conflicts remind us of the unseen conflict. There is angelic warfare taking place behind the scuffles on the world scene which we learned about from the angel's remarks to Daniel in chapter 10.

Reminder #2 is to keep in mind the big picture. There are three divisions to the vision. The first section (1-20), which we studied last week, described what would happen from Daniel's day to the coming of Antiochus, roughly speaking a 350 year period from 535 B.C. to 175 B.C. The second section (21-35), which we'll consider this morning, deals with the deeds of Antiochus from 175-164 B.C.. The third section (36-45) deals with the future, and predicts a wicked, world ruler that will be on the scene in the Day of the Lord.

Here's the first truth which will help us distinguish the godless from the godly.

I. When trials come, the godless look in (21-32a).

*Case in Point: Antiochus IV Epiphanes*

Antiochus Epiphanes reigned for eleven years, from 175-164 B.C. He is the same person who was prophesied as the "little horn" in Daniel 8:9-14. What kind of person was this godless leader? We learn three things about him in verses 21-32.

**A. He was a self-seeking man (21-24).** Remember, what we're reading in Daniel 11 is explanation the angel delivered to Daniel. We left off in verse 20 with the prediction of the fall of a great leader, probably Antiochus the Great, who would be succeeded by another who would rule a few years, likely a reference to Seleucus IV Philopator.

Let's read the account of his successor, Antiochus Epiphanes in verse 21, "And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom; but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries."

Antiochus was a self-seeker, a fact which is evidenced in three ways here.

1. *He exhibited deceit (21).* The Bible calls this coming ruler a "contemptible person" who would come to power, not rightfully, but by "intrigue." Antiochus had "not been given the honor of royalty" (21), that is, he wasn't the rightful heir to the throne. Antiochus Epiphanes was the younger son of Antiochus the Great. As such he had no legal claim to the royal throne. His older brother's son, Demetrius I, did. That didn't stand in the way of Antiochus.

Antiochus was a master at power politics. Please don't think that the practice of crafty deals behind closed executive doors is unique only to our day, for it's not. Antiochus buddied up with influential government leaders, and gave them promises of promotion and favor in return for their support. His deceitful tactics worked, and he took the throne. Just like the Bible predicted 3 centuries earlier.

Antiochus was an ambitious, vigorous leader. I should note he gave himself the title, "Epiphanes," which means, "the Manifest One." He also produced coins and claimed divine honors for himself on every major coin he minted. He used the inscription, "King Antiochus, Theos Epiphanes (God Manifest)." His opponents referred to him as "Epinanes" instead of "Epiphanes," Epinanes meaning "madman."

2. *He exhibited aggression (22-23).* Notice how he did it in verses 22-23 (NIV), "Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed. After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully and with only a few people he will rise to power."

In the 1930's, Adolph Hitler hit the scene. At first, no one took him seriously. He used propaganda and flattery to cover up his destructive aims. He used intrigue and deceit to take Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Austria. When other European leaders objected, he covered

his tracks and convinced them he meant no harm. Finally, he showed his true colors when he sent his *blitzkrieg* into Poland in 1939.

That's how Antiochus operated years before Hitler. He rose to power with only a "few people" (23). When its people felt "secure," he invaded the kingdom by the use of "intrigue" (21). Along the way, he made promises and then later broke them.

3. *He exhibited manipulation (24)*. "He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province, and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches; yea, and he shall plot against the strongholds, even for a time."

Antiochus was the original Robin Hood! His strategy was to take from the rich and, instead of hoarding it, he shared it with the masses. A kind gesture? Hardly. He was merely using the people for which he seemed to care. He wanted the grass roots support, for he knew the populace could take him where he wanted to go. Sound familiar?

Earlier, v 23 said he would make an agreement with the "prince of the covenant." It's not easy to determine who this is. Some commentators believe it refers to the Jewish High Priest, Onias III (Walvoord, Strauss). Others suggest it refers to Antiochus' rival to the south, Philometor, ruler of Egypt.

Gleason Archer proposes the latter, and shows that history supports him. Antiochus's policy was to throw his intended victims off guard by making friends with them first. Then he would maneuver for position and catch them by surprise. That's what happened with Philometer.

Antiochus captured Philometer in battle, so the Egyptian people picked another king to take Philometer's place. Guess what Antiochus did? He made a deal with Philometer (the agreement talked about in v 23)--he would overthrow the new king of Egypt and put Philometer back on his throne. Another nice gesture? No, a mere ploy by Antiochus to unite Egypt and Syria under *his* control. That's the kind of man Antiochus was--a self-seeker who used deceit, aggression, and manipulation.

We learn something else about him in the next section.

**B. He had a self-seeking plan (25-28).** What was it? Stately simply, to be #1, to rule the world. We see the attitudes by which he operated in verses 25-28, three in fact.

1. *Might makes right (25)*. "And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army, but he shall not stand; for they shall plot against him." Remember, Antiochus started with a "few" (23), but now he's in charge of a "great" army. He used that army to accomplish his agenda. For him, might made right.

2. *Truth is relative (26-27)* In verses 26-27 we learned about one of his conspiracies--he had contact people right within the top administration of the Egyptian government. "Those who eat from the king's provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away...The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will come at the appointed time."

Antiochus was a pragmatist to the core. His motto was, "Do whatever you can get away with and whatever it takes to succeed." For him, like many in our day, truth was relative. Is that the way you live?

Does it bother you that there is a shortage of truth-telling in our day? Don't lose heart. V 27 is a powerful reminder that the day is short-lived for those who live by relativism. As with Antiochus and Philometer--those kings who lied to each other across the bargaining table--*an end will come at the appointed time*. God still rules.

If v 27 wasn't so sad, it would be funny. What happens when two self-seeking people sit down across the table from each other to make a deal, both wearing smiles? You'd better read the fine print!

Relativism kills meaningful relationships. What happens when two self-seeking people get married, both with the un verbalized expectation, "I expect you to make me happy," and the implication, "If you don't make me happy, I'm out of here!"

It's the same thing that happens when two self-seekers do business, and both are thinking, "You are important to me as long as you help take me where I want to go."

And we wonder why our society is in shambles! Thankfully, through the power of Jesus Christ, God turns self-seekers into kingdom-seekers.

3. *Enough is never enough (28)*. In v 28, we learn that Antiochus did not believe in separation of church and state. We're told that on his return trip, Antiochus made a whistle stop in Jerusalem. "Then shall he return into his land with great riches, and his heart shall be against the holy covenant [a reference to Israel]; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land."

We learn something else here about self-seekers. They're never satisfied. Enough is never enough. When Antiochus left Egypt, he took with him "great wealth" (28), but he wasn't satisfied. He wanted more, and made Israel pay the price of his covetous greed.

May I ask you something? Are you a content person? Or do you have to have more? Godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Tim 6:6). People who are godly are content. Not so the ungodly.

The tables turned for Antiochus beginning in v 29. What he did next reveals the depth of his self-seeking.

**C. He had a self-seeking response in defeat (29-32)**. I mentioned earlier that Antiochus made a deal with Philometer to put him back on his throne in Egypt. As it turned out, Philometer was as crafty as Antiochus, and in time turned against Antiochus. When Mr. Epiphanes learned of it, he marched his army southward against Egypt to teach his former ally a lesson. His effort was stalled when he ran into a Roman fleet.

Verses 29-30 tell us what happened (NIV), "At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before. Ships of the western coastlands [the Romans] will oppose him, and he will lose heart."

In fact, the Roman commander Popilius Laenas met Antiochus and told him to get out of Egypt immediately or face war with Rome. Popilius drew a circle around Antiochus with his staff and ordered him to make his decision before he stepped out of it.

Humiliated, Antiochus left Egypt and headed north for home in Syria. He was fuming mad. Picture this. A 16 year old teenager was walking down the hallway in school, happy as a lark, on his way to meet a special female friend at her locker. As soon as he got there, in front of a large crowd, the school bully (who was 5" taller and 75 pounds heavier) stuck a finger in his face, and demanded he get away from the girl. Like a whipped puppy, he retreated and headed for home, his peers snickering behind him.

What do you think the teen thought about on the way home? What do you think he would do if his kid brother pestered him when he walked through the door?

Well, after red-faced Antiochus left Egypt, he went through Israel, and here's what happened according to the prediction of v 30 (NIV), "Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant." When defeated, self-seeking Antiochus committed two atrocities.

1. *He turned against God*. In 168 B.C., Antiochus marched into Jerusalem, stopped the Jews from offering sacrifices in the temple, and poured the blood and broth of a swine

upon the temple altar. He polluted the temple of Yahweh by setting up an altar to the image of Zeus Olympius. Listen to the description of all this in verses 31-32 (LB), "Angered by having to retreat, the Syrian king will again pillage Jerusalem and pollute the sanctuary, putting a stop to the daily sacrifices, and worshipping idols inside the temple. He will leave godless Jews in power when he leaves--men who have abandoned their fathers' faith."

Antiochus, in essence, committed blasphemy by turning against God in two ways.

- He desecrated God's reputation (for the temple represented God's presence).
- He desecrated God's worship (for worship is linked to atoning sacrifice).

But Antiochus committed a second atrocity.

2. *He turned against God's people.* Just as God predicted in Daniel 11, so it happened. In the book of 2 Maccabees (5:11-14), we learn that Antiochus assaulted Jerusalem, and massacred with the sword 80,000 men, women, and children. The date, December 16, 168 B.C.

We ought to mention that Jesus made a specific reference to this verse in Daniel (11:31) in His Olivet Discourse. However, when Jesus spoke of the "abomination of desolation" in Matthew 24:15, He was not looking back to Antiochus, but to the future Antichrist.

After his deadly deed, Antiochus found some apostate Jews, put them in charge of Jerusalem, and then left for home. Isn't it interesting to watch what unites godless, self-seekers? They are brought together by their common hatred of God and God's people. Even in our day, hatred of God and God's people brings enemies together.

You say, "I'm sure glad I'm not like Antiochus Epiphanes." Wait a minute. Think about something. The 19th century Russian novelist, Ivan Turgenev, speaks for us all (from Hughes, 75), "I do not know what the heart of a bad man is like. But I do know what the heart of a good man is like. And it is terrible."

The truth is, we are all born into this world as self-seeking sinners. From birth, our world revolves around *ME!* But at the Cross, something happened. Jesus gave His life to rescue us from our plight of self-centeredness. The truth is, when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, a transformation occurs. A self-pleaser becomes a God-pleaser. What's the difference? We've already seen, by the Antiochus, what self-pleasers do when trials come--they look in. What do God-pleasers do? God's Word shows us.

## II. When trials come, the godly look up (32b-35).

They look up to God. You'll recall that when faced with the fiery furnace and the lion's den, God rescued Daniel and his three friends. They experienced divine intervention. But here, in this vision, Daniel learned this would not always be the case for God's people.

God does not always deliver His people *from* trials. Sometimes He delivers them *through* trials. That's what Daniel learned would happen to a remnant of Jews in the coming massacre of Antiochus.

There's a strong contrast right in the middle of verse 32--"But." We know Antiochus was a self-pleaser, and so were the Jews who betrayed God to spare their necks, BUT. We're introduced to a second group in v 32--the God-pleasers. Do you know what a God-pleaser does when trials come? He or she looks *up* to God! We learn four characteristics of God-pleasers in verses 32-35.

**A. They know God (32).** V 32 "But the people that do know their God [in contrast with the Jews that went through the motions and later betrayed God] shall be strong, and do exploits." God always has His remnant. He knows them, and they know Him.

Such a man was Mattathias. Mattathias, a Jewish priest, chose to risk his life rather than betray the God of Israel. He and his five sons resisted Antiochus by leading a guerrilla band that fled to the hills. Mattathias died, but his son, Judas Maccabaeus (known as the

"Hammer") assumed military leadership. Eventually, Judas Maccabaeus also chose to lay down his life in battle rather than retreat.

For people who truly know God, there is no greater motivation than this. They want to please God. Secondly, not only do God-pleasers know God, but...

**B. They teach God's Word (33).** (NIV) "Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered." Would you notice something? Trials bring ministry opportunities.

Do you remember what happened during Desert Storm--not in the Middle East, but what happened *here*? Church attendance went up. People started asking questions. It was a great teaching time. When trials hit a nation, people ask questions. When trials hit a family, moms and dads and children start searching.

Daniel learned that during the coming blood-bath, a spiritual revival of sorts would occur. The truly godly would use the opportunity to teach others God's Word.

We must never underestimate the importance of teaching the Scriptures. People need to know what God says. The godly are committed to such teaching.

But don't get the idea that God-pleasers are perfect. They're not. They struggle, and sometimes they fall. But herein lies the difference.

**C. When they stumble, they keep going (34).** "Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help..." The final characteristic is related.

**D. When afflicted, they trust God (35).** "And some of them of understanding shall fall, to test them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end, because it is yet for a time appointed." God can use our failures to accomplish good. Have you blown it in the past? There's hope. Turn to God. Trust Him. Choose to be a God-pleaser today.

Those here who grew up in the fifties may remember the name Mickey Cohen because he was one of the most well-known criminals of the day. Perhaps you may even remember the account of Cohen becoming a "Christian" (story told by Hughes, 21).

At the height of his career, Cohen was persuaded to attend an evangelistic service and showed a surprising interest in Christianity. Christians were ecstatic. Just think of the influence a converted Mickey Cohen could have for the cause of Christ! Some prominent Christian leaders began visiting him in an effort to convince him to accept Christ. Late one night, after repeated appeals for him to open his heart on the basis of Revelation 3:20, Cohen prayed.

The Christian community was elated! But as time passed, no one could detect any change in Cohen's life. Finally, his Christian friends confronted him with the fact that being a Christian meant he would have to give up his friends and his profession.

Cohen would not. His reasoning? There are "Christian football players, Christian cowboys, Christian politicians; why not a Christian gangster?"

Sound absurd? Sadly, the mentality is all too common. There are countless numbers in our day that have "accepted Christ," but continue to live as they always have. There is no repentance, no zeal for godliness. They remain as they always were--self-reliant, self-sufficient, and self-centered.

There's a question we each must ask ourselves this morning. Be honest.

Personal evaluation: Does my life revolve around Christ or myself?

My friends, there are eternal implications to how we answer that question.

Time of Response: What place does the Lord Jesus Christ have in your life? Does your life truly revolve around Him? Let's ponder this important issue as Dara and Emily exalt the Lord Jesus through the following song.

*Ministry in Music: "Majesty" (Dara & Emily)*

I want to ask you an important question in light of what God has said to us in His Word this morning. Have you been living as a God-pleaser or a self-pleaser? If your life has been focused on self, today is the day to allow the Lord to change you. Sing the following song to Him as the expression of your heart, "O Jesus, I have promised to serve you till the end." It's YOU I want to serve from now on, not self, but YOU.

*Hymn of Response: #369 "O Jesus, I Have Promised"*

Let's spend some time in reflection and prayer. With our heads bowed and eyes closed, allow the Holy Spirit to help you rightly respond to God's will for your life.

*Time for Response in Prayer*

Does your life truly revolve around Jesus Christ? You may find it hard to answer that question, so allow me to help you with some specific follow-up questions:

Have you ever been truly born again? Has there been a time in your life where you called out to God, admitted that you are a sinner and have been living for yourself, but wanted to change? Have you ever truly repented of living for yourself, and trusted in the Person of Jesus Christ? Have you ever committed your life no-strings-attached to Jesus Christ? If you haven't, or are not sure, do so right now.

How about since that day--are you living for Christ now? Does your calendar reveal that Christ is at the center of your life? How about your checkbook? How much time have you spent in the Lord's work in the past month versus how much time you've spent doing your own thing? How much money have you given to advance the gospel in comparison with how much you've spent on recreation and hobbies and other things for yourself?

Let's repent of living for self, and choose to live for Him from now on.

We're going to learn a new prayer song as we close. It's a song which helps us express to our Loving Father how much we love Him for what He's done for us.

*Closing Prayer-Song: #15 "Abba Father"*