

The Arrogant Antichrist Daniel 11:36-37

Past Performance and Future Results

Have you ever heard this phrase before? *“Past performance does not necessarily predict future results.”*ⁱ The Securities and Exchange Commission requires investment funds to make some form of this statement to potential investors: *“past performance does not necessarily predict future results.”* But here we are studying Biblical prophecy, and we are saying exactly the opposite. No, we aren’t offering any financial investments. But we are appealing to each other to invest in something far more precious: the eternal destinies of our souls. And as preachers, we are certainly not asking you to take our word for it. No, indeed. Our only real authority is the Word of God and what God Himself has said. For instance, consider the words of Isaiah 41

“Produce your cause, says the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, says the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.” (Isaiah 41:21-23)

In these verses, the Lord, the King of Jacob, throws down the gauntlet to challenge the so-called gods of the nations. And the Lord proposes one simple challenge: let these empty idols accurately predict the future: *“Declare to us the things to come!” “Show us the things to come hereafter!”* And this, of course, is exactly what the Lord did in the Book of Daniel. In this series, we have learned that His precise prophecies – about nations, national leaders and the coming of Christ – have been fulfilled. In our English idiom, when something is precise, we like to say *“to the letter.”* And we have been learning that the Lord has fulfilled His prophecies *“to the letter.”* And so, yes, the Lord has shown us that His past performance necessarily predicts future results. His name – His credibility – is at stake, and the God of gods intends to fulfill His Word. And in today’s text, the message is simple: run to the humble Christ to avoid the arrogance of the Antichrist.

The End Times

It ought to bother us when people play fast and loose with Biblical doctrines and terminology. For instance in a recent piece from National Public Radio, Sarah McCammon expressed the opinion that *“Christian eschatology ... is just a big word for what you think will happen at the end of the world.”*ⁱⁱ The commentators were responding to U.S. Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene who raised the following question about so-called *“vaccine passports:”* *“Is this something like Biden’s mark of the beast? Because that is really disturbing and not good,”*ⁱⁱⁱ To the commentators on NPR, we would recommend that they consult a dictionary for the word *“eschatology”* (*“a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind”*^{iv}). To Rep. Greene we would recommend that she stick to legitimate political discussions – like the invasion of privacy – without raising the specter of *“the mark of the beast”* in Biblical prophecy. This phrase is an allusion to Scripture. The mark of the beast is connected to the worship of the Antichrist.^v

The reason for mentioning these two illustrations is to note that discussions of “the final events in the history of the world” are very much in the public eye right now. It’s important for us to be careful and to be Biblical in the way we discuss these matters with our friends and family.

In Daniel 10:14, the angel told Daniel that he “came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.” Some of the prophecies in the Book of Daniel are about “the latter days” – the last days. Now sometimes it is difficult to discern the difference between prophecies near and far. Which ones would be fulfilled in the near future? And which prophecies would be fulfilled more than two thousand years afterward? Daniel was a careful historian, tying the date of the revelation of his prophecies to specific historical figures.^{vi} So it is not surprising to find what we might call “time signatures” in the text. Daniel 10:14 refers to “the latter days.” In Daniel 11:35, we can see another “time signature” “even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.” In Daniel 12:2 we find a reference to the coming resurrection of the dead – some to everlasting bliss and some to everlasting contempt. The “time signature” in Daniel 11:35 alerts us to a distinct change. Not all students of the Bible agree with this, but there seems to be a distinct change between Antiochus Epiphanes (11:21-34) and the Antichrist (11:36-45).

The Antichrist

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 [shocking] things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. ³⁷ Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.

Historically, there have been three interpretations of this passage in Daniel chapter 11. 1.) Verses 36 and following continue to refer to Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) only; 2.) Verses 36 and following refer to Antiochus IV, but in some manner, he is a type of the Antichrist; 3.) Verses 36 and following refer to the Antichrist. Based on the distinct “time signature” in verse 35 and the characteristics in verses 36-45, we believe this is a reference to Antichrist. The earlier kings in this chapter were routinely identified as “king of the north,” or “king of the south.” But verse 36 begins with “the king.” It is easy to see from Daniel 11:21-32 that Antiochus IV is a type of the Antichrist.^{vii} But “Antiochus did not exalt himself above every god (vv. 36–37), reject “the gods of his fathers,” or worship “a god unknown to his fathers” (v. 38); on the contrary, he worshiped the Greek pantheon, even building an altar and offering sacrifices to Zeus in the Jerusalem temple precincts. Daniel also predicted that this king “will come to his end” in Palestine (v. 45), but it is a matter of historical record that Antiochus IV died at Tabae in Persia.”^{viii} About verses 36 and following, John Walvoord noted that “in contrast to the preceding section, there is no specific correspondence to history” in these verses. He commented that Jerome (of Stridon), Theodoret (of Cyrus) and Martin Luther all expressed the belief that Daniel 11:36 predicted the coming of the Antichrist.^{ix}

If these verses refer to the Antichrist, then why does he not receive a more specific introduction? The Antichrist has already been introduced in Daniel 7:7-8. There the terrifying beast (the Roman Empire) is described in all its destructive power. And “the little horn” is described as having “eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.” (Note the reference to his rhetorical ability: “a mouth speaking great things.”) Then in Daniel 9:26-27 we find a reference to the prince who will make a treaty

with Israel. He is “the desolator” who will come “on the wing of abominations.” But take heart: God will desolate “the desolator.” The point of this message is that we ought to run to the humble Christ to avoid the arrogance of the Antichrist.

Characteristics of the Antichrist in Daniel 11:36-37

Willful: He will do as he wills, v. 36. **“And the king shall do according to his will...”** This king will do as he pleases without thought of pleasing God. The same language is used of Alexander the Great in Daniel 8:4, “he did according to his will,” and Antiochus III in Daniel 11:16.

Arrogant: He will exalt and magnify himself above every god. vs. 36-37 **“he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god...”** One commentator wrote that “Because of his personal charisma, intelligence, evil character, and political power, Antichrist will arrogantly believe that he can function sufficiently well without God.”^x This corresponds to the description of “the man of sin, the son of perdition” in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, who opposes and exalts himself above any thought of God and demands worship for himself.

Blasphemous: He will speak shocking, outrageous things against the true God. v. 36. **“... and shall speak marvelous [shocking] things against the God of gods...”** According to Revelation 13:6, the Antichrist will open his mouth in blasphemy against the God of heaven.

Blind: He will succeed until the appointed time of wrath is accomplished, for this is according to God’s divine plan, v.36. **“...and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done...”** Oblivious to the fact that the God of heaven will allow him to continue, the Antichrist will sink deeper into depravity. Romans 1:32 reads like the Antichrist’s gospel: **“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”** If you were sharing the Gospel with someone, you would want them to know that God is glorious, but man is sinful and rebellious. You would appeal to them to repent in the fear of God and embrace Christ by faith. But according to Romans 1:32, pagan societies grow more and more like the Antichrist: they know about sin and sin’s penalty but they keep right on and take pleasure in their wickedness.

Self-sufficient: He will not respect the God of his fathers nor the Messiah as he continues to exalt himself, v. 37. **“Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.”** Scholars have wrestled with these clues about the identity of the Antichrist. Does the phrase “God of his fathers” mean that this man will be Jewish? Or is it a reference to the Christianity that would spread throughout the Roman Empire? It seems likely that the phrase “desire of women” is a reference to the Messiah (see Haggai 2:7). Faithful women have longed for the coming of the Messiah since He was first promised in Genesis 3:15. Yet the Antichrist will set himself “against the Lord and against His anointed [Christ]” (Psalm 2:2-3). Remember these words as we sing Psalm 2 together today.

Applications: What should we learn from this study?

How would you run to Christ to avoid the arrogance of the Antichrist?

Are you doing God’s will or your own will? When you remember that the spirit of antichrist is already among us (1 John 4:3), it’s important to take stock of your life and behavior. Do you really mean the

words when you pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10)? Do you exalt yourself, believing Satan’s lie that “you shall be as gods?” (Genesis 3:5).

Do you take God’s name in vain – blaspheming and denying Him in your thoughts and private conversations? Do you deny that God sees you and that even now you are in His presence (Ezekiel 8:12)?

Are you blind to the fact that the Most High God rules in the kingdoms of men and that He appoints over it whomever He will for specific purposes and specific periods of time (Daniel 4:17)? Are you turning a blind eye to sin and God’s judgment on sin? Do you take pleasure in sin? Then, dear friend, you are more like the Antichrist than Jesus Christ.

Do you trust in the Lord with all your heart? Or lean to your own understanding? (Proverbs 3:5-6). In Luke 18:11-14, Jesus drew a contrast between the arrogant Pharisee and the humbled tax collector. Jesus reminded everyone that “he that exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Jesus said that the corrupt tax collector who repented, asking God to be merciful, went down to his house justified – rather than the arrogant Pharisee. In these dark times, it is important for every lost sinner to cry out, “O God be merciful to me, a sinner” before it is eternally too late. The humbled Christ died for your sins and rose again. Run to the humble Christ to turn away from the arrogance of the Antichrist.

When you study God’s prophecies, you come to this conclusion: *past performance really does predict future results*. Many specific prophecies of God have already come true, and the rest of them will too. God has placed His credibility on the line. He said what He means, and He means what He says. Don’t be like the arrogant Antichrist! Turn to the humble Christ, the Heavenly Christ, especially as you see the day approaching.

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ⁱ Mutual Funds, Past Performance, U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, accessed at <https://www.investor.gov/introduction-investing/investing-basics/glossary/mutual-funds-past-performance#:~:text=That's%20why%20the%20SEC%20requires,a%20Mutual%20Fund's%20Past%20Performance.>

ⁱⁱ Special Series: The Coronavirus Crisis, hosted by Ailsa Chang, audio transcript, accessed at <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/984322992> 04/08/21

ⁱⁱⁱ David Carracio, Hear Marjorie Taylor Greene rip vaccine passports as ‘Biden’s Mark of the Beast’ The Sacramento Bee, March 30, 2021, accessed at <https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/article250316644.html>

^{iv} “Eschatology” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/eschatology> 04/08/21

^v According to Revelation 13:14-18; 14:11; 19:20 the “mark of the beast” is connected to the worship of the Antichrist. No one is insisting that “vaccine passports” are connected to worship. If Rep. Greene wanted to make her point to someone other than a Christian audience, she could use illustrations such as the yellow star that the Nazis required the Jews to wear. See <https://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/voices/info/yellowstar/theyellowstar.html>

^{vi} See for instance Ralph Wilson, The Case for a Sixth Century Dating of Daniel, Jesus Walk Bible Studies, accessed at http://www.iesuswalk.com/daniel/app3_early-date-of-daniel.htm See also, The Dating of the Book of Daniel, accessed at <https://www4.westminster.edu/staff/brennie/rel101/daniel.htm> The prophecies of Daniel are so specific that liberal scholars insist that they had to be written by someone else long after the predicted events occurred.

^{vii} Jesus clearly connected the two in Matthew 24:15.

^{viii} Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 305.

^{ix} John Walvoord, *Daniel, the Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1989, p.270. The 1971 edition of this book is available online at <https://bible.org/book/export/html/6551>

^x Miller, p. 306