

Sermon outline and notes © Dr. Stephen Felker
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Daniel 11:36-12:1 “The Rise and Fall of Antichrist”

Intro. I believe that what I just read to you is a prophecy of that ultimate, final dictator known in 1 John by the term Antichrist. Notice that v.35 refers to “the time of the end,” which is the clue pointing to that end-time leader. Furthermore, those verses flow directly into chapter 12, which clearly refers to the end times. V.1 says, “At that time...” and then clearly gives a prophecy of the Great Tribulation. So from v.35 to v.36 we leap across thousands of years to the final king in this series of self-willed, rebellious kings. We’re talking here about the Antichrist.¹ The Antichrist will be all the evil power of the other kings we have talked about combined into one individual. He will be a man who will give himself, his competence, his ability, his genius, to be used as a tool in the hands of Satan.

Other prophecies indicate that the Antichrist will revive a confederation of nations of the old Roman Empire. Many have wondered what could cause that to happen. One factor that seems likely is the diminishing standing of the United States as a superpower. Do you realize that that is actually a goal of the political left? Well, we are watching that take place before our eyes with what has happened with Afghanistan. Leaders of England’s parliament are openly questioning if NATO can depend on the United States any longer. China is putting out propaganda that Taiwan and other allies can’t depend on the United States. World conditions are moving us in the direction of fulfilling the prophecies of the rise of Antichrist. As we shall see, he will promise peace and security in a time of turmoil and conflict (cf. 1 Thess. 5:3a).

So what does this prophecy in Daniel tell us about the coming Antichrist? Note first:

I. HIS CHARACTER

The Tribulation saints (Rev. 7:9-17) will need to recognize this man for who he really is, and one way will be to see if a powerful leader fits the character profile given here. First of all, we know that he will be:

A. Self-willed – In v.36 Daniel says, “Then the king shall do according to his own will....” Like others before him (vv. 3, 16) He does everything according to his *own* will. He is an absolute dictator who rules with completely self-centered motives. Having full demonic cooperation, he establishes an absolute world monarchy.

¹ Some Bible commentators believe that the rest of the chapter refers to Antiochus Epiphanies, not the Antichrist. It is possible that Daniel would have believed the king described in vv.21-35 is the same as the king described in vv.36-46. But let me suggest several reasons that a king yet future is in view here: First, we can substantiate the prophecy with accurate historical detail up to verse 35. But after that, we have no historical data that relates to what happens from verses 36-45. Second, verse 36 says that the king “shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished...” That phrase refers to the final outpouring of God’s wrath. Third, the description of the ruler in this passage closely parallels other scriptural accounts of the Antichrist. Also, 12:1 tells us that the period when the king shall be reigning will be “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time...” So there is coming a time that will be worse than any other time in the history of man.

Before sin entered into this world, there was only one will in the universe, the will of God. When sin invaded, the rebellious will of Satan intruded into God's universe. The antichrist will be self-willed like the devil.

Will you be like the antichrist? Or will you yield your life to the will of God? Every one of us can decide to do God's will or to do our own will. We ought to be like Christ Jesus, rather than the antichrist.

Do you remember when the Lord Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion? The Lord began to pray, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me...." Then He prayed, "...not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). Aren't you glad that Jesus decided not to do His will but the will of the heavenly Father? And I want to assure you that you will be far better off following the will of God than doing your own will like the antichrist.

Another characteristic of the Antichrist is that he will be:

B. Proud – Daniel goes on to say in v.36, "he shall exalt and magnify himself above every God...." Then v.37 says, "He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all." Likewise, 2 Thess. 2:4 says that the Antichrist "opposes and exalts himself." The pride of this King will be enormous. There have been many egotists in history, but the one who will sit in the Temple claiming to be God is the greatest of them all. What we see here is the height of pride, to exalt oneself even above God.

What a contrast to the Lord Jesus during His incarnation as a man. In Philippians chapter two we read, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." The Lord Jesus emptied Himself. That just simply means that when He walked on this earth, He simply emptied Himself of His prerogatives as God. That doesn't mean He wasn't God; He was. Jesus was fully God, yet fully man at the same God. He was the God-man. He emptied Himself of His heavenly throne, with all the outward splendor and majesty of that throne. When He walked on this earth, He humbled Himself and was obedient to the Heavenly Father. He lived not for Himself but for other people. But that is not so of the anti-Christ. He is going to exalt himself. He is going to demand that others worship him. This demand will be backed up by his ability to do miraculous signs and wonders that enable him to deceive people, as we see in 2 Thess. 2:9 and Rev. 13:13. That's what humanism is all about. Humanism is the deification of man, a desire to put man on the throne and tear God down from the throne.

Years ago Dr. W. A. Criswell spoke of seeing a cartoon in Russia. On the earth beneath, the churches are lying in shambles. A ladder from earth leans against a cloud in the sky. On the cloud is a banquet table at which sits God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There is a Russian workman on the top of that ladder with a raised hammer in his hands. He had them translate for him the caption that was written in Russian. It read, "We have destroyed God in the earth, so shall we destroy God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost in Heaven." That is the kind of thing the antichrist will speak of.

That leads to another characteristic of the Antichrist. He will be:

C. Profane in Speech – In the middle of v.36 Daniel says that he "shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods...." The Antichrist is a blasphemer without equal. He will be bold and

brash in his blasphemy against the God of the Bible. Revelation 13:5-6 predicts that he will blaspheme in ways that are without precedent.

D. His Spiritual Perversion – In v.37 he says, “He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any God....” The Antichrist doesn’t regard the traditional religion of his fathers. Since other prophecies declare that the antichrist will arise out of the old Roman Empire, that would mean that “the God of his fathers” would be the Christian God. There will be no respect for the religious traditions that have been handed down. The word translated “regard” can mean to “know or perceive,” and thus it can mean that he doesn’t know the God of his fathers, i.e. he is an unbeliever; even an atheist.

“...nor the desire of women...” could mean that he won’t regard the Messiah, who was referred to as “The desire of women” among Jews, though I did not find that phrase in Scripture. That’s because the great desire of Jewish women was that they would be the one who would bring the Messiah into the world. That interpretation fits into the fact that he is *anti*-Christ. He is against Jesus. What about you? Are you for Christ or against Christ?

On the other hand, it *could* mean that he will be a homosexual and not desire women. The word translated “desire” is found in 10:3 of desirable food. We love and desire certain foods, don’t we? It is used of precious or coveted jewelry or gold (2 Chron. 20:25; Ezra 8:27). Normally men have a natural desire for women. Yet Paul said that in the last days men will be “without natural affection” (2 Tim. 3:3). Therefore, in the last days, the family will fall apart—many will no longer care about their families.

However, the immediate context both before and after this phrase refers to his relationship to deities, so this interpretation seems less likely to me, though homosexuality is regarded in Scripture as a form of rebellion against the design of the Creator God (Rom. 1:27-28). So contextually, it seems that the phrase must refer to a deity, such as Jesus, for notice what follows: “...nor regard any god...” Most people believe in some kind of god. Antichrist will be utterly irreligious. The only god he believes in is himself! Such a man could rise to power in our day. Fifty years ago, no one would have considered him. But God is not thought to be important in our society. I believe for the first time an atheist could be voted into power even here in America.

Finally, we read here about:

E. His Power – Notice in v.38 that in place of worshipping and serving other deities, “he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know....” This could mean that he will have a perverted worship of military power. He will have military success.

On the other hand, “fortresses” in v.38 is primary a defensive term, not an offensive term. So it could refer to a place or means of safety, security and protection; a refuge, stronghold against some other threat to the nations, such as the rising threat of the Islamic world, or China. In an insecure, uncertain world, people will worship security in the last days, and the anti-Christ will lead in that worship. He will offer security and protection to Israel, by negotiating a treaty with their enemies, as we have already discussed in Daniel 9:27.

Have you noticed how people almost worship safety and security? We all have heard of a very popular program called “Social Security.” During the pandemic people long for safety and security from the coronavirus. Most have willingly accepted lockdowns and other measures in exchange for security. Listen, don’t look to the government or a political leader to provide your security. Look to God. Prov. 30:5 says that God “is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.”

Then v.39 says, “Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, *and* advance *its* glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.” The anti-Christ is going to have the idea that he can take over the world with his military power and political skills. He’s going to think that he can do what Napoleon couldn’t do, Stalin couldn’t do, Hitler couldn’t do, Mussolini couldn’t do, and Caesar couldn’t do. With such incredible military power, he is able to magnify himself above all.

Let me give another translation of v.39. The HCSB says, “He will deal with the strongest fortresses with /the help of/ a foreign god. He will greatly honor those who acknowledge him, making them rulers over many and distributing land as a reward.” The Hebrew word for “fortresses” is different from v.38. It refers to a fortified city or stronghold. Even the nations with the strongest defenses shall give in to him. That could even include the United States. He makes alliances with nations who worship a “foreign God.” Could that be the Islamic God? Those political leaders that surrender to his authority will continue to sway political power with him, and even gain political power over other lands. He will probably promise some measure of political autonomy to such leaders.

So we read about his character. Next, let us consider what this prophecy says about:

II. HIS CONFLICT

We read about this in vv.40-45a. Probably by the end of the first 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will rule an ever-expanding confederation of nations. He will bring a season of peace to the world. Yet in v.40, there’s an indication that the anti-Christ is going to begin to hear rumblings of war and will indeed face a series of battles. He is going to sense upheaval and things coming apart in the coalition he has formed. Holding a massive global empire together is an impossible task. No one has ever done it. The hellish system begins to disintegrate. Although the Antichrist came in peaceably, his control soon begins to fall apart.

Now, notice from the prophecy:

A. The Causes of the Conflict:

1. Invasion from the South – In v.40 we read, “At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him....” Only time will tell what nation this represents. I assume it will be a nation from North Africa.

2. Invasion from the North - A massive force, more powerful than the south, makes its attack from the north. “The king of the north” probably refers to Russia. Though they seemed to have been tamed by the West, the day will come when the bear of Russia will rise up with its military power. They have wanted control of the Middle East for some time. Ezekiel 38-39 contains some important evidence that leads us to conclude that it is the Russian army that comes out of the north. The initial peace causes Israel to let their defenses down, knowing that they are being protected by this great world ruler. But when Russia comes, it won’t come alone, according to v.43, which says, “the Libyans and Ethiopians *shall follow* at his heels.” Basically, some north African nations will unite with Russia and come against the Antichrist in the Middle East.

Yet notice what will happen. Here we read about:

B. His Conquest – V.41 says of the Antichrist, “He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many *countries* shall be overthrown.” Even so, Ezekiel 39 tells us that God allows the Antichrist to have victory. The Antichrist not only destroys the northern army, but he devastates the North

African army from the south as well. V.43 says in the HCSB, “He will get control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the riches of Egypt. The Libyans and Cushites will also be in submission.” His victory makes him the master of the world at this time. Now he really begins to sense his power. I believe it’s at this time that he begins to clash against the institutions that exist. He consumes the false church and then begins to persecute Israel (Rev. 12). He calls upon the whole world to worship him, abolishing all other religions. He will persecute and kill those who don’t.

Yet in the midst of his celebrations of victory, we read about:

C. His Consternation – In v.44 we read, “But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.” At this point in the Tribulation, the events of Revelation 6 - 18 begin to take place. He will be troubled by an army from the East. The “tidings out of the east” are clarified for us in Rev. 9:13-16 at the blowing of the sixth trumpet. “And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand.” This, of course, could refer to the Chinese army. The eastern army apparently moves toward Israel, also desiring to gain control over the Middle East. We are already seeing their efforts to exert influence in Afghanistan. They will resist the rule of the Antichrist. Yet he will also be concerned about another military power to the north, perhaps Iran.

Then, we read in the prophecy about:

D. The Climax of His Military Advances – In v.45 we read, “And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain....” The glorious or “beautiful” holy mountain most likely refers to Jerusalem. So he sets up his base of operations in Israel and declares himself to be God, having won great victories. This is where the battle of Armageddon will take place. I’m sure you have heard of that.

In this fallen, sinful world, evil men will rise to power, and the worst of all will rise to power in the last days. But I have good news. We also read in this prophecy of:

III. HIS CONDEMNATION

Wicked men may prosper for a while, but their judgment will surely come. In v.36 we read that he “shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished.” The Hebrew word translated “wrath” almost always refers to God’s wrath in Scripture. So he will prosper only for a time until God pours out His wrath upon the world, and upon the Antichrist. Then in the last of v.45 we read, “yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.” For a time it will appear that the kingdom of the Antichrist is invincible. But God assures His people of that day that he will come to an end. He may have been victorious over other kings, but he’s no match for the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:11-21; 2 Thess. 2:8). Though he assembles what seems to be an invincible army in the battle of Armageddon, Jesus Christ comes out of the sky with a sword and slays him (Rev. 19:11-21; 2 Thess. 2:8). He is no match when he meets God’s true King. However, prior to Christ’s return, Israel reaches their deepest point of sorrow, suffering, and humiliation. At that point Christ will come, not only to judge the Antichrist, but also to deliver Israel. They will look upon Him “whom they have pierced” (Zech. 12:10) and will be redeemed.

Now you have a choice. You can choose to put your lot with the devil and with his crowd, but when you do you only have a temporary future out there in front of you. Or you can determine to put your choice with the Lord Jesus and when you do the Bible says you are going to live forever

and forever and forever. The devil is the ultimate loser. The Antichrist will go down in defeat as well. Why not chose to follow Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords?

Conclusion: One of the main lessons from this text is the fact that God will triumph over evil. The wicked and the ungodly will get their ultimate due from a just God. This is assured in this prophecy. Though it will seem at times that the wicked are in charge, God assures His people that He is sovereign over all.

From Robert Louis Stevenson comes a story. There was a ship in a violent, stormy sea being driven against the rocks. Any moment it might be dashed to pieces. The passengers in the ship were huddled together in terror, facing what seemed like certain death. In the agony of that moment one of the men said, "I am going up to see the pilot." He made his way up and up, finally to the pilot's house. There he found the pilot, chained to his post with his hands on the wheel, guiding little by little, turning little by little away from the rocks and out into the deep of the open sea. When the pilot saw his intruder and looked at his terror-stricken face, the pilot looked at him and smiled. The man turned around, went back down to the deck below, and shouted as he went, "All is well. All is well. I saw the pilot's face and he smiled."

Well, in the midst of a troubled world, look to the Lord and sense the smile on His face saying in John 16:33, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Sources: W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on the Book of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976); Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2021; Tremper Longman III, *The NIV Application Commentary: Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999); John MacArthur, Jr., *The Future of Israel: Daniel 9:20-12:13* (Panaroma City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1985); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); Dr. Jerry Vines (from www.rr-mrc.com). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).