

From Antiochus to the Antichrist

Text: Daniel 11:21-45

Introduction:

1. The chapter divides into two main sections:
 - **Vs. 1-35** pertain to the Greek kingdoms of Egypt (Ptolemy) and Syria (Seleucid) and particularly to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. These events occurred exactly as written between 301 and 168 B.C. The history is found in Josephus and the book of the Maccabees.
 - **Vs. 36-45** pertain to the Antichrist. The words “time of the end” point beyond Antiochus, beyond the church age, to the last days.
2. Review of previous sermon (Vs. 1-20)
3. In this sermon we will study Vs. 21-45 which take us from the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, a prototype of the Antichrist, to the Antichrist of the end times (Vs. 36-45). We will divide the text under two headings:
 - The Antichrist Pre-figured (Vs. 21-35)
 - The Antichrist Predicted (Vs. 36-45)

I. The Antichrist Prefigured (Vs. 21-35)

A. His Description (Vs. 21a)

1. “a vile person” = the word ‘vile’ means morally debased, depraved
2. John Phillips: “Various ancient historians agree that young Antiochus was indeed “vile” or “contemptible,” as the text declares. Often, his behavior was eccentric, if not actually mad. He was given to the most degraded and unnatural vices. He was unscrupulous, cruel, of a savage temper, and fond of the company of the lowest of men. He was erratic and cunning but not devoid of courage.”
3. John Gill: “He is called ‘vile,’ being a very immoral man, given to drunkenness, lasciviousness, uncleanness, and unnatural lusts, and a violent persecutor... The word signifies ‘despicable.’” Gill goes on to state that he lived a lascivious and foolish lifestyle “drinking with strangers, and people of low life; reveling at merry bouts with young people; putting on strange habits; throwing away his money among the rabble.”

B. His Deceptions (Vs. 21b-24)

1. Deceitful in his ascension to the throne (Vs. 21b)
 - a. “obtain the kingdom by flatteries” = the nobles and people did not want to give Antiochus the kingdom, preferring Demetrius, son of Seleucus, who was being held hostage in Rome.
 - b. “To gain the throne, he made flattering speeches to the nobles, made false promises and gave gifts to the citizens.” (Cloud)

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- c. Note: When someone flatters you, they have a hidden agenda, an ulterior motive (Prov. 29:5). See also Prov. 2:16, 7:5 and 20:19
 - d. Note: Deception is the devil's trademark, the key weapon he uses to his advantage. Therefore, it is no surprise that the coming Antichrist will be a master deceiver.
- 2. Deceitful in his agreements (Vs. 22-24)
 - a. Harry Ironside: "At the beginning, he made a league both with the Jews and with Ptolemy Philometer but proved false to each, as God had declared he would."
 - b. "he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches" = he distributed the spoils of Egypt to his soldiers and followers

C. His Destructions (Vs. 25-26)

- 1. Antiochus attacks the Southern kingdom of Egypt (Ptolemy Philometer) and prevails.
- 2. "for they shall forecast devices against him" = one of the main reasons for Antiochus' victory against the king of the South was his clever espionage behind the scenes where he seduced key men within Philometer's inner circle (e.g. military commanders) to work for him. These men are referred to as "they that feed of the portion of his meat"
- 3. Josephus said that Antiochus "circumvented Ptolemy Philometer by fraud."

D. His Desecrations (Vs. 27-32a)

These verses document two attacks of Antiochus against Judea. They both followed failed attempts to gain power over the Southern kingdom.

1. A Failed Covenant – Israel attacked (Vs. 27-28)

- a. Antiochus and Ptolemy met ("at one table") and pretended to be friendly to one another but in reality, they both had their own secret agenda and planned on deceiving the other. "Though they seemed to carry it very friendly to one another, yet at the same time they were contriving in their minds to do as much mischief to each other as they could." (Gill)
- b. On his return to Syria, he attacked Israel. Historians say this was on account of rumors the Jews had revolted against him but the Word of God highlights the true heart motive – his heart was "against the holy covenant".
- c. 2 Maccabees 5:11-14 – "When these happenings were reported to the king, he thought that Judea was in revolt. Raging like a wild animal, he set out from Egypt and took Jerusalem by storm. He ordered his soldiers to cut down without mercy those whom they met and to slay those who took refuge in their houses. There was a massacre of young and old, a killing of women and children, a slaughter of virgins and infants. In the space of three

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days, eighty thousand were lost, forty thousand meeting a violent death, and the same number being sold into slavery.”

2. A Failed Conquest – Israel attacked (Vs. 29-32a)

- a. Antiochus attacked Egypt again but was unsuccessful. The Southern kingdom had formed a new alliance with the Roman Empire and when Antiochus arrived, the “ships of Chittim” (Roman navy and representatives) were waiting for him.
- b. The Romans demanded that Antioch depart from Egypt at once. Antiochus had no choice but to leave.
- c. Antiochus left Egypt in a diabolical rage and on his way home, unleashed his revenge against Israel – “therefore he shall be grieved, and return and have indignation against the holy covenant...” (Vs. 30-31)
- d. In 168 B.C. Antiochus caused the daily temple sacrifices to cease and polluted the sanctuary with sacrifices of pigs. He set up an idolatrous image (idol) of Jupiter in the temple (2 Maccabees 6:2). This is what is referred to as “the abomination that maketh desolate” (See Dan. 9:27; 11:31 & 12:11)
- e. The same year Antiochus struck a coin with his image on one side and a depiction of himself seated as Jupiter on the other. The inscription read, “Antiochus, image of God, bearer of victory.”
- f. Note: Antichrist will also force the world to worship the idolatrous image of himself (Rev. 13:14-18). He will have total power both religiously and economically.

E. His Devastation (Vs. 32b-35)

Antiochus’ rampage against the Jews evoked an uprising that would see his grip of power on the holy land broken. It is known in history as the Maccabean revolt. The resistance took two important forms:

1. Education – “shall instruct many” (Vs. 33)
 - a. “they that understand...shall instruct many” = A new class emerged called the Maschilim (“the wise”), men who knew the Word of God and who struggled to keep the true faith alive in the midst of persecution.
 - b. “yet they shall fall by the sword...” = many perished by fire and sword or were enslaved (‘captivity’). Possibly the persecutions listed in Hebrews 11:35-37 are drawn from this dark period of history.
2. Contention – “shall be strong, and do exploits” (Vs. 32)
 - a. The Maccabees War against Antiochus and the Greek Seleucid Empire lasted from 167 to 160 B.C. Judah and his forces were called ‘Maccabees’ which is the Hebrew word for hammer (makkebbeth), because of their unexpected, hammer-like

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attacks on the Greeks. (Cloud) (Refer slide for further detail).

The temple was recaptured, cleansed and repaired in 164 B.C.

- b. CHALLENGE: In these dark times, like the godly remnant during the dark reign of Antiochus, we need to keep faith alive by diligent education in the truth and by a spiritual contending for the doctrines we hold dear (Jude 1:3). *“We further covenant to maintain family and secret devotion; to religiously educate our children...”*

II. Antichrist Predicted (Vs. 36-45)

The prophecy now fast forwards to the end times and the future Antichrist. These gaps are not an unusual feature in Bible prophecy as previously demonstrated (e.g. gap between 69th and 70th week of 70-week prophecy). We can break what has been revealed about Antichrist in these verses into two divisions:

A. Antichrist’s Worship (Vs. 36-39)

1. His Prideful Deification (Vs. 36-37)
 - a. He will set himself up as god (Vs. 36a & 37b) He bears the mark of his father the devil (Isaiah 14:13)
 - b. He will set himself up against God (Vs. 36b-37a)
 - i. “he shall speak marvellous things against God” = describes his blasphemies against God
 - ii. Revelation 13:5-6 *“And there was given unto him a **mouth speaking great things and blasphemies**; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in **blasphemy** against God, to **blaspheme** his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”*
 - c. Illustration: The anti-God atmosphere of today (Jeremy Rifkin)
2. His Personal Deity (Vs. 38-39)
 - a. “the God of forces” = a reference to Satan. “The word ‘God’ is capitalized, indicating that it refers to Satan himself.”
 - b. John Phillips: “This king will not be simply an initiate into occult powers; he will be indwelt by Satan himself. As the god of forces, Satan is the instigator of war. Antichrist will rise to power over the world in the wake of war. He will glorify war. And when he arrives at the apex of his power, he will acknowledge his debt to his sinister master by establishing Satan worship as the world’s new religion.”

B. Antichrist’s Wars (Vs. 40-45)

1. The First Battle Described (Vs. 40-43)
 - a. Antichrist will be attacked from the north and the south. The South is present day Egypt and Northern Africa and the north is present day Syria and Iraq. Both areas are now Muslim.

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- b. Antichrist will be victorious in his counterattacks. He will overthrow “many countries” but not Edom, Moab and Ammon which is territory of modern Jordan. He will take control of Egypt and her treasures and the Libyans and Ethiopians will also submit to him.
2. The Final Battle Described (Vs. 44-45)
 1. Antichrist is attacked from the north and the east. The kings of the Far East take advantage of his local troubles in the Middle East and march against him.
 2. It appears that this sets the stage for the battle of Armageddon.
 3. John Phillips:

“With what armies he can gather from the West, he will prepare for the final confrontation with the East. But his time has run out. The divine clock of seven years, which began its countdown with the signing of his treaty with Israel, has been ticking away relentlessly. Now it chimes the final hour. At that moment, the heavens will open. The Lord Jesus will come, backed by the armies of heaven and accompanied by his blood-bought bride. Invincible and omnipotent, sweeping all before Him, He will descend. The sword will flash forth, and the Battle of Armageddon will be over in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. “None shall help him” is Daniel’s final word on the fate of the Antichrist. No one could help him. The Apocalypse adds the final details. The Antichrist and his soul twin, the False Prophet, will be hurled living into the lake of fire. Satan will be incarcerated in the Abyss. And Jesus will take to Himself His mighty power – and reign!”

Conclusion: There are at least four concluding challenges we can take home from the study of this passage

1. The Accuracy of Scripture – There are at least 130 fulfilled prophecies in Vs. 1-35! Isaiah 46:9-10 *“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, **Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:**”*
2. The Certainty of Prophecy – M.A. Butler “If the first 35 verses have been fulfilled in every minute detail, the remainder of this prophecy, too, will one day be history.” There will be a rapture, there will be an antichrist, there will be a return of Christ to earth, there will be a 1,000-year reign!
3. The Sovereignty of God – See Vs. 27, 29, 35 & 36. God’s position as ruler and sovereign again magnified through this passage. History is really “His story”! Man proposes but God disposes. Psalm 115:3 *“But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”*
4. The Brevity of Life – this passage reminds us that kings and kingdoms come and go. It reminds us that the affairs of this life are temporary and fleeting. Life is a vapour (James 4:14) and men are like the grass of the field. 1 Peter 1:24-25 *“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”*