

SESSION FIFTEEN

DANIEL 11:21-45

Antiochus & Antichrist . . . Persecutors of Israel

INTRODUCTION

This session continues the historical tracing of the conflicts between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria. From that historical conflict, a Syrian king arose named Antiochus IV Epiphanes who severely persecuted Israel. Verses 21-35 describe his time of power and atrocities against the Jews. Antiochus, however, is a type of the Antichrist who will persecute Israel in the *end times*, and it is the Antichrist himself who is depicted in verses 36-45.

I. THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES (11:21-35)

[reigned 175-164 BC]

A. His Rivalry with Egypt (11:21-28)

1. His Rise to Power (21-24) *"a despicable person"*
 - a. Antiochus was not the rightful heir to the throne; rather, the son of Seleucus IV (i.e., Demetrius Soter IV) was the heir.¹
 - b. Claimed divine honors for himself on coins he had minted.²
 - c. Vs 24 - Uses bribery to gain power!
2. Campaign Against Egypt (25-28)
 - a. Historical Background

During the years 169-68 BC, Antiochus carried out his military campaigns against Egypt. The exact dates and number are uncertain, but there were two primary campaigns:

 - (1) 1st = 169 BC Result: Dealt a defeat to Egypt
 - (2) 2nd = 168 BC Result: Romans intervene; halt Antiochus
 - b. Vs 26 - Victory for Antiochus over Ptolemy Philometor
 - c. Vs 27 - Notice the treachery and dishonesty between the Egyptian and Syrian rulers!

¹ Antiochus was the younger son of Antiochus III the Great. Seleucus IV was assassinated by his chief minister, Heliodorus. But Antiochus IV usurped the throne before Seleucus's sons could be crowned.

² On the coins, he had the phrase "Epiphanēs Theos" included, meaning "God manifest" (cf. 2 Thess 2:3-4).

- d. Vs 28 - Antiochus's return trip to Syria

His heart is "*set against the holy covenant*"!

The "holy covenant" is that special relationship between Israel and her God. Antiochus despised Israel's faith.

- (1) Puts down a small insurrection in Jerusalem
- (2) Plunders the Jerusalem Temple

B. His Persecution of Israel (11:29-35)

Occasion: Following Antiochus's second invasion of Egypt (168 BC)

1. Unsuccessful Invasion of Egypt (29-30a)

- a. "*ships of Kittim*" - This is a reference to Rome.³

Antiochus would have been successful again, but he was handed a letter from the Roman Senate ordering him not to fight against Egypt.

- b. "When the Syrian king hesitated, the Roman consul drew a circle around Antiochus in the sand and told him he must make a decision before stepping out of the circle."⁴

2. Persecution of the Jews (30b-35)

- a. "enraged at the holy covenant" (30b)

While Antiochus was in Egypt on his 2nd campaign, there had been a rebellion in Jerusalem. Jason, the former High Priest, was making an attempt to regain Jerusalem.

- b. Antiochus's persecution against Jerusalem

"No doubt, in light of the recent events with Egypt and Rome, Antiochus felt compelled to communicate a message that insurrection would not be tolerated. Such opposition to Hellenization and Seleucid authority could only be interpreted as sympathy for Egypt, for only from Egypt could the rebels hope to receive support for the liberation movement. Therefore, upon reaching Jerusalem, he had the walls of the city torn down, slaughtered thousands of Jews, and sold many more into slavery (II Macc. 5:11ff). In addition, he himself entered the Holy of Holies, with Menelaus as his guide."⁵

- c. The Aftermath (31)

³Cf. Num 24:24b. Kittim sometimes refers to Cyprus (there was a city on Cyprus called by the Phoenicians KTY = *Kitti*). But the name became for the Hebrews a designation of the Mediterranean people generally and even of certain nations specifically. In the Qumrân scrolls, Kittim often refers to Rome. Cf. "Kittim" in rev. *ISBE*, 3:45-46 by W. H. Brownlee. The *Old Greek* (OG) tradition even identifies the Kittim as the Romans.

⁴Donald Campbell, *Daniel: God's Man in a Secular Society*, 168. The Roman consul was Gaius Popilius Laenas.

⁵J. Paul Tanner, "The Rise of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and His Dealing with the Jews" (paper submitted for course 380, Concepts in Judaic Culture, The University of Texas, July 1987), 15-16.

- (1) Apollonius was left behind to make sure that the "rebellious Jews" presented no danger to Antiochus's kingdom.
 - (2) Apollonius's stay in Jerusalem only made things worse.
 - (a) The pollution of the Temple by Gentiles worshipping other deities.
 - (b) The use of sacred prostitutes.
 - (3) There was a great Jewish flight out of Jerusalem and abandonment of the Temple.
 - (4) Antiochus now saw Judaism as detrimental to the unification of his realm.
 - (5) Orders were issued for a further religious persecution which occurred in December of 167 BC.⁶
 - (a) A special emissary was sent to Judaea to force the Jews to transgress the laws of their religion.
 - (b) Jewish ritual was prohibited (1 Macc 1:45-6).
 - (c) The sacred precincts were formally given over to the worship of Zeus Olympios (1 Macc 1:54; 2 Macc 6:2).
 - (d) A small pagan altar was erected on top of the altar of burnt offering (1 Macc 1:59; 4:44), an abomination to the worship of the LORD God.
 - (e) Copies of the Torah were burned.
 - (f) Sabbath keeping and circumcision were forbidden.
 - (g) Jews were forced to celebrate the king's birthday every month and to participate in the festal procession of Dionysus.
 - (h) High places and altars on which swine and other animals were to be sacrificed were erected throughout Judea. [Inspectors were appointed]
- d. Result: The Maccabean Revolt (32-35)

"the people who know their God will display strength and take action" (32)

The leading priest of the town of Modein (Mattathias) not only refused to worship at one of the pagan altars, but slew the officer of Antiochus carrying out the command. The sons of this priest (including Judas Maccabaeus) led the Jewish people in an uprising against Antiochus, and eventually overthrew their oppressors and rededicated the Temple in December of 164 BC.

⁶For a more complete description of this time, see J. Paul Tanner, "The Rise of Antiochus IV Epiphanes," 18.

A Lesson for Our Life

Notice again v 33: "*And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many.*"

Principle: Being an encourager in times of great difficulty—

Especially where personal sacrifice is called for in order to be obedient to God, the immature and fainthearted among God's people need to be reminded to view things from God's perspective and be faithful. The "strong in faith" need to encourage the fainthearted to remain true to the Lord and obey Him. Practice being an encourager to others, both by words and by personal example. Remind others that faithfulness to the Lord and sacrifice for His sake will prove worthwhile in the final analysis, when we stand before Him and give account of our lives.

Application Point:

Even the strong need encouragement. Take time to sit down this week and write a letter of encouragement to someone that you know is really in "the battle." One suggestion: write to a missionary and remind him or her of the promises of God. Let them know that their life is well-spent.

II. THE ANTICHRIST OF THE "END TIMES" (11:36-45)

Beginning in v 36, the text leaps ahead in time to the period when the Antichrist is going to persecute Israel.⁷ This sudden transition might appear unduly abrupt had it not been for chapters 7–8 of Daniel which depicted Antiochus as a type of the Antichrist. The first four verses of this section (11:36-39) provide us with a general description of the Antichrist, while the final six verses (11:40-45) depict his military ventures that lead up to the battle of Armageddon.

Observations:

1. Note that the change in subject from Antiochus (vv 21-35) to the Antichrist (vv 36ff.) is very subtle, and yet a new subject is clearly in view beginning at Daniel 11:36. Support:
 - a. The primary subject in vv 36ff. is not referred to as the *King of the North* but rather as "the king" (מֶלֶךְ). Normally in ch. 11, a qualifier such as "south" or "north" is included (exc. 2-3,27).
 - b. In vv 21-35, Antiochus IV served in the role of the *King of the North*, as the other Seleucid kings before him. In v 40, however, the *king* is apparently in contention with both the *King of the North* and the *King of the South*.⁸

⁷Most critical scholars reject the Antichrist interpretation. However, it has been favored by both premillennial and amillennial expositors (inc. both C. F. Keil and E. J. Young). It was also favored by early Church leaders such as Chrysostom, Hippolytus, Theodotion and Jerome.

⁸For a discussion and evaluation of this (i.e., that the Antichrist is distinct from both the *King of the North* and the *King of the South*), see my article "Daniel's 'King of the North': Do We Owe Russia an Apology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35:3 (Sept 1992): 318ff. [See Appendix N].

- c. Verse 35 still anticipates the "end time" (אֶת־עֵת־הַסֵּף), whereas verse 40 reflects that the "end time" has finally come.
 - d. Dan 12:1-4 is actually a continuation of 11:36-45 and forms one unit with it. The opening verse of ch 12 connects the two temporally with the expression "Now at that time." But the mention of the time of greatest distress in 12:1 (certainly the "Great Tribulation") and the mention of the resurrection in 12:2 certainly gives the whole unit an eschatological setting. It is certainly beyond the time of Antiochus!
 - e. Related to "d" above, there is a large "leap forward" in time between 11:35 and 11:36. However, there are other "leaps" in time throughout chapter 11 (e.g., between v 2 and v 3).
 - f. The death of the "king" recorded in Dan 11:45 takes place in Israel, but the details do not correspond to the death of Antiochus (who died in Persia).
 - g. The comment in Dan 11:36 that "he will exalt himself above every god" is not exactly true of Antiochus. Antiochus exalted Zeus on the reverse side of his coinage (cf. G. Archer, "Daniel," *EBC*, 144).
2. Observe that nothing is said in these verses about the ten nation confederacy or about his time in power of 3 1/2 years.

A. His Description (11:36-39)

- 1. His pride and defiance of God (36)
 - a. This verse seems to have parallels with Rev 13 and 2 Thes 2.
 - (1) The mention that "*the king will do as he pleases*" suggests that he has attained to his place of military and political power (notice the use of the phrase in Dan 8:4; 11:3,16). This should be compared with Rev 13:4-5.
 - (2) He speaks "*monstrous things*" (*NIV*: "*unheard-of things*") against the true God, which is paralleled by Rev 13:5-6 "*he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God.*" (cf. Dan 7)
 - (3) The idea that he will "*exalt and magnify himself above every god*" is parallel to 2 Thes 2:4. The latter takes place in conjunction with the "apostasy" and "revealing" of the man of lawlessness after the first 3 and 1/2 years.
 - b. The parallels suggest the proper time setting for Dan 11:36ff.
 - (1) Both Rev 13 and 2 Thes 2 pertain to the last 3 1/2 year period of the Tribulation (note Rev 13:5).
 - (2) Conclusions:
 - (a) Daniel 11:36ff. portrays the Antichrist in his time of power during the final 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation.
 - (b) Recall Dan 9:27, where the Antichrist forbids sacrifice and offering at the Jewish Temple in the middle of the "week" (i.e., 7 year period). Apparently, that precedes the activities described in the Daniel 11 passage.
 - (c) Since the Antichrist gains his power by acquisition from the 10 nation confederacy, and since he holds power for the 3 1/2 years, apparently

he subdues three of the ten nations and gains dominion before (or "by") the middle of the 7 year period. This would imply that the events in Daniel 11:36ff. follow his victory over the 10 nations.

2. His Religious Outlook (11:37-38)

a. Negatively (37)

(1) Reference to the "gods" of his fathers (37a) [עַל-אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתָיו]

(a) KJV = "the God of his fathers" (cf. Ex 3:15)

NASB/NIV = "the gods of his fathers"

(b) Following the lead of the *KJV*, some expositors have concluded that the Antichrist will be Jewish.⁹

(c) The Hebrew term *Elohim* can be translated as "God" or "gods."

Elaboration: While either translation is grammatically correct, we should observe that the expression "the God of his fathers" is a commonly used phrase in the OT to refer to Israel's covenant God, Yahweh, who had long associated Himself by covenant with the "fathers" of the nation. Hence, when Moses was sent to speak to the elders of Israel in the Egyptian bondage, he was instructed to say "The LORD, the God of your fathers [אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם], the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me" (Ex 3:16). Solomon was exhorted to "know thou the God of thy father" (1 Chr 28:9), and regarding the evil king Amon we are told that he "forsook the LORD God of his fathers [וַיַּעַזֵּב אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתָיו]" (2 Kg 21:22; cf. Gen 31:29; 46:1,3; Jer 19:4; and Dan 2:23). These observations would tend to support the idea that the Antichrist will be Jewish. However, we should also take note that Dan 9:26 associates him with the Roman people (cf. 7:24). Are both true?

(2) No regard for the "*desire of women*" (so *NASB*) [חֲמֻדַּת נָשִׁים]

(a) Note the NIV: "the one desired by women"

(b) Notice the context before and after the phrase! Whatever this means, it has something to do with his regard for other gods. This would probably exclude any interpretation concerning his sexual outlook.¹⁰

(c) Possibly a connection to the Messianic promise

"From the Jewish perspective, the desire of women was to fulfill the promise to Eve of a coming Redeemer to be born of a woman.

⁹Charles Feinberg takes the expression "*God of his fathers*" to imply that the Antichrist is Jewish, on the similarity with Ex 3:15. However, Feinberg is somewhat unique in that he regards the Antichrist to be a different figure than the "little horn" of Dan 7 and the Beast of Rev 13 (*Daniel*, 176). Furthermore, he takes the phrase "*god of fortresses*" to be a designation for the Beast, the head of the Roman Empire. The two are in league together.

¹⁰Gleason Archer remarks, ". . . perhaps it simply points to the cruelty Antiochus showed toward all women he was sexually involved with" ("Daniel," *EBC*, 7:144).

Undoubtedly, many Jewish women hoped that one of their sons would fulfill this prophecy. Accordingly, 'the one desired by women' is the Messiah of Israel."¹¹

- b. Positively (38)
 - (1) Instead, he honors "*a god of fortresses*" (so *NIV & NASB*)
 - (a) The KJV had translated this "But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces."
 - (b) One New Age analyst writing from a Christian perspective used the *KJV* to connect the future Antichrist with the New Age concept of "the force."¹² That is clearly not the point!
 - (2) Several expositors connect this verse with the idea of "military might."¹³ Note that the term "fortress" (בְּצֻרָה) is also used in Dan 11:7,19 and 31. While this may indeed be correct, how does this tie in with the following phrases:
 - (a) Why is this a "god whom his fathers did not know"?
 - (b) How does he honor such a "god" with gold, silver, etc.? [Does this mean he invests all his financial resources in his *war machine*?]

3. His Military and Political Policies (11:39)

- a. "with the help of a foreign god" ??? [עִם־אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר]

Is this a reference to the "god of fortresses" mentioned in v 38? Cf. Mal 2:11, where Judah was rebuked for "marrying the daughter of a foreign god" [אֵל גִּבּוֹר].
- b. He is good at passing out favors to those who support his efforts, whether it be in terms of political positions or allocation of real estate.

B. His Military Campaigns Leading Up to Armageddon (11:40-45)

1. How do we understand the pronouns of the translation (v 40)?

Who is the "him" and "he" in verse 40?

- a. Is he opposed by both kings, North and South?

"And at the end time the king of the South will collide with him [the Antichrist], and the king of the North will storm against him [the Antichrist]."
- b. Is the Antichrist the King of the North who opposes the King of the South?

¹¹John F. Walvoord, *Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, 272. Feinberg, Pentecost and Donald Campbell take a similar position.

¹²Constance Cumbey, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow*, rev. ed. (Shreveport, LA: Huntington House, Inc., 1983).

¹³J. Dwight Pentecost: "he will promote military strength" ("Daniel," *Bible Knowledge Comm.*, 1371). Walvoord states, "in place of worship of God he will place material things which enable him to increase his power militarily and politically" (*Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, 273).

"And at the end time the king of the South will collide with him [the Antichrist, the king of the North], and the king of the North will storm against him [the king of the South]."

2. The answer to the above question determines to some extent the interpretation of "the king of the North."
 - a. According to translation "b," the King of the North = Antichrist
 - b. According to translation "a," the King of the North is not the Antichrist but has some other identity.
 - (1) Throughout Daniel 11, the "king of the North" was consistently connected with the Seleucid dynasty with its capital at Antioch (and which ruled the territory that now comprises Syria, Iran, Iraq, and lower Turkey).
 - (2) Several notable premillennial expositors, rejecting the idea that the Antichrist is the "king of the North," have instead interpreted the "king of the North" as having some connection with Russia.¹⁴

Response: I have attempted to argue in my article in *JETS* (Sept 1992) that there is no connection between "the king of the North" and Russia. There is very little basis for equating Russia with the "king of the North" other than the fact that Russia is north of Israel. Keep in mind, however, that in the OT, invasions from Babylon and Assyria were often viewed as an invasion from the "north" (they were basically *east* of Israel, but they always attacked from the *north*; note Jer 1:15 and 25:9 in ref. to Babylon). Furthermore, there is no other evidence in Scripture for a Russian invasion of Israel. Many have suggested that the invasion depicted in Ezekiel 38--39 does have Russia in view, but I have argued elsewhere that such is not the case at all.¹⁵

- c. Conclusion:

The fact that the pronoun ("he") is maintained even in the final clause of v 40 suggests that the Antichrist is distinct from both the King of the South and the King of the North.¹⁶ Also, the "king of the North" is not a reference to Russia. One should consider the possibility that the "king of the North" refers to a confederation of Arab nations (such as Syria and Iraq) as well as Iran and Turkey (i.e., countries which once comprised the Seleucid kingdom). If this is so, then v 40 is suggesting that the Antichrist and his forces are drawn into a Middle East conflict, in which he comes under attack from a combined force of North African and Middle Eastern

¹⁴Campbell suggests that it is "probably Russia" (*Daniel*, 172). Walvoord says, "a great army from Europe, probably including Russia and other European nations, will attack him from the North" (*Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, 274). Pentecost suggests that this could be either (1) the same as the invasion of Gog and Magog (Ezek 38--39) or (2) a later invasion from the north. He adds, "Either way the king of the North in verse 40 is certainly not one of the *Seleucid* kings of the North in verses 5-35" (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1372).

¹⁵J. Paul Tanner, "Rethinking Ezekiel's Invasion of Gog," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39:1 (Mar 1996): 29-46.

¹⁶The Hebrew text has no explicit pronoun in the latter part of vs 40. For example, we have a series of singular verbs (e.g., יָבֹא—"he will enter") with no explicit subject.

countries: Egypt (king of the South) and a northern confederation of nations (including Syria and others).

3. Details of the Conflict (41-43)
 - a. The Antichrist and his forces will enter Israel ("the Beautiful Land," v 41 - see notes on Dan 8 for this identification).
 - b. Jordan (Edom, Moab, sons of Ammon) will somehow be spared (v 41).
 - c. Egypt in particular will be attacked, and her riches will be confiscated. Other African allies of Egypt will be affected.
4. The Final Battle of Armageddon
 - a. Passages to Correlate
 - (1) Rev 16:12-16 - The 6th Bowl Judgment

The kings of the world will be gathered for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty!
 - (2) Zechariah 12:3; 14:2-4,9
 - b. Location of Armageddon [Har-Meggido]
 - c. Rumors from the "East" and "North" apparently draw the Antichrist back to Israel. Note Rev 16:12 and 9:13-16. China may have a role to play.
 - d. The Antichrist will make his final stand in Israel (v 45)
 - (1) Details
 - (a) the "beautiful Holy Mountain" = Mt. Moriah (Jerusalem)
 - (b) "seas" - This at least includes the Mediterranean if it is not an explicit reference to it (regarding the plural ref. *seas*, see Judges 5:17 and Deut 33:19).
 - (c) The *NIV* translation "at the beautiful holy mountain" is doubtful on syntactical grounds.¹⁷
 - (d) Point: he will establish himself in Israel, between the Mediterranean and Jerusalem.
 - (2) Jerusalem is nearly destroyed, but fortunately Jesus Christ returns to save the nation of Israel and destroy the Antichrist (Rev 19:11-21).

A Lesson for Our Life

One of the amazing characteristics of the Antichrist is that "*he will speak monstrous things against the God of gods.*" When you stop to think about it, the idea that anyone would speak a word of contempt against God is dumbfounding. Repeatedly in Scripture, God is exalted as One who is good (Ps

¹⁷For the construction ל . . . ׀, see *BDB* 107c (1b). This can be used to indicate the space separating two distinct objects, as in Lev 20:25. Pentecost suggests that the Antichrist sets up his headquarters in Jerusalem (*Bible Knowledge Comm.*, 1372).

136:1). The goodness of God is something all of us should cherish. There is no reason to speak a word *against* God, because He is perfectly good and operates out of a heart of goodness. But Satan even tempts believers to question God's goodness. Let's not let him deceive us with this lie!