

History and the End Times

August 8, 2021

Daniel 11

As we get close to the end of our study of the book of Daniel, I have to confess something to you at the outset. After studying chapter 11, our text for today, I think this was actually what I grew up listening to, hearing preached in our church. And I have much the same attitude about it that I had then. I am not proud of this, but I have to tell you that I am not a history buff. I read names, places, and dates and it all mushes together in my mind. After the third or fourth “this guy conquered that guy”, I am about done. Welcome to chapter 11!

And yet, even for non-history buffs like me, there is great value in studying, in preaching Daniel 11. We have made this point before, but it bears repeating that the level of detail given here, backed up by the precise fulfillment of all of these details ought to instill a great confidence in us as readers, as students of the text.

In fact, there really can only be two options in how to take this text, either it was all written after the fact and put into terms as if it hadn't happened yet (the theologically liberal view), or the God who gave this vision to Daniel knows and controls the future (the biblically faithful view). There really are no other options. The problem for the liberal view if they are wrong and it IS predictive is that when the text goes beyond the past and into the future, then they would have to agree with God's perspective on the future. It means you'd have to take seriously what God says not only about the future but about what must take place in our own lives to be on the right side of the future and they can't (or won't) do that.

In other words, if the text before us actually describes world events as they actually happened even though it was written hundreds of years before they happened, then the God who gave such insight would have to be believed and heeded. You would have to take seriously when this God who controls the future tells you that there is no way to eternal life but through His Messiah. And that would be the worst news for the theologically liberal. They believe that all roads lead to heaven, that no one will be excluded, that whatever works for you is your truth, and all of those other expressions of syrupy sap. But if God speaks authoritatively about the future and the implications of which side we are on are true, they are in big trouble.

I say all of this because I want you to receive and appreciate the text that we have before us. Yes, it might be filled with details that will tax our minds to retain, but the fact that they were fulfilled EXACTLY as given in the text ought to instill us with confidence that our faith is in something solid, based in truth, our hope is not just wishful thinking. This text could only be written by a God who knows and controls the future!

So, as we go through this long text, stay awake! Allow the text to wash over you like a good shower. Give the text weight with you. Know that if I was a history buff like some of you are, we could spend many sermons dissecting how each verse reflects specific historic events that could be studied and verified. I encourage those of you who think that way to do so. But for the rest of us, use this occasion to deepen your faith in your faith, meaning give added weight to the substance of your faith. What you have before you in chapter II ALL came true precisely as is written here. If so, we can equally be assured that the events yet to come will just as assuredly come true. The truth is that either the whole of Scripture is a fraud (and it MOST DEFINITELY IS NOT!) or we serve the One true God who created and controls all that is, and gives us the path to be on the right side.

The text is too long to read it twice, so in the interest of time, we will read the text as we go through it.

Main point: Throughout history, there will be a concerted effort by world forces to wipe out the people of God, but they will ultimately fail and be destroyed themselves.

That is the overarching theme found in the substance of the text: world forces will regularly and intensely attempt to destroy, wipe out the people of God. Some will think they have succeeded. But the truth is that the people of God will end up on the winning side and their oppressors will be defeated and destroyed. This has been and ultimately will be true.

I. The God of Scripture here shows us that nothing happens beyond His knowledge and control vv. 1-35

The fact that this could all be written hundreds of years beforehand ought to be convincing truth to the open-minded. Our God IS the One true God who is sovereign over all.

“And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.

This verse should probably go with chapter 10 as it describes the angel talking about his help for the angel Michael. But he also introduces us to the time frame. This mentioned conflict in the heavenlies actually began BEFORE this interaction with Daniel. Now for the future:

2 “And now I will show you the truth. Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them. And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece.

There are names for these four. I won't give them to you for the sake of time.

3 Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills.

You know this one: Alexander the Great.

4 And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these.

We know the names of these four Greek leaders as well. Alexander the Great died young, with no offspring to take his place. All true.

5 “Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he and shall rule, and his authority shall be a great authority. 6 After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement. But she shall not retain the strength of her arm, and he and his arm shall not endure, but she shall be given up, and her attendants, he who fathered her, and he who supported her in those times. 7 “And from a branch from her roots one shall arise in his place. He shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the

king of the north, and he shall deal with them and shall prevail. 8 He shall also carry off to Egypt their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold, and for some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north.

Are you catching this? Kingdoms will be at war with each other. They will make alliances, break alliances, fight against each other. They will pass the precious items, the loot back and forth. Again, it all happened with real names and real battles that history records.

9 Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return to his own land. 10 “His sons shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall keep coming and overflow and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress. 11 Then the king of the south, moved with rage, shall come out and fight against the king of the north. And he shall raise a great multitude, but it shall be given into his hand. 12 And when the multitude is taken away, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail. 13 For the king of the north shall again raise a multitude, greater than the first. And after some years he shall come on with a great army and abundant supplies. 14 “In those times many shall rise against the king of the south, and the violent among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they shall fail. 15 Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siegeworks and take a well-fortified city. And the forces of the south shall not stand, or even his best troops, for there shall be no strength to stand.

Can you see why a young boy might have been bored listening to week after week of the pastor all excited by each of these historic figures and battles? Sorry, it's true.

16 But he who comes against him shall do as he wills, and none shall stand before him. And he shall stand in the glorious land, with destruction in his hand.

Ooh, Ooh, we have gotten to an interesting part. Clearly, the glorious land is the land of Israel. So this leader will be in the Holy Land with destruction on his mind. For reference, this is about 200 BC.

17 He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them. He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom, but it shall not stand or be to his advantage.

I think you may have heard of this “daughter of women”. Her name was Cleopatra! Again, this was written down 300 years before Cleopatra was born.

18 Afterward he shall turn his face to the coastlands and shall capture many of them, but a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him. 19 Then he shall turn his face back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found. 20 “Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute for the glory of the kingdom. But within a few days he shall be broken, neither in anger nor in battle.

Now we have reached the age of Roman dominance. From here to v.35, the focus is on a character that we have seen before, Antiochus Epiphanes as we saw toward the end of chapter 8. As we read this, remember that the focus here is how this despicable leader mistreated the people of God in the Holy Land.

21 In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given. He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. 22 Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, even the prince of the covenant. 23 And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully, and he shall become strong with a small people. 24 Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province, and he shall do what neither his fathers nor his fathers' fathers have done, scattering among them plunder, spoil, and goods. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time. 25 And he shall stir up his power and his heart against the king of the south with a great army. And the king of the south shall wage war with an exceedingly great and mighty army, but he shall not stand, for plots shall be devised against him. 26 Even those who eat his food shall break him. His army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. 27 And as for the two kings, their hearts shall be bent on doing evil. They shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for the end is yet to be at the time appointed. 28 And he shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. And he shall work his will and return to his own land.

As you might expect, this prophecy would be especially important to those living during such days, particularly as Antiochus Epiphanes' reign of terror was terrorizing and humiliating those living in the Holy Land, those who were watching their temple be profaned.

29 "At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before. 30 For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

There it is again, this is what will happen with temple worship. It will be forcibly stopped and a temple to a foreign god set up in the space. The Holy Place will be corrupted and mocked. It will seem like the God of Scripture was powerless to defend His own temple...except for the fact that He prophesied that this would take place 350 or so years before it happened. Are you catching the point?

32 He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. 33 And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder.

Again, are you seeing how encouraging this would be to the faithful of that day? Yes, horrible things will happen, but God will see it all and has already given His stamp of approval on those who stood strong in the face of such adversity. He has declared that there will be wise people during those days, who do the right thing at great cost to themselves.

34 When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery, 35 and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.

Such difficult times will bring out the best and worst, even among the people of God. But He will reward the faithful and punish the rebellious. He is still in charge, even as His people are run out of His temple by wicked men.

II. Similarly, the end times will bring another such wicked leader to oppress the people of God. He will meet his destruction! vv. 36-45

It is not exactly clear in the text that there is a time lapse between vv. 35-36. But the details do not fit the leaders of the next generation after Antiochus Epiphanes and they do fit what is written elsewhere in Scripture about the anti-Christ in the last days. The fact that they do not fit what followed after Epiphanes is a big clue that there has been a shift to the future, a perspective that Jesus Himself brings out in Matthew 24:15. So, what happened in the past in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes will be repeated only magnified in the last days. Here is what God told Daniel about the days of the anti-Christ.

36 “And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done.

In other words, this later despicable leader will exalt himself, to the level of God Himself, and seem invincible.

37 He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. 38 He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.

He will be in the line of all the other despicable, wicked rulers, but this one will be exponentially worse. He will make it up as he goes, setting himself apart from all others.

39 He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.

He will be powerful enough to give great power to those loyal to him. He will buy their allegiance.

40 “At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through.

As powerful as he is, he will have his enemies.

41 He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. 42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape.

Notice that his focus will be on geographic Israel. This tiny, seemingly unimportant piece of land will be the center of world attention. All eyes will be on what is taking place in the Holy Land.

43 He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train.

Some of these historic countries have ceased to exist, but the inhabitants of the land are still going to be involved. And I suggest to you that most all of such people these days are Muslim.

44 But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. 45 And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.

He will set up his great and final stand between the Mediterranean Sea and Mount Moriah (or Jerusalem). From other texts we might know such a place as the plains of Megiddo, setting up the battle of Armageddon. And there, he will make his final stand, carrying out a last plan to destroy, but he will lose! There will be no one to come to assist him. Now, we are not told right here, but WE know who will defeat Him. It will be the return of the Messiah, followed in His train by His saints. It will be a most glorious day for the plan of God, the people of God. God's side WILL prevail. We WILL win!

If we believe this passage is the Word of God, then what should be different about our lives?

- I) We will see history through the eyes of the God who is sovereign over it. He sees your life the same way. He is sovereign over it. Nothing takes Him by surprise.

- 2) We will know that there will always be those out to destroy the people of God.
- 3) We will have great confidence in Scripture and Scripture's God.
- 4) We will look forward to the end times with sober optimism.
- 5) We will make sure we have allied ourselves with the God who is sovereign over all.