
The Book of Daniel

Chapter 11, Continued

Ministry Reading -- July 10, 2013

Opening Reading -- Daniel 11:10-45

Daniel 11:10-45

And when the multitude shall have been taken away, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall cast down myriads, but he shall not prevail. For the king of the north shall return and set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come at the end of years with a great army and with much substance. And in those times shall many stand up against the king of the south, and the violent of thy people will exalt themselves to establish the vision, but they shall fall. And the king of the north shall come and cast up a mound and take the well-fenced city. And the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, for there shall be no strength to withstand. And he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him. And he shall stand in the land of beauty, and destruction shall be in his hand. And he shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him. And he shall practice, and he shall give the daughter of women to corrupt her, but she shall not stand, neither shall she be for him. And he shall turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many, but a captain for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease. He shall turn it upon him without reproach for himself. And he shall turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, and he shall stumble and fall, and not be found. And in his place shall one stand up, who shall cause the exactor to pass through the glory of the kingdom,

but in a few days he shall be broken, neither in anger nor in battle. And in his place shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom, but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And the overflowing forces shall be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken, yea, also the prince of the covenant. After the league made with him he shall work deceitfully, and he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. In time of peace shall he enter even into the fattest places of the province, and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers. He shall scatter among them prey, and spoil, and substance, and he shall plan his devices against the fortified places, even for a time. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army, and the king of the south shall engage in battle with an exceeding great and mighty army. But he shall not stand, for they shall plan devices against him, and they that eat of his delicate food shall break him, and his army shall be dissolved, and many shall fall down slain. And both these kings' hearts shall meditate mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table, but it shall not prosper, for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. And he shall return into his land with great substance, and his heart shall be against the holy covenant, and he shall practice and return to his own land. At the set time he shall return and come towards the south, but not as the former time shall be the latter, for the ships of Chittim shall come against him, and he shall be grieved and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant, and will practice, and he shall return and direct his attention to those that forsake the holy covenant. And forces shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, the fortress, and shall take away the continual sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he pervert by flatteries, but the people that know their God shall be strong and shall act, and they that are wise among the people shall instruct the many, and they shall fall by

the sword and by flame, by captivity and by spoil many days. And when they fall they shall be helped with a little help, but many shall cleave to them with flatteries, and some of the wise shall fall to try them, and to purge and to make them white to the time of the end, for it shall yet be for the time appointed. And the king shall do according to his will, and he will exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and speak monstrous things against the God of gods, and he shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished, for that which is determined shall be done. And he will not regard the god of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god, for he will magnify himself above all, and in his place will he honor the god of fortresses, and a god whom his fathers knew not will he honor with gold and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things. And he will practice in the strongholds of fortresses with a strange god, whoso acknowledgeth him will he increase with glory, and he shall cause them to rule over the many, and shall divide the land to them for a reward. And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him, and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots and with horsemen and with many ships, and he shall enter into the countries and overflow and pass through. And he shall enter into the land of beauty, and many countries shall be overthrown, but these shall escape out of his hand, Edom and Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon, and he shall stretch forth his hand upon the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. And he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him, and he shall go forth with great fury to exterminate and utterly to destroy many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the mountain of holy beauty, and he shall come to his end, and there shall be none to help him.

Prophecy as History: The Bible Treasury Account

Before entering into the detail of these verses, it is worth pausing to illustrate something that has been said throughout our study of Daniel: this prophecy is so detailed and accurate that it might as well be a history. We have no names of actual persons in the text -- only 'the king of the north' and 'the king of the south.' Yet when we turn to secular history, every single player has a name, and every event described here can be mapped to what actually occurred.

A writer in the Bible Treasury went through these verses and assigned the historical names: In verse 10, the efforts of Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great against Egypt; verse 11, Ptolemy Philopator's rage and Antiochus's rout at Raphia; verse 13, Antiochus seizing his moment when the Egyptian king had oppressed the Jews; verse 15, the defeat at Panium and the taking of Sidon; verse 16, Antiochus standing in the land of beauty; verse 17, the intrigues through Cleopatra; verse 18, his invasion of the isles of Greece halted by the Roman consul Quinctius at the Isthmus; verse 19, his glorious defeat and fall; verse 20, his son Seleucus Philopator, broken by his own tax collector Heliodorus; and from verse 21 onward, the account of Antiochus Epiphanes, with more detail than all that went before.

All of this is recorded in history. It transpired over several hundred years, and the men who fought these battles are known by name. This prophecy was written in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia -- at the very beginning of the Persian Empire, before Greece had risen, before Alexander was born. And it unfolded to the letter.

Israel: The Land of Beauty

One might ask: why does any of this concern the prophecy of Daniel? These are wars between Syria and Egypt, between the king of the north and the king of the south. What does that have to do with Israel?

The answer lies in geography. North of what? South of what? Jerusalem. Every time the king of the south marched against the king of the north, or the king of the north against the king of the south, his armies passed directly through the land of Israel. Armies in the ancient world did not march single file and pay for their provisions; they swept through a land and consumed and destroyed everything in their path. This happened to Israel repeatedly -- not once or twice, but over the course of centuries.

This is why the Jewish writers known as the Maccabees recorded these events: because those events devastated their land. And this is why God refers to it as 'the land of beauty' -- because that is what it is to Him. The Lord's interests on this earth are centered on Israel and on Jerusalem. When He records the history of the Gentile powers in Daniel's prophecy, it is always with an eye on what those powers mean for His people and His land.

Antiochus Epiphanes: Type of the Final King of the North

From verse 21, the text singles out one particular king with remarkable detail -- far more than any who came before. This is Antiochus Epiphanes, called here a 'vile person.' He is given special attention because he is not merely an enemy of Israel; he sets himself up as an enemy of God Himself. He is a type -- a foreshadow -- of the final king of the north who will come at the end of the age.

The name he gave himself, 'Epiphanes,' means 'God manifest' -- he was claiming divine status. His own people gave him a different epithet: 'Epimanes,' meaning 'the madman.' He was perceived as vile even by those closest to him. Verse 26 bears this out: those who ate of his own food -- his confidants and generals -- were the ones who ultimately broke him.

His profaning of the temple -- entering it, removing the continual sacrifice, and placing the abomination that makes desolate (verse 31) -- was an act of deliberate

hostility toward the living God, not merely toward a nation. History records that he sacrificed a pig on the altar of the temple. That act is the specific historical fulfillment of verse 31.

The Abomination That Makes Desolate -- Matthew 24:15

Yet the Lord, in Matthew 24, refers to 'the abomination of desolation spoken of through Daniel the prophet' as something still future -- something His disciples are to watch for:

Matthew 24:15

When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which is spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in what is a holy place (let him that readeth understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

If the abomination of desolation already happened under Antiochus Epiphanes, why does the Lord speak of it as yet to come? Because what happened historically was a type -- a foreshadow. Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled the letter of verse 31 in history, but he was only the shadow of a coming one who will be of the same moral character, and who will do the same thing again. That is the one referred to from verse 36 onward -- a different person from Antiochus, as we shall see.

Two Classes of Israelites

What was true in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes will be true again in the future. There were two classes of Israelites during that period, and verse 32 sets them before us plainly: those who 'do wickedly against the covenant,' whom this vile person perverts by flatteries -- and those who 'know their God,' who are strong and act, and among whom the wise instruct the many.

The faithful ones suffer greatly: they fall by sword and flame, by captivity and spoil. Yet God preserves a remnant. In the coming tribulation, this same pattern will be seen. Revelation speaks of those slain during the tribulation because of their faithfulness to God -- the tribulation saints. They are not born-again Christians taken out before that time; they are a faithful remnant among God's earthly people, the Jews, who stand true to God in the midst of intense persecution. The historical type in Antiochus's day helps us understand what that future remnant will face.

The Break at Verse 36: A Different King

Verse 36 begins, 'And the king shall do according to his will.' If one reads carelessly, it seems as though the same king of the north is still in view. But several things mark a clear change of person.

First, verse 37 says he will not regard 'the god of his fathers.' The king of the north was a Syrian Gentile king, whose gods were the gods of the nations. But a man who does not regard 'the God of his fathers' is a man whose fathers' God is Jehovah -- a Jew. This king in verse 36 is of a different nationality altogether.

Second, verse 40 says 'the king of the south shall push at him, and the king of the north shall come against him.' The king of the north comes against this one -- so he cannot himself be the king of the north. He is a third party, distinct from both. As one writer observed, it does not require any special spiritual discernment to see this. The evidence is plain in the text.

This king is an apostate Jew who rises to power in a future day -- specifically the day the Lord was describing in Matthew 24, when He told Israel to watch for the abomination of desolation. The age of grace is over by then; we -- the church -- are gone. The seventieth week of Daniel has begun, and this man holds sway over Jerusalem.

The King Who Does According to His Will: John 5:43

This king does according to his own will. That is entirely fitting for the people who, in Matthew 21, said of the Son of God, 'This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.' They cast out the rightful King so that the inheritance might be theirs. What they receive in that coming day is a king who does as he pleases, with no reference to God at all.

The Lord anticipated this precisely in John 5:43:

John 5:43

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

The Lord came in His Father's name -- representing the Father, doing the Father's will. They rejected Him. This coming one will come in his own name -- with no reference to God, serving his own ambitions. And him they will receive. The Lord was speaking obscurely, but He was describing this very man with precision.

The Desire of Women and the God of Fortresses

Verse 37 gives us three things this king will not regard: the God of his fathers, the desire of women, and any god at all -- for he will magnify himself above all.

The expression 'desire of women' might seem obscure, but understood in its Jewish context it is clear. The deepest desire of a godly Jewish mother was that her son might be the Messiah. Every such woman knew the Messiah was to come from among the Jews, and every godly Jewish mother could hold the hope that her child might be that one. 'The desire of women' refers to God revealed in flesh as the Messiah. This king does not regard Jehovah, does not regard the Messiah, and does not regard any god -- for he lifts himself above all.

Yet there is one thing he does honor: the god of fortresses (verse 38). This is the strong political power that has installed him -- the head of the revived Roman Empire, who has set this apostate Jew up as a religious leader in Jerusalem. He honors that power because that power is his patron. In a sense, by placing an idol in the temple that represents that political leader, he is honoring himself through his patron -- magnifying himself above all, including God.

Revelation 13 and the Two Beasts

Revelation 13 makes clearer what is only suggested here. There are two beasts in that chapter -- a Gentile power (the first beast, the head of the revived Roman Empire) and a second beast who exercises authority on behalf of the first. The second beast is the one installed in Jerusalem as a religious figure. He does the will of the first beast; the idol placed in the temple is really an idol to that first beast, the Gentile political power. The relationship between verse 36 of our chapter and Revelation 13 helps us understand who these players are and how they relate to one another.

All of these names -- king, beast, false prophet -- bring out different aspects of the same persons. 'King' speaks of authority and government. 'Beast' speaks of what these men are morally -- their true character before God, stripped of all the trappings of office. The Spirit of God was not careless in what He called these players. When they are called by different names in different passages, it is because a different aspect is being brought out. We do well to think carefully about what each name conveys.

He shall come to his end, and there shall be none to help him -- so ends the chapter. For all his power and all his fury, for all his armies and his alliances, he meets his appointed end. 'The end shall be at the time appointed.' God is in control of all these things.

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Lord willing.