

The Character and Career of the Antichrist Daniel 11:36-45

Writing 2500 years ago, Daniel supplied a brief sketch of the character and career of this king who “shall do according to his will” (11:36). The prophet Daniel, exiled in Babylon almost all his life, was shown by the Lord the future of his people Israel. In the revelations recorded in Daniel chapters 2 and 7 through 9, Daniel learned that because of their sin, the people Israel would be kept under Gentile domination for “seventy sevens” of years. These Gentile nations were pictured as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, after which the Messiah would destroy these kingdoms and institute a righteous kingdom with Israel back in its place of blessing. After the fall of Babylon to King Cyrus of Persia (539 B.C.), Daniel received another revelation concerning Israel in the “latter days” (10:14). This one caused him much anguish (10:16) because it depicted severe persecution for Israel.

From Daniel’s point in history in 536 B.C., the revelation of Daniel chapter 11 was totally prophetic. But from our vantage point in the year 2020, the prophecy of Daniel 11:1-35 is historical fact. It has already been fulfilled, with 11:36-45 yet to be fulfilled. The main focus of Daniel 11 is the rivalry between the king of the south (the Ptolemies of Egypt) and the king of the north (the Seleucids of Syria) over the land of Israel during the time of Greek rule (323-198 B.C.). This culminated in the person of the Seleucid despot Antiochus IV, described in 11:21 as a “vile person.” Antiochus IV sought to Hellenize Judea by outlawing the practice of Judaism and proclaiming himself as “Zeus manifest.” To that end, he erected an image of Zeus in the Temple in Jerusalem in 167 B.C. and demanded that everyone worship the image. This is “the abomination that maketh desolate,” referred to in Daniel 11:31. The Jews resisted this Hellenization, resulting in the Maccabean revolt that reclaimed the Temple three years later and produced the Feast of the Dedication, commonly known as Hanukkah.

Daniel 11:21-35, describing the persecution of the Jews under Antiochus IV, relates to 11:36-45 in that Antiochus is a type of the Antichrist who is to come. Just as Antiochus persecuted the Jews and magnified himself as God, so will the Antichrist. And just as Antiochus was eventually defeated, so the Antichrist will come to an inglorious end.

The Character of the Antichrist (Daniel 11:36-39)

1. He Will Arrogantly Blaspheme (v. 36). While it would seem most likely that 11:36-45 would continue to prophesy concerning Antiochus IV, the descriptions in these verses do not correspond to Antiochus's religion or career. Since the king in these verses is distinguished from the kings of the north and south (11:40), he must, therefore, be a king from a different region. Since an analogous figure, the "little horn," is found elsewhere in Daniel as the final leader of rebellion against God, the king here must be none other than Antichrist himself.

As pictured in Daniel 7:8, 11-20, Antichrist will exalt himself above God, which is blasphemy. But he will not restrict himself to only reviling the true God; he will exalt himself above all gods. This pictures a situation similar to Revelation 17, when the Beast (representing the Antichrist) turns on the harlot (representing pagan religion) and destroys her in order to set himself up as God, to be worshiped alone. The sense is that the Antichrist will ridicule all known religion and proclaim something new, with himself at its head.

2. He Will Exalt Himself as God (v. 37). The Antichrist will disregard the "gods of his fathers" (meaning traditional worship) and will initiate something previously unheard of. He will also disregard the "desire of women." The interpretive question in this phrase is whether it means that the Antichrist will hate women or hate what women desire. If the verse means the latter, it suggests he will hate a child, either Tammuz in the pagan context or Messiah in the Jewish. Since the context of verse 37 concerns Antichrist's exaltation of himself over all gods,

whatever the “desire of women” is will somehow relate to this self-exaltation above all gods. Consequently, it fits better to interpret this “desire” as the Messiah, who would fall into the same category as “other gods.” This also correlates with Revelation 13:15, which pictures the Antichrist setting up an image of himself in the Temple in Jerusalem and demanding worship—a future “abomination of desolation” (Mt. 24:15).

3. He Will Worship Military Power (vv. 38-39). While Antichrist will exalt himself above all gods, he will, nevertheless, worship a god—“the god of fortresses.” This may mean that as an arrogant dictator, he will trust only in military might. Or, as verse 39 implies, he will trust in a “foreign god” (Satan himself [see Rev. 13]), whom he will proclaim to reveal incarnately (as Antiochus did of Zeus). Either way, the result will be military conquest. As pictured in Daniel 7:8, the Antichrist (“little horn”) will uproot three horns of the ten-horned kingdom/beast, which represents the worldwide Roman Empire. This suggests that the ten-kingdom final form of the Roman Empire will already be in place before Antichrist appears and makes his move to dominate. The world war that will erupt from this effort will produce the effects pictured by the four horsemen of the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:1-8).

Thus the character of the Antichrist can be summarized as one who will try to establish himself as God, seeking to rule the world strictly for his own glory and desire for power. In doing so, he will deride all known religion and proclaim a new order for the world, with himself at its head. All who do not submit will be crushed. As revealed in Revelation 13, the Antichrist ultimately will receive his power from Satan, who will seek to rule the world through him much as God the Father rules the world through his Son, Jesus Christ.

The Career of the Antichrist (Daniel 11:40-45)

1. Invasion of the Middle East (vv. 40-43). Verse 40 places these events “at the time of the end.” This most easily describes the last half of the seven-year Tribulation period. Antichrist will invade the Middle East and conquer Israel, breaking the covenant he confirmed with the nation (Dan. 9:27). He will capture half the city of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:2), including the Temple (Rev. 11:1-2), and will try to exterminate the rest of the people of Israel. But God will protect them (Rev. 12:6, 13:16). It is significant that Antichrist is distinguished from the king of the north and the king of the south. Although he is typical of Antiochus IV, a king of the north (Syria), he will not be Syrian. Since the ten-horned beast of Daniel 7 and Revelation 12-13 represents the Roman Empire, Antichrist most likely will be a Westerner who will invade Israel in order to proclaim himself God in the Temple. In reaction to this invasion, Egypt and Syria will counterattack. Egypt and North Africa will fall before him, and his troops will occupy much of the Middle East.

2. The End of the Antichrist (vv. 44-45). Not only will Antichrist’s invasion of Israel spark resistance from the Middle Eastern nations, but other nations to the north and east apparently will come to attack him. This gathering of the armies of the world is reflected in Revelation 16:12-16. There the sixth bowl judgment will open the way for the kings of the east to move toward Israel. Then the “three unclean spirits, like frogs” (demons) will perform supernatural signs to gather all the nations of the world to Israel, where they will camp in the valley of Armageddon. Apparently these armies initially will gather in Israel to oppose the Antichrist. But through demonic influence, they will unite instead to fight against Israel and the true and living God.

As pictured in Daniel 11:45, Antichrist will pitch his tent on the “holy mountain,” the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. There he will come to his end. The Lord Jesus Himself will descend, destroy the armies at Armageddon, and stand on the

Mount of Olives to rescue the Jewish people in Jerusalem who, by this time, have recognized Him as the Messiah (Zech. 12:1-14; 14:1-5; Rev. 19:11-21). Thus the stone made “without hands,” pictured in Daniel 2:44-45, will destroy this Gentile rule over Israel and crush this last-ditch Satanic rebellion against God. Then God will set up a Kingdom of righteousness on earth that will endure for 1000 years (Rev. 20).

Thus the Antichrist will use Western military might to invade Israel and the Middle East. There he will conquer Israel, erect an image of himself in the Temple, and demand the worship of the world. In doing so, he will blaspheme not only the true God, but also all other gods, in order to establish a dictatorship that worships him alone. Although nations will resist him, demonic influences will gather these nations together in Israel to fight against the true God. There the Antichrist and the armies of the world will be destroyed.

Conclusion

Since Adam fell and lost man’s God-given authority to rule the world, Satan has led the nations in opposition to the work of the Lord. As Psalm 2 says, the nations rage against the rule of the Lord’s Son, the Messiah. Consequently, the Lord must establish His righteous rule by force, and He must rule with a “rod of iron.”

The world has entered a new millennium. Yet it is evident that the nations do not honor the Messiah as Lord. When Antichrist appears, a selfish, sinful world will readily accept him as God in a final attempt to break free from the rule of the true Messiah. The Bible is very clear that these nations will not succeed. The rebellion will be crushed, and the Lord will rule from Mount Zion.

Much has been published concerning the coming of Antichrist. He is a formidable figure in Scripture, and his prophesied reign of terror often generates fear. But there is no need to fear. God is sovereign. Though Satan, Antichrist, and the

whole world shake their fists at Him, He laughs (Ps. 2:4). Their fury is insignificant; their rebellion, absurd. As Daniel wrote, he (Antichrist) “shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done” (11:36). For all Antichrist’s claims and all his conquests, he still will be utterly and irrevocably subject to God.

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