

# (Daniel) Antiochus and Antichrist Revisited

by David Guzik

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of persistence in prayer and the character of God, using the example of Daniel's 21-day prayer and self-denial.*

**Duration:** 59:44

**Scripture:** Daniel 10:8-9, Daniel 10:15-16, Daniel 10:18-19, Acts 9:7

**Topics:** "Antichrist"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Daniel and his encounter with an angelic messenger from God. The speaker highlights Daniel's persistence in prayer and how it led to his success in receiving angelic insight. The speaker also emphasizes the importance of persistence in prayer in our own lives, suggesting that our lack of persistence may hinder angelic assistance. The sermon concludes with the speaker reflecting on Daniel's mourning and fasting for three weeks, noting that Daniel abstained from pleasant food and wine, and did not anoint himself.

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## Transcript

But you should know that I regard Daniel chapter 11 as one of the most complicated and difficult to teach chapters in the entire Bible. For that reason, there will be portions of it that we will summarize and not go through verse by verse, but you'll get the point of it, I trust. Let's jump right into it.

Daniel chapter 10, verse 1. In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long, and he understood the message and had understanding of the vision. In those days, I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.

I ate no pleasant food, nor no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all till three whole weeks were fulfilled. This is late in the life of Daniel the prophet. As a matter of fact, Daniel is in his eighties at this time.

He has been among the exiles in Babylon for some 72 years. In some respects, the Babylonian exile is over. King Cyrus of the Persians has given permission for the Jewish people who have been taken away to the empire of Babylon, now which has been conquered by the empire of the Medes and Persians, I should say.

At this point, they have permission to return, and many of them have returned under the leadership of a priest named Ezra, who came back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. It wasn't a big group of people that came back with Ezra. You might ask yourself, well, here is Daniel.

Daniel, if you're so godly, why didn't you go back home to Jerusalem? The first chance that you got? Well, we could respond to things to that. First of all, cut the guy a break. He's in his eighties.

You know, I mean, this is a long, difficult trip, and he's basically going to a ghost town, a city with no infrastructure, where everything has to be started again by scratch. Secondly, Daniel rightly thought that because of his high position in government in the Medo-Persian kingdom, he could influence things for the benefit of the returned exiles to Jerusalem. He could influence them more from his position of high authority in the government than he could being there with them in Jerusalem.

And so Daniel was considering all this and he was mourning. We don't know why exactly he was mourning. Perhaps he was mourning because of the difficulties that the returned exiles faced.

Perhaps he was mourning because he knew that it was a very small group. You know, most of the Jewish people who were carried away from Judea into Babylon, when they had the opportunity to return back to Jerusalem and Judea, they didn't. It was only a very small proportion that went back to the promised land, the land that God promised to give them to give to their fathers.

And because Daniel was sad, it says there in verse two that he mourned for three, four weeks. And we know that he mourned because he says that he ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into his mouth, nor did he anoint himself at all. This means that he cut out all the junk food.

He became a vegetarian for three weeks and he didn't drink any wine either. We should also note that he didn't anoint himself. We should probably take that to mean that he didn't take a bath or put the sort of perfumes on.

I don't know if that was a thing of discipline for himself or the people that he hung out with every day, but it was a form of self-denial. I think it would be a mistake to describe what Daniel does here as fasting. Honestly speaking, the understanding of the biblical term for fasting is to abstain from food.

It's not to restrict your diet. It's to abstain from food. So I don't think what we should call what Daniel did here fasting, although it was a legitimate and godly form of self-denial.

But not every form of self-denial is fasting. Fasting is when you don't eat at all. All right, verse four.

Now, on the 24th day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is the Tigris, I lifted my eyes and looked and behold a certain man clothed in linen whose waist was girded with the gold of Uphaz. His body was like barrel and his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze and color and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. Now, commentators like to divide over the identity of the certain man that Daniel saw in this vision, although we're not really told that it was a vision, are we? We're told that he saw this man.

This was not necessarily a spiritual vision where God put in front of Daniel's mind's a certain image or appearance. This seemed to be in front of his actual eyes. He saw this glorious or spectacular man, a man clothed in linen.

It's interesting because, again, commentators divide. First of all, is this the same man that seems to be with Daniel throughout chapters 10 and 11? If it is, then it helps determine who it is. If it isn't, and this guy just appears here and then somebody else comes later, then it determines another way.

Let me sort of put it to you this way instead of beating around the bush. This description, especially in verse six, matches up remarkably with the description that the Apostle John gives of Jesus when he saw him in Revelation chapter one. It's very similar for the purposes of time.

I won't get into it right now, but put a little mental note there to look at it and compare side by side the description that John gives in Revelation chapter one. It's verses 12 through 16 and the description that Daniel gets here. So many people think, well, this is Jesus that Daniel saw.

And it may be. But if it's the same person that Daniel is dealing with throughout Daniel chapter 10, then I don't think this was Jesus, merely an angel of high rank for reasons that I'll explain a little bit later on. Verse seven.

And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great terror fell upon them so that they fled to hide themselves. Now, again, the intimation here, although we can't say with absolute certainty, the intimation is that the other men should have seen it. There was something supernaturally clouding their eyes so that they could not see it.

By the way, a very similar thing happened to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. He was thrown down to the ground and he heard a voice from heaven saying, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And his companions with him heard something but did not hear a distinct voice. The ability to hear the distinct voice was given to Paul or Saul actually alone.

And so the men hid. Now, look, verse eight. Therefore, I was left alone when I saw this great vision and no strength remained in me for my vigor was turned to frailty in me and I retained no strength.

Yet I heard the sound of his words. And while I heard the sound of his words, I was in a deep sleep on my face with my face to the ground, which is something I've seen a time or two during preaching. Matter of fact, I wonder if verse nine shouldn't be sort of my theme verse for preaching ministry.

I heard the sound of his words. And while I heard the sound of his words, I was in a deep sleep on my face. Now, that would be an inspiring verse to give to somebody on their ordination or entrance into ministry, wouldn't it be? In any regard, verse 10, you get the picture here.

Daniel is very affected by this vision of the man. Verse 10. Then suddenly a hand touched me and made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands.

And he said to me, Daniel, man, greatly beloved. Understand the words that I speak to you and stand upright. For I have now been sent to you while he was speaking this word to me.

I stood trembling. So as Daniel was laid out in weakness by this experience, he was strengthened by the touch of a hand. And then a voice comes to him.

And the voice coming to him says, Daniel, you're a man greatly beloved. This is the second time that Daniel is called greatly beloved in the book of Daniel. The previous time we saw it was in Daniel chapter nine, and it was just before Daniel was privileged with a rather spectacular vision and insight into future

prophetic events.

But I do think it's interesting that God did not mind Daniel knowing that he was greatly beloved. I don't think it did him any harm. If it would have done him harm, then God wouldn't have told him.

You know, it always seems like there's always a few people who feel that it's dangerous for a Christian to feel like God loves them too much. You know, you shouldn't know or shouldn't think that you're greatly beloved by God. You might get proud.

You might get arrogant. You might think that you can sin and God will love you just as much. God didn't seem to be concerned about that with Daniel.

I think it's a great blessing for us to know how greatly God loves us. And we should be very concerned with this to know the greatness of the love of God. Isn't that a valid prayer for you to pray? God, show me the greatness of your love for me.

If you knew how much he loved you, you would love him more. Because the Bible says that we love him because he first loved us. If you knew how much he loved you, you would obey him better.

Because Jesus said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. Friends, it's a wonderful prayer to pray. It's something I would challenge you to consider.

God, show me and help me to understand the depths of the riches of your great love for me. Well, in any regard, verse 12. Then he said to me, do not fear, Daniel.

For from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. And I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days.

And behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me. For I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days.

For the vision refers to many days yet to come. This is fascinating. God, as it were, through the message of this angel, is pulling back the veil and telling Daniel what happens behind the scenes spiritually.

Isn't this interesting to know? You know, we understand that there is a spiritual realm or dimension. That is just as real as the material dimension. We have a tendency to think that somehow spiritual is ethereal and unreal material.

Well, that's the real stuff. Might I tell you that the spiritual dimension is even more real than the material dimension? Spiritual is more real. Now, the angel is informing Daniel what was happening spiritually when Daniel prayed.

In other words, look at it again here. Verse 12, it says, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. And I have come because of your words.

When Daniel began these three weeks of prayer and self-denial and humbling himself before God, the very first day an angel was dispatched from heaven to bring an answer to Daniel. You say, well, heaven

must be a long way away if it took him three weeks to get there. No, it wasn't a long way away.

There was opposition in the way we read here in verse 13. Do not fear, excuse me, verse 13. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days.

Now, at first glance, we would read that and say, well, how could a person, whoever the prince of the kingdom of Persia is, withstand an angelic messenger for 21 days? Well, we're led to understand here that this prince of the kingdom of Persia was more than a man, that this prince was some kind of angelic being. And we would take it that he was an evil angelic being because he opposed the word of God coming to Daniel. And he stood against the angelic messenger to Daniel.

The word prince in the Bible has the idea of a ruler or a person of authority. And we're told many times in the New Testament that angelic ranks, including demonic forces, are organized and have a hierarchy. It might sound strange to our ears, but there are a such thing as junior demons and senior demons.

There's demons in the army of hell, so to speak, that are privates and there are generals in Satan's army, so to speak. We don't understand all of the rankings. The Bible gives us mentions from time to time, principalities and powers and so forth.

But we do know this, that there are rankings. And apparently this was a demon of high rank, somehow associated with the kingdom of Persia that opposed this answer to prayer. By the way, again, just to remind you that sometimes a demonic being can be called a prince.

On three different occasions, Jesus referred to Satan as the prince of this world. Now, you know, we don't want to start giving too much credit to the devil, but you've got to admire two things about the devil. First of all, he's a hard worker.

If Christians worked as hard as the devil, you would think it'd be about five years until the whole world had heard about Jesus Christ. Secondly, I think the devil's very well organized. And if Satan is called the prince of this world, you might think that in an administrative sense, he supervises the battle plan over the whole world, from the demonic side, so to speak.

Well, it would be reasonable to think that he parcels out areas of administration according to geography. And this is the guy who was kind of, you know, coordinating the attacks on Persia. The prince of the kingdom of Persia.

Now, what's fascinating about this is that this angel, this demonic being, the prince of the kingdom of Persia, withstood this angel for 21 days. Isn't that amazing? Now, you could conjure up all sorts of things in your mind. You know, what was it? I mean, you know, you could get into the whole sci-fi thing.

How did actually this demonic being hinder the angelic messenger from God? You know, was it some force field? Was it some spiritual dimension battle? Did it look like WWF, you know, in the cage match or something? I don't know. Nobody knows. It's just pure speculation.

But in some way or another, this demonic being was able to block, to hinder, to set off the answer coming to Daniel. But not forever. You see, the demonic being couldn't send the angelic being back to heaven.

He couldn't stop him, but all he could do was hinder him. And how long did he hinder him? For 21 days. Now, here's the question of the night for you.

How long did Daniel pray, humble himself before God and practice self-denial for 21 days? And when did the answer come? On the 21st day. What happens if Daniel gives up his prayer, humility before God and self-denial on the 19th day? Does the answer ever get to him? Perhaps not. Now, we can't say for certainty, right? But it certainly seems like that's the case.

That the correlation between Daniel's time of self-denial and prayer and the duration of the battle between the angels and the prince of the kingdom of Persia, that it establishes a link between Daniel's prayer and the angelic victory. Now, isn't it sobering to think of? Here you are and someday, maybe tonight you pray a prayer and God immediately dispatches an angelic being with the answer. But that angelic being is hindered.

And so you pray today and you pray tomorrow and then you give up. And then when you give up, for whatever reason, God withdraws the angelic messenger and Satan's hindrance, not elimination, but his hindrance is what stops it. Now, listen, it wasn't Satan that stopped that angel.

It was you. You stopped it by your failure to pray. Satan could only slow the angel, hinder him.

But you're the one who stopped him. You're the one who sent him back because of your failure to pray. That's scary, isn't it? It's convicting that we need to persist in prayer for things, that we need to pray for things until we have an assurance from the Holy Spirit that we're done praying with them.

I think it's fascinating how the help came to this angel. It says, Behold, Michael, verse 13. One of the chief princes came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.

You know, that makes you think kind of like the old WWF match, you know, they're going there in the in the ring and then, you know, he he brings in Michael into the ring with him and the two of them can, you know, get out the folding chair and start whooping on the king of Persia or whatever it takes. The bottom line is that in verse 14, he says, Now I have come now. Why did God even allow this kind of angelic conflict in the heavenlies? Listen, if it was in the plan and purpose of God, do you think God could have thought a thought and that prince of the kingdom of Persia could have been eliminated like that? Absolutely, he could.

God had a purpose for allowing this demonic hindrance to slow down the response of the angel until Daniel prayed through. What was God's purpose? God used that time of delay to develop Daniel as a man of persistence in prayer. Why do we need persistence in prayer? It is not because God is reluctant to answer our prayers and we need to overcome his reluctance.

No, my friends, persistence in prayer is necessary because we need to be trained in prayer. Oh, not too long ago, I was with my son and we were sitting around and I was chatting with some friends and, you know, they were all grown up friends. My friends and my son got tired of it and he wanted us to go on to the next errand we were going to run.

And so what he did was he got a little pole, and in fun, it was all in fun. My son and I would goof around like this periodically. In fun, he took this little stick and he just started poking me with it.

Gently, you know, but he must have poked me with it a hundred times and I just ignored him, you know, but he just kept it up with a big smile on his face. Poking, poking, poking, poking. And it was like he was petitioning me with every little poke of the stick, you know, until finally, you know, I took the stick and playfully whacked him with it or whatever and chased him off.

But the whole point of it was I wanted to get it across to him. Listen, you're not going to get anything from me just poking me with this. I'm going to stay here and chat with my friends as long as I please and we'll go when I'm ready to go.

Well, sometimes we think God is kind of like that, don't we? Well, God isn't some mean old dad like I am. It's not that God is reluctant to answer our prayers. And if you go, oh, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please.

Then you can eventually talk God into it. No, no. The key is this.

First of all, either your prayer is in the will of God or not. If it is, he'll answer it. If it's not, he won't.

But secondly, even if your prayer is in the will of God and God intends to answer it, God may delay the answer, giving you an opportunity to display persistence so that the answer to prayer trains your character. You see the difference there? It's not that you're overcoming God's reluctance. It's that you're laying hold of his character, his heart.

So anyway, Daniel's great success in this. It makes us reflect on our failures. How much angelic insight, how much angelic assistance has never been realized in our lives or has been greatly delayed because we lacked persistence in prayer.

Verse 15. When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face towards the ground and became speechless. And suddenly one having the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips.

Then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, my Lord, because of the vision, my sorrows have overwhelmed me and I've retained no strength. For how can the servant of my Lord talk with you, my Lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me. Then again, the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me.

And he said, oh, man, greatly beloved. Fear not. Peace be to you.

Be strong. Yes, be strong. So when he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, let my Lord speak for you have strengthened me.

Then he said, do you know why I've come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia. And when I have gone forth, indeed, the prince of Greece will come. But I will tell you what is noted in the scripture of truth.

No one upholds me against these except Michael, your prince. Also, the first year of Darius, the I even I stood up to confirm and strengthen him. Now, in verse two of chapter 11, we get in to this great prophecy.

One point more, if you notice in the flow of the chapter, one of the great reasons why some people believe that perhaps this glorious man that Daniel saw on the shores of the River Tigris, why it may not have been Jesus, even though it answers so closely to the description given of Jesus in Revelation chapter one. If it's the same being throughout chapter 10, then we would have to say that Jesus could not defeat or overcome this prince of the kingdom of Persia until Michael came along and helped him. And we just can't say that, right? There's just no place for saying that scripturally.

So some people believe that maybe in some way that that is a little hard to grab a hold of that two or three different beings, angelic or divine, are spoken of here in chapter 10. Other people think that, well, just the

description of the being in the early part of the chapter, it's similar to Jesus, but it's not Jesus. But you get that this sort of side issue of some interest there.

Well, let's get into it now. Daniel chapter 11, beginning at verse two. I need to preface this great chapter with a few remarks.

First of all, I need to tell you that this chapter contains one of the most specifically fulfilled prophecies of the Bible, predicting history over some 375 years and to the end of all history and what has been fulfilled already in this passage has been fulfilled with amazing precision. This chapter is so specific that many critics who deny the supernatural inspiration of the Bible have insisted that it could not have been written before these things take place. Absolutely not.

It had to have been written as history, not as prophecy, and that it, in fact, fraudulently claims to be prophecy. Well, because of the great detail of the prophecy, we're going to be forced to frequently summarize through Daniel chapter 11, but the fulfillment of the prophecy will be observed as we go along. First of all, in Daniel chapter 11, verses two through four, it describes the division of the Greek empire.

Verse two. And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings will arise in Persian.

The fourth shall be far richer than them all. By his strength through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. Well, we can document these three kings that he mentions and the fourth.

The fourth was King Xerxes of Persia, very famous king of ancient history who had famous and epic battles. Some of the most epic battles of ancient history were fought between the Persians and the Greeks, in particular, under the leadership of this great Persian king Xerxes. And so he attacked the realm of Greece.

Look at it here. Verse three. Then a mighty king shall arise who shall rule with great dominion and do according to his will.

And when he is arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity, nor according to his dominion with which he ruled. For his kingdom shall be uprooted even for others. Beside these.

No, the angel tells Daniel, OK, you're going to have three more kings over Persia, but then the fourth one will attack Greece and then you're going to see a mighty king from the Greek people and he's going to be mighty and exercise his dominion everywhere. But he's going to die. And when he dies, his dominion will not be passed to his descendants.

Rather, it won't be passed to any one man. It'll be split up. His dominion will not be transferred as a whole.

That's what the angel says. Well, this was fulfilled exactly in the person of Alexander the Great, one of the truly compelling figures of ancient history. It says that he shall rule with great dominion and do according to his will.

In verse three, Alexander the Great was certainly a mighty king, but he did die prematurely. He died at 32 years of age of a fever after a drunken party in Babylon. And when his kingdom was divided, assumed after him, it was not by any of his children, any of his descendants.

Not that they didn't try. Alexander left three possible heirs. He left a half brother named Philip.

Philip was mentally deficient, and so he was not considered for the throne. He left a son who was born after Alexander died, and he left an illegitimate son named Hercules. The half brother and the posthumous son were first designated co-monarchs, even with the regent or each of them with the regent.

But then the regents fought against each other. And in all the fighting, all the possible heirs of Alexander were murdered. So what did they do with his kingdom? They divided it up among four of his leading generals.

So the kingdom was divided, but not among his posterity. Now, the rest of this chapter will have to do with two of the four inheritors of Alexander's realm. One of them took the area known as Syria.

The other took the area known as Egypt. Now, if you look at Syria, greater Syria and greater Egypt on a map, what's right in between those two realms, the land of Israel and the battles between these two kings, the kings, the the dynasty of the north will be called the king of the north. The dynasty of the south will be called the king of the dynasty of Egypt will be called the king of the south.

Their battles, one with another, are relevant to the people of God. Because Israel was caught in the middle like a big football between these two warring empires. Well, in any regard, the kings of the north and the kings of the south fight against one another with great regularity.

That's what's described in verses five through 20. Let me just read you a verse five. Then the king of the south, that's Egypt, shall become strong as well as one of his princes, and he shall gain power over him and have dominion.

His dominion shall be a great dominion. Well, this prophecy of the king of the south was fulfilled in a man named Ptolemy, the first of Egypt. He exerted his control over Egypt and then northward into the Holy Land.

As soon after the division of Alexander's empire, the Ptolemies dominated the region of Egypt. Now, Ptolemy, the first had a prince named Seleucus, who rose to power and took dominion over the region of Syria. He became more powerful than his former Egyptian ruler.

And so the Seleucids, you're going to hear me say these two terms a lot. The Seleucids are identified with the north, the Ptolemies with the south. And the dynasties of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies fought each other for 130 years.

And the stronger of the two always held dominion over the Holy Land. Well, basically, that's what this chapter is about until we get to verse 36. But there's just fascinating little precise explanations in here.

Again, honestly, it's a little too much for us to go into it piece by piece. We could spend, honestly, four or five evenings going through this prophecy in almost exquisite detail. But just look at verse six.

It says, and at the end of some years, they shall join forces for the daughter of the king of the south shall go to the king of the north to make an agreement. But she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand. But she shall be given up with those who brought her and with him who begot her and with him who strengthened her in those times.

Well, this was fulfilled precisely. You see, there was a marriage between Antiochus, the second of the Seleucids and Berenice, who is the daughter of Ptolemy, the second. And there was a peace for a time

because of this marriage.

But then the whole marriage got messed up and there were murders on each side. And the details of verse six were fulfilled exactly. So Daniel chapter 11, verses seven through 20 goes into amazing detail, describing the conflict and the intrigue between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids over many years.

And why is it all relevant? Look at verse 16. It says, but he who comes against him shall do according to his own will and no one shall stand against him. He shall stand in the glorious land with destruction in his power.

Well, what do you think the glorious land is? Southern California, Maui? No, biblically speaking, it's the land of Israel. And this is why this is important. I really like one commentator, an old Puritan commentator named John Trapp.

He describes these two great kingdoms, the Syria of the Seleucids and Egypt of the Ptolemies as being like two great millstones and what's caught in the middle getting crushed Israel. And that's why this is all relevant to the people of God. Now, in the midst of all of this, eventually in the line of the Seleucids who rule over Syria arises a notable person.

Look at verse 21. We read there and in his place shall arise a vile person to whom they will not give the honor of royalty, but he shall come in peaceably and seize the kingdom by intrigue. You see, the angel told Daniel that after the brief reign of the former king of the north, the next king would be a vile person.

He would not be recognized as royalty, but he would take his power by intrigue. Now, we're going to spend a little bit of time talking about this fella because Daniel spent some amount of time talking about him. This was fulfilled in the successor of Seleucus, the third, who was named Antiochus, the fourth.

This man did not come to the throne legitimately. It was strongly suspected that he murdered his older brother, who was the previous king and the other potential heir was imprisoned in Rome at the time. Now he came in peaceably, but he came in because he flattered and bribed and and patted on the back everybody he could.

He was a real politician, smooth as oil and knew all the right words to say. But at the same time, he could be brutal as anything. And Antiochus, the fourth, took a title.

It's the title Epiphanies. Have you ever heard that? I had an epiphany. Do you know what that means? It means you had a moment of crystal clear, bright, shining revelation or insight.

It was an epiphany to me, you might say. Well, Antiochus Epiphanies means illustrious Antiochus, the illustrious one. Other people derisively called him Antiochus Epimanes, which means Antiochus, the madman.

But that's another item altogether. Verse 22, it describes here the failure of Antiochus Epiphanies to conquer Egypt. Again, we could go into this, but I'm going to summarize this.

Verses 22 through 27 describe this intense battle that Antiochus Epiphanies had bringing this kingdom of the north, the Syrian dominions, down in a furious, intense war against the Ptolemies of Egypt. And he lost. He lost because the Egyptians, the Ptolemies of Egypt, received reinforcements from the Roman navy.

And there's a very famous scene from history where Antiochus Epiphanes is defeated. His navy has been defeated. His army has been defeated.

He has to go back to Syria with his tail between his legs. And the Roman general comes up to him on the seashore and he says, Antiochus, here's the deal. You've got to decide whether you want to die and we destroy everything that you have or you can become a client state of Rome.

It's up to you. And then this is what the Roman general did in the sand. He drew a circle around Antiochus and he said, and you have to make up your mind before you step out of that circle.

It was Rome's way of flexing their muscle and saying, you're ours now, mister. We own you. We beat you in battle.

We are the new masters of the Mediterranean. Well, to put it mildly, Antiochus went from Egypt back up north to his Syrian dominions. He went back in a bad mood and he took it out on Jerusalem, which was on the way.

Look at it here. Verse 28, while returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant. So he shall do damage and return to his own land at the appointed time.

He shall return and go toward the south, but it shall not be like the former or the latter for ships from Cyprus shall come against him. That was the reinforcements of the Roman Navy. Therefore, he shall be grieved and return in rage against the holy covenant and do damage.

So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. Now, notice what it says there. It says that when Antiochus returned to Jerusalem, he would show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.

This is what Antiochus Epiphanes did to the Jewish people, the people of God, as they existed under his dominion. Antiochus Epiphanes wanted to impose Greek culture upon the Jewish people. In other words, you can't dress like a Jewish man anymore.

No, you've got to wear clothes like the Romans do, excuse me, like the Greeks do. You can't cut your hair like the Jewish people do anymore. You have to do it like the Greeks.

You have to learn Greek. You have to learn how to enjoy the entertainments of the Greek people. You have to go to the public baths like the Greeks and all the rest of it.

He wanted to impose Greek culture upon the Jewish people. Now, how do you think the Jewish people embraced that? Well, let me tell you, a lot of them said, hot dog, we're sick of sticking out like sore thumbs. You know, isn't that same tendency within Christianity today? It's sad to see Christians who just can't identify with the world enough.

I mean, they spend all their efforts trying to show the world how hip they are and how, oh, we're not like anything, like Christians, like you know them. You know, there needs to be a place where Christians will make a distinction and say we're not of this world. Now, I know that there's always those who want to put out an extreme and say we're not. And I know that there's always those who want to put out an extreme and say, well, what do you want us to do? Be like the Amish? No, we don't want to be like the Amish, nor do we want to be like those people on certain widespread, though not necessarily greatly watched

Christian television channels who seem to decorate their sets in a way unknown to any of our homes or dress and apply their makeup and their hairstyling and such in something that we haven't seen for 30 or 40 years.

But, you know, despite those extremes, there is a very real place for saying, you know, we're Christians and we're just not going to go along with the cultural and the thinking and the mentality of this world. Nevertheless, some of the Jewish people very much embraced Greek culture. And their whole thing was, man, this Antiochus guy is the new guy in town.

Let's get along with him the best we can. These were those who forsook the Holy Covenant and received regard from Antiochus. For example, there were men who wanted political power over the people of God.

And so they bribed Antiochus Epiphanes and said, make me the high priest. And then the people of God kicked out the high priest that was put in by a bribe. Then Antiochus came back and said, what, you kicked out my high priest? You don't do that to me.

He paid me good money for that office. And you can see the battle erupting. Well, in any regard, we go on here.

Where did we leave off with the Holy Covenant? On now to the next verse. He says, and forces shall be mustered by him. And they shall defile the sanctuary fortress.

They shall take away the daily sacrifices and place there the abomination of desolation. Those who do wickedly against the covenant, he shall corrupt with flattery. But the people who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits.

And those of the people who understand shall instruct many. Yet for many days they shall fall by the sword and flame by captivity and plundering. Now, when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help.

But many shall join with them by intrigue. And some of those of understanding shall fall to refine them, purify them and make them white until the time of the end, for it is still for an appointed time. Do you get the picture here? He says that when this future leader who was fulfilled specifically in Antiochus Epiphanes, when he comes, it will bring a division among the people of God.

Some will side with him, perhaps out of worldliness, perhaps out of fear, perhaps out of cowardice. Other people will stand against him and there will be severe conflict. Again, all of this was fulfilled when Antiochus Epiphanes returned from Egypt, bitter from defeat, and he vented his anger against Jerusalem, which was already reeling because Antiochus had sold the office of the high priest and persecuted the Jewish people to conform to Jewish culture.

And so he came and he did whatever he could. If you notice, it says very pointedly there in verse 31 that they shall take away the daily sacrifices and place there the abomination of desolation. Do you know what Antiochus Epiphanes did to desecrate the Jewish temple? He set up an image of Zeus at the temple altar.

And he said, come sacrifice to Zeus at the temple. He demanded sacrifice to that image. And later he desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar and taking the broth and the blood and the juices from that pig and sprinkling it everywhere around the temple.

Now, this great offense against the Jewish people was combated, led by a notable family in Jewish history known as the Maccabees. You may ask yourself, I've heard of those by those books of the Bible, you know, in the old Catholic Bible or something, I see first and second Maccabees. What you should know that the books of first and second Maccabees are largely accurate historically.

They're just not inspired scripture. Say, well, why aren't they inspired scripture? Well, first of all, you should know that Jesus nor the apostles never quoted from any one of the apocryphal books. Secondly, the early church never regarded them as scripture.

They regarded them as perhaps useful, good books from antiquity, but not on the same level as scripture. Well, in this great battle, the two sides of the Jewish people were pitted against each other. But there was a great and tremendous battle, as it describes in verse 33.

Did you notice that it says? And those of the people who understand shall instruct many. Yet for many days, there shall be. They shall fall by sword and flame by captivity and plundering.

You see, on his attack on Jerusalem, Antiochus, the fourth is said to have killed 80,000 Jews, sold 40,000 more into slavery and taken 40,000 as prisoners. He also plundered the temple and they calculated the modern value of what he plundered the temple of. And it was approximately a billion dollars worth of gold and precious metals.

So this Antiochus Epiphanes dude was a bad fellow. But what's very interesting and perhaps most notable for us is when we get to verse 36, there's sort of a transition. It says, then the king shall do accordingly to his own will.

He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god and speak blasphemies against the God of gods and shall prosper till the time of wrath has been accomplished for what has been determined shall be done. Have you ever used a function, perhaps in video editing, or you've seen it certainly on television and the like, where you have two images and the first image appears on the screen and the second image begins to fade in over the first image. And there's a time when the first image only is in view.

Then there's sort of a transition between the two. And then there's a time when you can see both of the images. And then as it continues to fade, all you can see is the second image.

This is kind of what we have in the transition that sort of starts around verse 36. Antiochus Epiphanes, as important and compelling a figure as he was, he is most notable as a preview of the coming Antichrist. And verse 36 begins the section that seems to have the Antichrist of the end days in mind more than Antiochus Epiphanes.

Now, again, this may seem very strange to you. You may say, wait a minute, how can this be where you're cooking along in exact, precise fulfillment? And then from one verse to a next, you have a dramatic shifting of gears and a fulfillment that takes place 2,500 years later. Well, let me explain to you that this is a common phenomenon of prophecy.

And I could quote you example after example, where a scripture is given prophetically. And the first half of the scripture was fulfilled at Jesus's first coming. And the second half of the scripture will clearly be fulfilled at Jesus's second coming.

You've got like a 2,500 year gap between the two. The idea of a near and a far fulfillment in scripture is used often. One picture that may be helpful for you to sort of comprehend this is that sometimes people give the idea of you're standing on a distant vantage point and you see two mountain peaks in the distance.

What you look at the two mountain peaks from a distance and they look like they're right by each other. If you were to get close to them, you might see that the two peaks are actually hundreds of miles apart. But you can't tell that looking from a distance.

Now, what's interesting about this is in verse 36. It says that this king, the willful king who will do according to his own will. It says that he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god and shall speak blasphemies against the god of gods.

Now, was this true of Antiochus Epiphanes? Yes, but not exactly. You see, here we shift from what was fulfilled in the days of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids to what will be fulfilled in the Antichrist. You see, we know that everything about this prophecy was not fulfilled during the career of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Jesus specifically spoke of the abomination of desolation, did he not? That it was still future in his day. Friends, Antiochus Epiphanes had been dead for almost 200 years when Jesus walked this earth. Jesus is letting us know that the abomination of desolation was not fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes.

Did he provide a preview of it? Yes, absolutely. There will come someone who will desecrate the temple like Antiochus Epiphanes. But he'll do it in a little different flavor.

Look at it again in verse 36. He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god. Now, certainly Antiochus Epiphanes did this in the general sense that all sinners oppose God.

Yet he did remain loyal to the Greek religious tradition. Let me put it to you this way. Antiochus Epiphanes did not put a statue of himself in the temple of Jerusalem.

He put a statue of who? Zeus. This fellow spoken of in verse 36 shall exalt and magnify himself above every god. Well, will there come a man so bold as to put an image of himself in the temple of God that we believe will be rebuilt in Jerusalem? Absolutely.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. He says, let no one deceive you by any means. For that day will not come unless the falling away comes first. And the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

And so this is what's fascinating about this. Antiochus Epiphanes is important, but he's most important as a historical preview of the Antichrist. And this is why so much space is given to describing the career of one evil man, because he prefigures the ultimate evil man.

If you don't understand what I'm talking about, let me put it in another way. Antiochus Epiphanes is the trailer. The Antichrist is the feature.

So you sit in the movie theaters and see the trailer for coming attractions. Well, that's what he was. He shows you some glimpse, but no, he's not the whole movie.

That is the Antichrist who will come along at the end. Well, let's take a look here. Verse 37, he shall regard neither the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any God, for he shall magnify himself above them all.

But in their place, he shall honor a God of fortresses. God, which his fathers did not know, he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus, he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign God, which he shall acknowledge and advance its glory, and he shall cause them to rule over many and divide the land for gain.

It's a very interesting phrase used there in verse 37, where it says he shall regard neither the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women. Based on this, some Bible scholars believe that the Antichrist will be of Jewish descent. Now, it's not necessary from that verse, but a natural way to take that phrase, God of his fathers, would be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It could just be a way of saying he won't recognize the God of his descendants, but it could be a clue that at least by ethnicity, the Antichrist may be of Jewish extraction. Let me be very careful when I say that. This is a very slender thread to hang this on.

But just so you know that it's out there, and this is why some people believe this. You could also know that some people believe that the Antichrist will be a homosexual, because it says that he will not regard the desire of women. I don't think that that's what this verse is talking about, though I will allow the possibility.

Most commentators, or many, I should say, believe that the desire of women here refers to Jesus in the sense that all women desired the honor of bearing the Messiah. And Haggai chapter 2 verse 7 gives a messianic title to Jesus, speaking of him as the desire of women in that sense. So that's what seems to make sense to me in the light of this context, though I will not say that the idea that this is a clue that perhaps he could be a homosexual, I will not say that that's impossible.

The things about this regarding the Antichrist, a perhaps Jewish heritage, a perhaps homosexual orientation, those things may not be popularly known about the man at all. I mean, nobody may think of him in those terms one bit. It may be that he has Jewish heritage in an obscure way.

It may be that he is a homosexual, but that it's secret to the world. And so you shouldn't say, well, look for the charismatic politician who's a Jewish man and who's homosexual, and that's going to be the next Antichrist. That would be just about as misguided as you could get in considering who the Antichrist would be.

No, the much more reliable way is to add up the letters of their name and see who adds up to 666. That's just a joke also. Fortunately, we don't have to concern ourselves with looking for the Antichrist.

We should keep our eye and our vision on Jesus Christ, who is our salvation and will be revealed unto us. Well, from verse 40 to verse 45 describes the final conflict ending in the ruin of the Antichrist. Let me just end with the final verse here in verse 45.

And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountains. Yet he shall come to his end and no one will help him. You know, in the end, there is no hope, no help for the Antichrist or for any of his followers.

I think of the contrast. There's Daniel praying and an angel was dispatched to help him. And the angel was there to help Daniel.

But Daniel helped the angel by his persistent prayer. And then God dispatched another helper to come and help the angel who was battling against this, who was being helped by Daniel's prayer. Can I put it to you this way? There's a lot of help in the kingdom of God.

Some of it comes directly from God's hand himself unto us. Other of it comes through angelic messengers that we cannot even see. But you've sensed it before, haven't you? That you've been strengthened by an unseen hand in your life.

Sometimes that strengthening comes from the help that God brings to us just through another brother or sister who's there to give us comfort and encouragement. But there's a lot of help in the kingdom of God. In the end of it all, the kingdom of the Antichrist and his followers, there is no help.

There will be no one to help him. I don't know about you, but it just reaffirms my desire to stay on the side where there's a lot of help, because I need a lot of help. I don't know about you.

I'll take it from the Lord and his messengers of any kind. Let's pray and thank the Lord for this passage of scripture this evening. Lord God, we thank you for the amazing precision of your word.

And Father, seeing the phenomenon of fulfilled prophecy makes us so persuaded of your truth, of your power, of your accuracy, so to speak, Lord, that we have great and tremendous confidence that you can fulfill every good purpose that you've occasioned in our life. We love you, Lord. We thank you together this evening.

And as you keep working in our hearts, God, make us people of persistent prayer. Continue to stir us. Continue to move us.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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