

The Kingdom of This World (Part 2) – Daniel 11:31-45

There is a lot to chew on in these verses. The things predicted have come true in such amazing detail that if we were to take the time and touch on every point, it would be information-overload and we would be here all afternoon. So instead of going into all the details of these verses, it seemed like a good idea to take a small handful of the most significant fulfillments and show how those came true. That way, when you go back to study these verses, you can take your notes from this morning, or my notes from our website, and fill in the rest of the pieces. But to remind you what we saw last week was an almost unbelievable verse by verse bullet-point story of the history of the rulers over Jerusalem from the time of the Persian Empire until the end of the Greek kingdoms that ruled in the 2nd century BC. If someone asks me for proof that the Bible is the supernatural, infallible, error-free, authoritative Word of the Living God, then this is what I would want to show them. There is no way to avoid the conclusion that the God whose words were written in the Bible is the God who controls every event in history, other than to close your eyes and plug your ears to what we read here. But I'm afraid it's often people who call themselves Christians that close their eyes and plug your ears when it comes to these prophecies. Because there is no room for being a nominal Christian if this is true. There is no room for thinking you are in charge of your life or your future when you see what this chapter so accurately predicted! So I hope when we get to the end of this chapter that you won't have any doubt left in your mind about these two things: God is in control, and ignoring Him just isn't worth the cost.

Now a lot of commentators agree that while the verses before are about ancient history about Antiochus IV, starting with verse 36 that period of history doesn't fit the prophecy very well.ⁱ I'm going to suggest the history unfolds from then, step by step, but what it reveals in light of this prophecy is not what we would have expected.ⁱⁱ

Many Jews will fall away but some will follow God (and bear fruit) [read vv31-35]

168BC to the end > The background here, from the verses before this, is that the Kingdom that was occupying Jerusalem at this time was ruled by King Antiochus IV of the Seleucid Kingdom in Syria that used to be part of the Greek Empire. He's called the King of the North earlier because his kingdom was north of Jerusalem. So verse 31 brings us to a time when some kind of forces from him arrive in Jerusalem. A couple of things to touch on in these verses: first, who these "forces" are, and second, that these 5 verses are really about what "they do" and not about the king. These "forces" arise "from him" or "on account of him" (v31). And the way this is written gives a big hint about who they are. Verse 31 is sandwiched between two mentions of "those who forsake the holy covenant"—the Jewish people who turn their back on God. The end of verse 30 says the king would "pay attention to them", and the beginning of verse 32 says he will "seduce them with [smooth words]". He bribed a lot of Jews to betray their own. But he used fear as well. In 1 Mac 1:40-51, it tells of the letters Antiochus sent to the Jews telling them to completely abandon their religion, the Scriptures, and the worship of God on penalty of death. And it says that many of the people turned away from God's Law and joined Antiochus and were responsible for a great deal of evil that was done in the land. So these "forces that appear" in verse 31 aren't just Antiochus' troops, but also the population of Jews who joined his side and stopped worshipping God altogether. It's just crazy—and so unhealthy—to pretend sin doesn't matter to God when we learn about the desolations—the awful thousands of years of loss and ruin—that God brought upon the Jewish people and Jerusalem, Daniel 8:12, 9:27, 11:31, "because of transgression". It wasn't just an idol in the Temple that is the "abomination that causes desolation": it was so many of the

people—the Jews—who turned their backs on God and joined in profaning the Temple, and in the murder of so many fellow Jews, who caused the desolations that fell on that city and on those people in wave after wave of destruction in the centuries that followed.ⁱⁱⁱ Statues of idols and pagan sacrifices don't cause desolation. People who turn away from God—"transgressions" (Dan 8:12,13)—cause desolation.

⁵² Then many of the people were gathered unto them, to wit every one that forsook the law; and so they committed evils in the land; And drove the Israelites into [hiding]... And whosoever was found with any the book of the testament, or if any committed to the law, the king's commandment was, that they should put him to death. Thus did they by their authority unto the Israelites every month, to as many as were found in the cities. (1 Ma. 1:52-58 LXA)

That widespread betrayal of their God and their own people, sets up the contrast in verse 33: many will fall away, but there will be some among the people who are wise and influence others. That contrast, *Jews who fall away vs. Jews who follow the Lord* from this point on through the end of the lives of Christ's apostles, is one of the main plots of the next 250 years. It's the story of why most Jews rejected Jesus while a few followed Him; why so many were hardened against God, while a few were humble and faithful. Jesus didn't start a new religion. There were Jews like Simeon and Anna waiting for Jesus when he was born. Helping Jewish people "understand" isn't about getting them to change religions, it's about helping them see that Jesus is the Messiah believers in the Old Testament prophecies were waiting for.

But even though "many" will be taught by the "wise among the people", this will not avert the great desolations decreed "for many days".^{iv} Through the rest of the time of the Seleucids, under the Hasmonean Kingdom, under the Romans after Pompey in 64BC, through to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD and the scattered diaspora in the centuries that followed. "...For some days" leads up "until the end" in verse 35, meaning the martyrdom of many believers, the conversion of many gentiles, and the hypocrisy of many professing Christians, would be major themes of the next several centuries of Christian history. That's why Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven..." (Lk. 6:22-23 ESV) God often uses suffering more than success to train us to look forward, more than anything, to when His Kingdom comes.

[The Roman Empire rules, and then crushes, Jerusalem \[read vv36-39\]](#)

64BC to 70AD; 70AD-637AD > "the King" is the Roman Empire who rose as the next beast after the Greeks in Daniel's earlier vision (cf Daniel 7:1-9). For such a long time believers must have wondered why God let Rome go unpunished. All the Christians who were martyred were following the example of faithful Jews before them: The Macabbees in verse 33, who know their God and stand firm, become a pattern for believers who would rather die than be forced by Rome to deny Jesus.^v "The king" that rules over Jerusalem "prosper until the indignation is accomplished" (v36). Like the use of the word "prosper" in Psalm 37:7-11, it means God let Rome get away with it only for as long as God planned. All the things Roman leaders said against "the God of gods"—both against the God of the Jews and against Christ specifically—are kind of infamous. But that was mostly later on when Christians were commanded to worship Caesar instead of Jesus Christ. It wasn't like that at first. The Roman Empire started out surprisingly tolerant of the Jews and their strange religion. That policy changed because of Rome's "kings". Traditionally in Rome they didn't like one man having the power of a king, so they elected Consuls to serve under the Senate. But then with Caesar Augustus and the Emperors who followed him, one by one they became more arrogant and thought of themselves as gods. In the Hebrew Bible the

word “god” often means powerful rulers on earth.^{vi} As the Emperors replaced consuls, they did exactly what verse 36 says, doing whatever they wanted, elevating themselves above the “gods”, i.e. the consuls of their fathers’ tradition, above other officials, foreign kings, and even the Senate.^{vii} The reason the Roman emperors were like this is simple: verse 37 says they looked down on everyone. When it comes to identifying the Caesars in a prophecy, this is just about as good as photograph I.D.

Verse 38 tells us next what the Caesars did. It uses the same word, “fortress” as in verse 31—the “temple and fortress”, the same word as in “the Lord is the stronghold” (Psalm 27:1). The words in verse 38 are a bit clearer in the King James or JPS, “he shall honour the God of strongholds in his place”. This is about the true God, and since this chapter is from the perspective of Jerusalem, where is “God’s place”? It’s the Temple. So this is saying that the Caesars would honour God’s Temple with a lot of money, even though their ancestors didn’t know about the God of the Bible (38). Verse 39 tells us how: the Roman Emperor would deal with God’s Temple, with the help of a “foreign god [or ruler]”—he would use King Herod. And that’s what Josephus, the Jewish historian says King Herod did. After the Roman Senate appointed Herod as the King of the Jews,^{viii} with Rome’s money and permission he began the expensive project of rebuilding of a beautiful Temple in Jerusalem.^{ix} (39) Dan 9:24-27 predicted what happened to that Temple. It’s a good reminder that whatever we think we are trying to do for God, God doesn’t need our help. He used a secular king and a pagan Emperor to make the Temple beautiful for the coming of Christ. God doesn’t need our work and sacrifice but He wants our love and trust. God’s grace sets Him apart as the One who gives, and recipients of grace as the ones who depend on Him.

Two Islamic Empires threaten Europe & rule Jerusalem [read vv40-45]

637AD to 1917 > By now in our study of Daniel it shouldn’t surprise us that the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, 40 years after Christ, was the culmination of 250 years of unfaithfulness in the Jewish nation after the time of Antiochus IV. Likewise, the desolations of Jerusalem that reached new heights in the first century destruction by the Romans, lasted for many centuries. The desolations of Jerusalem continued under Muslim rule when Jews and Christians alike were repeatedly prevented from worship and even killed. “The King of the South” in verse 40 is again from the perspective of Jerusalem, and in the 7th century AD, that new southern empire was the Islamic Caliphate established by Mohammed.^x The Umayyad Caliphate took Jerusalem from the Holy (Byzantine) Roman Empire in 637AD and began attacking the nations of Roman Europe (v40a) until the height of their power at the Battle of Tours in 732AD. Jerusalem remained in Muslim control for 400 years.^{xi} In 1099, the Crusaders, deluded into thinking they were serving God, captured Jerusalem from the then ruling Shiite Muslims. Then, in 1453, another Muslim Empire became the new “King of the North” when the Sunni Ottoman Empire conquered Constantinople (in Turkey). Throughout the 16th century, the Ottomans fought many battles with Roman European kingdoms, penetrating all the way to Vienna, Austria, and “overflowed and passed through” many countries around the Mediterranean from Venice in Europe around to Tunisia in North Africa (v40b).

The Ottoman Empire took over Jerusalem, “the glorious land” in 1517 and held it until 1917. Then the prophecy mentions Edom and Moab and the Ammonites, but we’ll come back to them in a second.^{xii} (v41) It also says they would conquer and rule Egypt, and that’s what they did (though Egypt tried to escape in the 1830s) (v42).^{xiii} Then he would control the precious resources of Egypt, and that Libya and “Cush” (Ethiopia), would be under Ottoman leadership (but with some autonomy—“follow in his train”) (v43).^{xiv} The next verse touches on a couple of the worst, but often forgotten, human tragedies in

modern history: “News from the east and north” (44)--first about Assyrian Christians then about Armenian Christians--led to two infamous acts of "genocide" by the Ottomans. Radical movements in the Ottoman Empire became suspicious enough of the minority Assyrians (many of whom were Christians) in the east, resulting in a wave of persecution in which as many as 300,000 were killed.^{xv} In the north (from the point of view of Jerusalem), similar distrust of the Armenian Christian population resulted in the murder of as many as 1.5 million people (so many were “devoted to destruction”) (v44).^{xvi} Hearing this reminder of these highlights from the last 2000 years, ***doesn't it make your heart ache for the return of Christ?***

I prayed that in this sermon all the history wouldn't distract us from that big purpose in this prophecy, when believers in God in any generation, under any foreign ruler, or in times of suffering, sit down and try to make sense of the world in light of God's Word in Daniel 11, the most important encouragement is these words in verse 35: **[read]** God doesn't just want to impress us with His power and sovereignty: He uses suffering to train our hearts to repent of our sin and "seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness". When He purifies us and helps us to be holy, it is a work in our hearts, teaching us to love Him more than anything in this world. When we cry out, "how long o Lord?" he covers us with his righteousness and tells us to wait a little longer, because our King is coming! (Rev 22:20)

"They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been." (Rev. 6:10-11 ESV)

But being “refined and made white”, or “given white robes” are symbolic ways of saying that we need to ask God to take away our dirty clothes—our own actions including our best “good works” and all of our sin—and ask him to cover us with a righteousness only He can give us. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified [counted as righteous] by his grace, as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:23-24). But when He turns us from our rebellion, from our running after every kind of sin instead of toward God, is that it? NO. He saves us for a purpose: “the people who know their God will stand firm and take action” (Dan 11:32), “and the wise among the people shall make many understand” (11:33). I came across this quote that could be our prayer for God to use us for His purpose:

“On the streets, in their workplaces, in classrooms and homes all over town, previously timid church members are faithfully declaring the gospel and fruit is coming fast. Lives are transformed, marriages are saved, and most of all, one after another God's enemies are laying down the weapons of their rebellion and are taking refuge in his glorious and merciful Son.”^{xvii}

So my friends don't close your eyes or plug your ears any longer. Don't be nominal, and don't turn away. There's not much history left to unfold. As we will see next week, Jesus is coming soon. And ignoring Him is not worth the cost.

ⁱ E.G., Rodney D. Stortz, *Preaching the Word Commentary: "Daniel"*, on chapt. 11:36ff (he makes an exegetical argument that verse 36 switches from Antiochus IV to Antichrist); *ESV Study Bible* (Crossway Books), notes on Daniel 11:36; Stephen Miller, *New American Commentary: Daniel*, “Daniel 11:36”. Miller writes: “Scholars are in

agreement that the vision up to this point has been concerned with events between the time of Cyrus (in which Daniel lived) and the death of Antiochus IV, but with v. 36 this agreement ends. Those who adhere to the Maccabean thesis maintain that vv. 36-45 continue to speak of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. However, there are serious problems with this position, not the least of which is the fact that much of the historical data set forth in these verses (even in vv. 36-39) is impossible to harmonize with Antiochus's life. For example, Antiochus did not exalt himself above every god (vv. 36-37), reject "the gods of his fathers," or worship "a god unknown to his fathers" (v. 38); on the contrary, he worshiped the Greek pantheon, even building an altar and offering sacrifices to Zeus in the Jerusalem temple precincts. Daniel also predicted that this king "will come to his end" in Palestine (v. 45), but it is a matter of historical record that Antiochus IV died at Tabae in Persia. Exegetical necessity requires that 11:36-45 be applied to someone other than Antiochus IV."

ⁱⁱ I'm greatly indebted to Thomas Brightman for the insights in his commentary, *A Most Comfortable Exposition of the Last and Most Difficult Part of the Prophecies of Daniel from the 36th verse of the 11th chap. To the end of the 12th chap.* (1635).

ⁱⁱⁱ Early examples of waves of destruction and desolation include the persecutions and profaning of the temple by Jewish traitors and the forces of Antiochus in 167-164BC; the siege of Jerusalem by Pompey in 64BC; the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (c.f. Dan 9:27) by Titus in 70AD; the annihilation of Jewish forces in the Bar Kokhba revolt by Severus in c.135AD. Later on examples (you can Google them) include the Rhineland Massacres, the Expulsions from England and Austria, the Black Death Persecutions, the Granada Massacre, the Spanish Inquisition, the Pogroms of the 19th century in the Middle East and Africa, and the Russian Pogroms of the 19th and 20th centuries. This prolonged era of Jewish desolations culminates in the events of "trouble" predicted in Daniel 12: especially the Holocaust.

^{iv} (see the implied force of the "many days" according to the NASB and KJV)

^v See for example the many accounts in Foxe's Book of Martyrs.

^{vi} This is in the sense of "mighty men" (c.f. Brown Driver Brigg's Lexicon 480.1), "judges" or magistrates (BDB 482.1, c.f. Ex 22:7, 8, etc.). Compare Genesis 23:6 where "prince of gods" (lit. Heb) is translated, "mighty prince", etc. The Hebrew word, "el" and the plural "elohim" often has a basic meaning about strength more than about supernatural nature. So the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament defines "el" as "God, god, mighty one, strength" and goes on to say, "The primary meanings of this root as used in Scripture are "god" (pagan or false gods) "God" (the true God of Israel) and less frequently, "the mighty" (referring to men or angels)" (TWOT, 93.c).

^{vii} Similarly, unlike the kings of other nations, the emperors seemed to pay little attention to the normal maternal ambition of seeing biological heirs succeed their fathers. Not many Roman emperors were succeeded by their sons. That is the best explanation of the Hebrew words, "...or to the desire of women" (literally)—the emperors disregarded the traditional governments "of their fathers" and the succession hopes of their wives and mothers of their heirs.

^{viii} Herod was designated "King of the Jews" by the Roman Senate in 40 BCE: Antony, "then resolved to get [Herod] made king of the Jews...[and] told [the Senate] that it was for their advantage in the Parthian war that Herod should be king; so they all gave their votes for it. And when the senate was separated, Antony and Caesar [Augustus] went out, with Herod between them; while the consul and the rest of the magistrates went before them, in order to offer sacrifices [to the Roman gods], and to lay the decree in the Capitol. Antony also made a feast for Herod on the first day of his reign." [Josephus, Wars, 1.285 in BibleWorks] And see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean_dynasty

^{ix} Josephus, Antiquities, 15.387-391a.

^x See my exposition of Daniel 8:15-27, "The Vision of Evenings and Mornings" (Part 2) at www.beaconcommunities.ca/sermons for the explanation of how the Islamic Caliphate was predicted in that prophecy as an outgrowth of the remains of the Greek Empire, and therefore is called "the King of the South" later in Daniel 11:40. It is worth noting that the capitol of the Umayyad Caliphate was in Syria, and so we might have expected the angel to call it, "the King of the North" since that was Syria's title in the first 35 verses of Daniel 11. But the focus of verse 40 is the attacks on an unnamed third party, "him"—the nations of Roman Europe as the successors to the Roman Empire. Therefore the title "king of the South" is applied to the Umayyad Caliphate not because its capitol was in Egypt, but because it was from Egypt that the Muslim Arabs attacked Roman Europe. The Byzantine Empire in modern Turkey still stood guard on the eastern borders of Europe, and because the Byzantines had until recently also controlled Syria, they still could reasonably have been called "the King of the North". So to

avoid that mis-identification, the angel calls the Muslim-Arab Umayyads, “the King of the South” at that point in the 7th and 8th centuries.

^{xi} Various Muslim powers ruled Jerusalem during this time: See Zank, Michael. "Abbasid Period and Fatimid Rule (750–1099)". Boston University. [Retrieved 1 February 2007.] Cited at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem#Middle_Ages_and_caliphates [June 10, 2017]. Occupiers included the Abbasids, Seljuks, and Fatimids.

^{xii} The reference in this verse to the countries being “delivered out of his hand” is a bit premature if the rest of this exposition is correct. It might be mentioned here because of the historical fact that the Ottomans never had a very strong presence in the area of modern Jordan, but mainly collected regular tribute and left the population alone. So the liberation of Jordan is anticipated long before it happened. Finally the British and French mandates carved up the remains of the Ottoman Empire and Jordan was born. On the other hand, it is possible that from verse 41-45 the subject “he” is again referring to the final form of the Roman Empire (in Daniel’s vision in chapter 7) under the “ten horns” of the European nations. If that is the correct understanding it is interesting that many of those European nations now have “pitched their palatial tents” (their embassies) west of Temple Mount (“between the sea and the glorious holy mountain”). The events predicted in verses 42-43 can also be understood of European colonial rule after the 1st World War until the middle of the 20th Century. But because it seems like a bit of a stretch to apply verse 44 to the news of German and Japanese hostilities in World War 2, and the response of the Allied forces in Europe, the whole context of these verses seems a much stronger fit with the exposition I have given in this sermon. The difficulties might be explained just as a result of the “angel’s eye view” of events in world history—the perspective that characterizes the whole prophecy in Daniel 11—as I explained in my exposition on Daniel 11:1-30, “The Kingdom of This World” (Part 1), at www.beaconcommunities.ca/sermons.

^{xiii} See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian%E2%80%93Ottoman_War_\(1831%E2%80%9333\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian%E2%80%93Ottoman_War_(1831%E2%80%9333))

^{xiv} See <http://www.worldhistory.biz/sundries/29861-massawa-ethiopia-and-the-ottoman-empire.html> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Tripolitania

^{xv} See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_genocide

^{xvi} See

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Genocide#Armenian_population.2C_deaths.2C_survivors.2C_1914_to_1923

^{xvii} Andy Johnson, “Pray for Revival—In the Other Guy’s Church”, 9Marks.org

[<https://www.9marks.org/article/journalpray-revival-other-guys-church/>], Accessed June 10, 2017.