

Antichrist

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[0 : 00] Will you turn with me please to the passage we read in Daniel chapter 11, continuing as the reason this prophecy, I'd like to consider these verses, or at least matters arising from these verses tonight, that we may be enabled to do so.

Perhaps for the focus of our thoughts, just coming to verse 45, the last verse of this chapter. And he shall plant the tent of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain, New York.

He shall come to his end, and no one will help him. Yet, he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.

In this chapter of Daniel, up to verse 35, we have basically a detailed prediction of future historic events.

And a detailed prediction of these events, expressed with breathtaking accuracy. The focus has been, well, from verse 2 down to verse 35 of this chapter, has been on the rise and expansion and division of the Greek Empire, which under Alexander the Great had taken over from the Persian Empire.

[1 : 29] There is reference in verses 5 to 13 of this chapter, to an internal struggle between the southern kingdom, the kingdom of the south, namely Egypt, and the kingdom of the north, namely Syria, with the gradual ascendancy in that struggle, the gradual ascendancy of the Syrian, which we see described in verse 14 down to verse 20.

Now, from this northern part, northern kingdom of the north, there arises, as we saw in verse 21, this particularly vile person who was raised as a leader.

And we identify this vile person of verse 21, who is involved in all that we read of from that point down to verse 35. We identify him as Antiochus Epiphanes, who did his worst from about 175 BC down to 164.

And under his reign, there was special persecution upon the people, the covenant people of God, of which we read from verse 28 particularly, and onwards down to verse 35.

Many blasphemies are committed by him, which we read in verse 31 and part of 32. And within this context of the opposition to the covenant people of God by this horrific ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, there is given to us the basis upon which the people of God can withstand persecution and can withstand opposition.

[3 : 15] How do we do it? How do we, facing such persecution and opposition, withstand it? And in verse 32 and on down to verse 35, we have an insight into this.

And the first is this, the knowledge of God. If we are, as Christians, going to withstand persecution in any age of persecution, then we must get to know God better.

We must get to know him more intimately. And we must come to know and enjoy communion with God. That's what we read in verse 32 there. But the people of God, the people who know their God, shall be strong and carry out great exploits.

And then there is instruction too here, involved in the ability and the enablement to overcome persecution. Instruction or sound ministry. Verse 33, those of the people who understand shall instruct many.

All this, notwithstanding the threat that there is of death. And the promise is given, verse 34 of health. And the purpose of persecution even is stated in these verses there, which is refining and purging and cleansing to make us more devout, to make us more holy people, to make us more consistent and more dependent upon the Lord.

[4 : 44] This is the purpose of it. It's a purpose, of course, with which we're familiar, even in the New Testament, for we read in Hebrews 12, for instance, whom the Lord loves, he chastens and scourges every son whom he receives.

If you endure chastening, God deals with you, as with sons. For what son is there whom a father does not chasten? And so on. You know the passage in Hebrews chapter 12.

So this part of Daniel 11, notwithstanding the anticipation of persecution, brings comfort.

And it brings challenge to Daniel and to us, hearing the message so many millennia later. And one of the implications is this, that circumstances don't matter.

We can never blame circumstances for any spiritual life. Circumstances don't matter. Indeed, the more threatening the circumstances, the greater the challenge upon the people of God in their knowledge and communion with God.

[5 : 57] There's a stimulus to it. But now we move into verse 36. And as we do so, we have to notice something very different about these verses.

There is so much in these verses, 36 onwards, that doesn't square with what we read about Antiochus Epiphanes and what we know about him from history.

And so we find as we go into the following chapter, for instance, in chapter 12, that it is clear that these verses, these latter verses, 36 to the end of chapter 11, refer to the end times, the very end of the world.

In verse 2 of chapter 12, many of those who sleep in the dust of the air shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. He's speaking there of the resurrection of the last day.

And these verses, 36 to the end of the chapter, are building up to that, are pointing to that. What has happened between verse 35 and 36 is this.

[7 : 08] The prophet in his vision now sees through this particularly awful and vile historical person of Antiochus Epiphanes, mentioned in the immediately previous context.

And he sees through him to someone else who will more than reflect his characteristics further into the future.

Let us remember that we've already, in our studies in Daniel, met two little horns. You remember we came across the first little horn in Daniel chapter 7.

And there, this little horn, was a picture of an evil figure who would arise at the end of history. And this little horn arose out of ten horns from the indescribable beast.

Now we considered, we identified, that the ten horns represented by way of a complete number all the world empires from and including the Roman Empire, which replaced the Greek one, right through to the end of history.

[8 : 17] And therefore the little horn is the last of these. It is Antichrist. The little horn of Daniel 7 is the last.

It is Antichrist. But then there was a little horn in chapter 8, not the same. This one came from the Greek Empire, which had divided into four after the death of Alexander the Great, who had conquered the Persians.

And this little horn is the vile person of Antiochus Epiphanes, who particularly was involved in blasphemy and persecution of believers.

And both these, the little horn of chapter 7, the final Antichrist, and the little horn of chapter 8, Antiochus Epiphanes, these are different, but they have a kinship.

There is a kinship between the two of them. They have similar sort of characteristics. The characteristics of this one, Antiochus, points forward to the awful characteristics of the final Antichrist, the little horn of chapter 7.

[9 : 32] And so the vision here quite readily moves from verse 35 to verse 36. From verse 35, and considering Antiochus Epiphanes, into the final Antichrist, who is evidently more vile than any previous historical figure.

So you see, the then of verse 36, then the king shall do according to his own will. This takes us into something beyond Antiochus Epiphanes and applies to the final consummation of God's purposes in history.

But although there is a final Antichrist, and we'll come to this in a moment, and although this passage may primarily refer to that Antichrist, verses 36 to 45, we must be aware that between times, between these times, there will arise Antichrists, there will arise apostasies, there will arise persecutions against the visible people of God.

And there will be in history, right up to the final Antichrist, people and movements, philosophies, which reflect the characteristics of the Antichrist in some way or another.

And that is a real concern for us in learning from this passage. Of course, it's difficult for us to know who is or who will be the final Antichrist.

[11 : 13] Now, down the years, many proposals have been made. And we do well to remember with seriousness the view enshrined in our own confession, which identifies the final Antichrist, described in 2 Thessalonians 2 as the man of sin, identifying the final Antichrist as the papacy, particularly because of the corrupt religious character of Antichrist.

And perhaps our Protestant forefathers also considered this from what is said there in verse 37, where it says, he shall neither regard the God of his fathers nor the desire of women nor regard any God and so on.

And so, there was the view of historic Protestantism that saw the Antichrist enshrined in the papacy. However, I'm not going to press that, but simply to put this point, we in our generation, we in our generation must face the onslaught from Antichrist, from Antichristian forces.

It will remain to be seen how the final Antichrist will manifest himself in the end of history. Most likely, it will result from an alliance between religious, political, and economic forces.

In our shrinking world, a movement towards world government is a development not unlike the sort of thing that we see developing here. With a religious focus like the papacy, we could envision severe persecutions on the remnants of God's people.

[13 : 06] However, from these verses tonight, what can we gain about the characteristics of Antichrist? The characteristics of Antichrist or the final Antichrist as he will be manifest at the end of the age?

Well, first of all, we have to say that he is human. Verse 36 indicates this. The king shall do according to his own will. He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, and so on.

It is human. Antichrist will be a human, not a demon, although the work and activity of the devil and his demons is very great and considerable in this whole thing, as we've mentioned before.

He is a man who does as he wants. We have here somebody who is simply basing his rules upon man.

He exalts himself as a religious, not Christian, but as a religious person and yet he blasphemes against the true God. That is part of the characteristic of Antichrist.

[14 : 17] But then, he is a man who will prosper. We read in verse 36. He shall prosper, but this prospering of Antichrist will have a limit because we read that it will be until his time is up.

It will be till the wrath has been accomplished, for what has been determined shall be done. We get a glimpse there of the fact that even though this Antichrist is horrendous in what he does, yet there are boundaries and these boundaries are set by the determined purpose of God.

But then, there seems to be a total lack of love in Antichrist. Verses 37 to 39 indicate this. Neither regard God or his fathers the desire of women and so on, but in their place he shall honour a God of fortresses and there is this idea of violence, of suppression, of a lovelessness characteristic of Antichrist.

And we see this in the second place in how he acts because we have a picture from verse 40 of a violent conflict. He will overcome all who stand in his way.

You see, there's a reference there to Edom and to Moab and to the people of Ammon. Now, this would not apply to Antiochus Epiphanes because the kingdom of Moab had disappeared by his time.

[15 : 50] So why are Edom and Moab and Ammon mentioned here? Well, notice, notice how in verse 41, in verse 41, the verse begins by describing entering into the glorious land.

he shall enter into the glorious land. That is, he shall enter into Palestine. This is figurative language for the citadel, the people of God. He will come against them.

There is a concern for their destruction. And yet, Edom, Moab, and Ammon will escape. But these shall escape from his hand, Edom, Moab, and Ammon.

How is that? Well, they were the traditional opponents and enemies of the people of God. It is only those who oppose the people of God, it is those who oppose the visible kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ who will escape in this horrendous, destructive, violent, oppressive, persecuting work of the Antichrist.

It is clear from here that, verse 42, that his conquest will be worldwide. He will have control, verse 43, over economic wealth. He will eventually set up his seat of power in sacred soil.

[17 : 20] He shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain. And this ties in, doesn't it, with Paul's teaching in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2.

He opposes, he says, in describing the Antichrist, verse 4 of that chapter, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

There is the description of Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians which is which is very reminiscent of what we have here in Daniel chapter 11.

And here there is a mixture in his particular activity. There is a mixture of the military, the outward opposition, oppression, persecution with the spiritual powers, with the principalities and powers.

It is all these evil forces and they are directed towards the glorious land, the oppression, the destruction of the people of God.

[18 : 41] we are reminded in these verses as we are reminded in 2 Thessalonians that one aspect of Antichrist which we must never forget is the religious element in it.

It isn't simply going to be a secular world power but it is going to be a power, an individual or whatever in which there is this religious claim and element.

But then so much for who he is and how he acts, what about his end? Well this is simple. His end is stated at the end of the chapter in verse 45.

Yet he shall come to his end and no one will help him. And as we come to these words at the end of chapter 11, they come as a relief to us because of all that we have read from verse 36 down to verse 44 or the first part of verse 45.

These words come as a relief and they come to us surely, those who believe, as comforting words, as words of glorious comfort. What amazing words to tried and tested saints going through this awful opposition of the world of Antichrist, of Antichristian philosophies and unbiblical religion.

[20 : 08] what words of comfort and assurance they are. The Antichrists that we counter, the Antichrist who comes right at the end, will be defeated, will come to an end.

Even the final Antichrist, no hope for him, no hope for him. what a wonderful assurance and comfort there is for the people of God.

He will be defeated, he will be at an end, he will be destroyed. And so that we can say, as the Lord is saying to Daniel, and through Daniel here, fear not, saints of God, fear not, even amidst all your fearful testings.

You need not fear, because the Antichrist of Antichrist will come to an end, and there will be no help for him. So what does this mean for us?

Well, I think the last thing we want to do is to push this off into some far-off future time, as if we will always be thinking that the Antichrist is sometime in the future and waits to be revealed.

[21 : 36] But implicit here, and made clear by John in his letters, and particularly in his first letter, is that Christians in every age have their battles.

Remember what John says to the believers to whom he writes. He says, little children, he says. He's writing in the first century, he says, little children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now, many Antichrists have come, by which we know it is the last hour.

And so the Christian is always reminded, we have our battles, we have our battles in our generation, we have our battles against all that is contrary to the Lord Jesus Christ, with all that denies the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have our battles with those who would deceive our hearts, who would deceive even the very elect. And the last thing we want to do if we are Christians is not to take this seriously.

There always seem to be signs of the last days. We were reading there in 2 Thessalonians 2, there will be, the end will not come till there is a falling away first.

[22 : 57] And we think to ourselves, wow, we recognize in our own day and in our own generation what a falling away there has been, even within our own lifetimes, in our own society.

Oh, Paul speaks about a falling away coming first, and we say, is it the last time? Why is there a falling away? Because of the spirit of Antichrist, because of the mystery of iniquity that is working, because there our antichrists have come, by which we know it is the last hour.

And then there is another sign, what Paul says to Timothy, 2 Timothy 3, evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse. And we say to ourselves, wow, as we look around us and we see evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, and we must ask ourselves, Lord, is this the last time, the last hour?

There is, as we were mentioning this morning, the fulfilling of the times of the Gentiles, where Jesus says the gospel must be preached to all nations and then the end will come and we think to ourselves, wow, the gospel pretty well has gone out to all the nations.

Is this the last time? Are we just not seeing Antichrist? Or is it developing? Is it amongst us? Or is it to be so soon?

[24 : 18] And so, as we reflect, we must always be serious, and we must always be watchful, and we must always be ready, because these forces are so fearsome, and they are so real, and they are so devilishly spiritual, the very elect would be deceived.

And so, are we on the alert? Are we battling? Little horns are going to arise. Antichrists with similar characteristics to Antiochus Epiphanes, and to the Antichrist of all Antichrists at the end of time.

Their work will be destructive of Christian values, and Christian life. God forbid that we should be deceived, and be sucked, into a state of unreadiness.

We think how many churchgoers have fallen away, how few want to come out to service on the Sabbath evenings, to worship the Saviour. God forbid that we should be unwary, or anything, but wholehearted, and alert, and awake to these factors, and forces.

Ask yourself tonight, as I ask myself, and I'm not sure if I know the answer right, ask yourself, am I the stuff of which martyrs are made?

[26 : 10] Am I? Have I really counted the cost following the Lord Jesus Christ? Am I really wholehearted in my love for him?

How is my prayer life? Ah, how is my prayer life? How many mornings, and afternoons, and evenings, at the throne of grace, and we say, ah, but there is none that prays like that this day?

I've been convicted myself reading the biography of Andrew Bonner, the ministry of prayer of these men of old, and I think to myself, ah, we don't pray like that today, but that is the love.

Ask yourself, will I be able to withstand when the Antichrist comes? Am I able to do that now?

in some degree, in some measure. That will be true in every age. And so, as we round up this reflection tonight, what comfort can we take for ourselves here?

[27 : 31] Well, we're better prepared, of course, for battling for Jesus Christ when we recognize that God rules history. And this is a repeated lesson, and I've mentioned it before in connection with our exposition of Daniel, that here there is something quite clear in the exposition, the Lord rules history.

And that tells us that Antichrist won't prevail. We have that implied in these verses. We have it in verse 36, we have it in verse 45. What comfort can we take?

Well, there's the promise of verse 45. He shall come to an end. No one will help him. All that rise up against Christ, all who wish the end of Christian things, all who would be indifferent to Christ and leave no place for him in their lives, all that is not for Jesus Christ.

Will end. Has no future. Has no hope. And has no hell. But of course this forces us to look at our own communion with God.

Our own commitment to Jesus Christ. Let me share the words of one commentator on this passage. This is what he says. He says, Cruel oppressors can close down all public worship and forbid all Christian meetings.

[28 : 58] They can take away our printed Bibles and our Christian books. They can outlaw Christian work, remove all our liberties, threaten us with cruel penalties and allow the Lord's people no visible presence whatsoever.

But they cannot take away our communion with God. They cannot stop us knowing God. Even modern mind bending drugs have been found to be unable to remove all enjoyment of the comfort of his presence.

There are some things that evil foresees, however, unrestrained cannot do. This is why there will always be a remnant. Even in the darkest times there will always be those who go among others teaching them the truth of God.

No oppression has served to do anything except ultimately to further the spread of gospel truth. God's plants do not thrive in greenhouses, but in wind, hail, snow, and burning heat.

These are challenging words. The Antichrist must arise. Antichrists are in the world, but they will not triumph. Evil will not prevail.

[30 : 09] Why not? Why not? Because of the triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Because our Lord Jesus Christ is victorious. Consider what we read in 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 8. And when the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming.

The Lord will consume him with the breath of his mouth. That is picturesque language for this. Christ is victorious. What a precious comforting truth that is to Christians.

in an age of persecution, in a desperate age. But what an awesome thought it is for those who are outside of Christ, who remain outside of Christ, impenitent.

Finally, Christ will blow away all his and his people's enemies. And so, friends, as we are on the Lord's side, let us take comfort.

[31 : 27] let us be encouraged. Let us be strengthened in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ, even over this manifestation, this worst of all manifestations of evil, in the person of the Antichrist.

Christ is Christ. My dear friends, are you on the Lord's side? Blessed are you if you are on the Lord's side as you are on the Lord's side, because you can be assured, although all hell may be let loose against you and upon you, Christ is victorious.

And the gates of hell will not prevail against him. He rules history. Antichrist is doomed. And that is what we have intimated for us here, way back in the Old Testament, in the prophecy of Daniel, chapter 11, verse 45, yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

And may the Lord bless his thoughts upon his word. Let us pray. Loving Heavenly Father, bless thy word to us tonight.

Help us to recognize that in Jesus we are on the victory side, and that all his enemies will be vanquished, and even the great Antichrist will not stand.

[33 : 01] O Lord, give us grace to withstand all the oppression and persecutions that may come our way, and help us having done all to stand depending upon the power and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

So will thou look upon us, Lord, in mercy tonight, and graciously uphold and be with us in this week upon which we have now entered, that our lives may be a sweet savor of Christ, and may bring glory to his name for his sake.

Amen.