

Message #16
Daniel

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THE FINAL CONFLICT
DANIEL 11:40-45

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

For the sports fans among us interest in the baseball season is eclipsed right now by the playoffs in the NBA and the NHL. Given our local hockey connection many southern Nevada residents are following the Las Vegas Golden Knights. I don't follow hockey very closely. But, like some others, I tune in to the Olympics every four years, and hockey is one of the sports that gets a lot of attention in the Winter Olympics, especially because it features competition between countries.

One of the most memorable competitions for us who were born in the 1960s or earlier is the hockey game between the US and the Soviet Union in the Winter Olympics at Lake Placid in 1980. (PROJECTOR ON--- MIRACLE ON ICE) Back in that era the Soviet Union fielded teams that were players in their twenties and thirties who were basically professionals. The US in following the Olympic rules could not allow professionals on the American team. So the US squad was made up of college kids. The Soviets were hugely favored to beat the US and win the Olympics.

I remember the occasion well when the US played the Soviets. The game was broadcast on American TV a couple of hours after it actually took place. The Americans were huge underdogs. I was watching the game with a number of other young single people. All of us had intentionally avoided hearing what the results were so that we could watch the game as though it was a live broadcast.

But in the middle of the first period another guy arrived to watch the game. Before any of us could say anything, he blurted out with great excitement, "Hey, did you hear? The US won 4-3."

Our reactions to that announcement were mixed. On one hand we wanted to wring his neck for giving away the outcome of the game. On the other hand we were thrilled and excited to learn that the Americans had actually beaten the Russians. We were still able to enjoy watching the rest of the game. We watched it with a different attitude though. For we knew that the good guys were going to win in the end. We just didn't know exactly how they were going to do it. The US team went on after that game to win the gold medal. (PROJECTOR OFF)

It strikes me that the end of human history will provide emotional responses similar to those that we experienced while watching that Olympic hockey game. The stakes involved will obviously be much greater than what is involved in any sporting event. But the people of God will know that good triumphs in the end. We just may not know quite how all of the details fit together.

Today in our continuing study of the Book of Daniel we are going to consider what the Bible has to say about the end of human history as we know it. We have been considering the last of the revelations given to the godly statesman Daniel as he was in exile in the Persian Empire (PROJECTOR ON--- PERSIAN EMPIRE 2) in the sixth century before Christ. In #11 at least 135 specific prophecies were made concerning events that took place, as they were predicted, before the time of Christ. These events concerned conflicts between two kingdoms which were remnants of the Greek Empire. (PTOLEMY VS SELEUCUS) In the next three or four centuries Judah was caught up in the conflicts between these two kingdoms which were to the north and south of it.

Between vv. 35 & 36 of #11, however, there is a gap of at least 2500 years as the angel revealing future events to Daniel describes a time that is yet future to our day. (PROJECTOR OFF) Last week we saw that he was describing a ruler in the last days who will be known as the Antichrist. Verses 36-39 described this ruler's character. Now in vv. 40-45 we learn something about his activities.

This passage is only one of many that make reference to end time events. In considering these six verses I am going to tie in several other passages in the Bible that describe the same time period. Good Bible teachers differ among themselves about how all of these events fit together. So I make no claim that my interpretation is infallible.

I.

In vv. 40 & 41 in our passage we find that THE ANTICHRIST INTERVENES IN ISRAEL. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. THE ANTICHRIST INTERVENES...) Notice first that these events happen "at the end time." This phrase is used in Daniel to refer to events in the distant future. Verse 45 relates the demise of the Antichrist to this future time. At the beginning of #12 we will find that the resurrection of the dead is related to this time period.

According to v. 40, "**At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him...**" The one being attacked is the king of vv. 36-39, the Antichrist. In the first part of the chapter the king of the south is identified as the leader of the Ptolemys, who ruled Egypt. So the king of the south here probably rules a realm which includes Egypt. (KING OF THE SOUTH) But this description of events far in the future may include a broader configuration of countries. Perhaps it includes Saudi Arabia and Sudan and Jordan. We don't know.

The rest of v. 40 reads, "**...but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through.**" (PROJECTOR OFF) Some have suggested that the king of the North is the Antichrist himself. That is doubtful for three reasons: **First**, the Antichrist is simply called "the king" in vv. 36-39. **Second**, the Antichrist is elsewhere said to lead a revived Roman Empire. What was once the Roman Empire lies primarily to the west of Israel, not to the north. **Third**, Ezekiel #38 & #39 may tie in with v. 40 of our passage. There are different interpretations among good

Bible teachers about how these two chapters fit in with other Biblical descriptions of the end times. Those chapters talk about a different enemy who comes from the north of Israel.

If you have a Bible and want to turn to Ezekiel, you will find it right before Daniel. Chapter 37 in Ezekiel describes a restoration of the Jewish people to the land of Israel in the end times. Chapter 38 then proceeds to describe an enemy which comes against Israel. Verse 2 of Ezekiel 38 makes reference to Gog, Magog, Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. There is considerable uncertainty about the locations of these places or people. The one about which there is most agreement is Magog (PROJECTOR ON--- MAGOG MAP), which is believed to refer to the region between the Black and Caspian Seas, which would include southern Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerberjan. Would this northern alliance that attacks Israel in the future thus include modern Russia? Perhaps-- although it is difficult to imagine that Russia would ever invade a neighboring country unprovoked, right?

Notice in Ezekiel #38 the end of v. 10 through the beginning of v. 12 (EZEKIEL 38:10B-12A): **"...and you [this northern empire] will devise an evil scheme 11 and say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will fall upon the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates,' 12 to seize spoil and carry off plunder..."** Why is Israel unwalled, which might be understood to mean undefended? This might tie into the passage about end time things that we studied at the end of Daniel #9. In that vision in vv. 27-30 we saw that Daniel foresaw the coming evil ruler, whom he called "the prince," making a covenant, a strong covenant, with Israel at the beginning of this last seven year period. The speculation of some interpreters, including myself, is that this Antichrist guarantees the security of Israel. So the land is undefended. The Jews are dependent upon this strong ruler to protect them. But then this northern ruler swoops down to attack Israel.

The last part of Chapter 38 in Ezekiel says that God will intervene with an earthquake, pestilence, and, in v. 22 (EZEKIEL 38:22), **"torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur."** Everything that could possibly go wrong for this northern army will go wrong. It will all happen without the northerners even encountering another army. The ground, the sky, and even the air will seem to oppose them.

This northern army will be destroyed. According to v. 40 in our passage, if indeed it is referring to the same incident, this army is comprised of chariots, horsemen, and ships. Whether this involves literal chariots and horses--- the result of a world disarmament--- or perhaps more likely, ancient descriptions of future armaments, is uncertain. (PROJECTOR OFF)

But the picture that emerges from Ezekiel #38, Daniel #11, and our previous studies in Daniel looks something like this: At the beginning of the seven year tribulation the Antichrist gains control over a ten nation revived Roman Empire. According to Daniel 9:27 he makes a treaty with Israel at the beginning of this seven year period. Perhaps that treaty guarantees the security of Israel and allows the Jews to worship God in a

restored temple in Jerusalem. But toward the middle of that seven year period a northern army, in alliance with Egypt and other African and Arab countries, attacks Israel. God, who ultimately controls all of the events of history, uses the forces of nature to destroy this invading army.

The last clause of Daniel #11 v. 40 says, **“And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through.”** The “he” must be the Antichrist. When the northern and southern armies attack Israel, the Antichrist, in fulfillment of his treaty obligations with Israel, moves in to rescue the Jews. God intervenes before this ruler and his army from what was once the Roman Empire become involved in the battle. But the Antichrist moves in anyway.

Verse 41 says, **“He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites.”** Perhaps these people, who live mostly to the east and south of Israel, will not have participated in the previous attack upon Israel and will therefore avoid being attacked now by the Antichrist.

Other Scriptures, such as Daniel 9:27, suggest that it is at this time--- in the middle of the tribulation period when the Antichrist is in Israel--- that the worship of God in the temple is stopped, and the abomination of desolation takes place. That abomination will involve the claim of the Antichrist to be God and the placing of his image, or some image, in the temple to be worshipped. Persecution of Jews and Christians will then be intensified. (PROJECTOR ON--- 2 THESSALONIANS 2:4)

Second Thessalonians #2 v. 4 declares, **“...[the man of lawlessness] who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, ... takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.”**

Revelation #13 also fits in here. In this vision from Jesus received by the Apostle John a second beast is mentioned (REVELATION 13:14) who **“deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.”** Those who don't worship this image will be killed.

On one hand it seems difficult to imagine that educated, modern people will actually revert to worshipping an idol. Yet that is what the Bible predicts. At the same time we know that there are practices in the New Age movement that are close to idol worship. Even in some strains of Christianity there is something close to idol worship in the treatment that is given to images of the saints and the virgin Mary and Jesus. The Antichrist, empowered by Satan, will in the end times succeed in having people worship his image.

II.

Verses 42-44 in our text describe how THE ANTICHRIST TAKES THE OFFENSIVE. (II. THE ANTICHRIST TAKES THE OFFENSIVE) The angel tells Daniel, **“He [the Antichrist] shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt**

shall not escape. 43 He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train. 44 But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction." The Antichrist moves into North Africa during the second half of the tribulation and captures great riches. Perhaps these riches include oil. As he is extending control over this part of the world, rumors reach him about trouble brewing in the north and the east.

Revelation #9 describes a 200 million man army that gathers at the Euphrates River. (EUPHRATES MAP) That river is somehow dried up, and four angels are said to release this huge army to move against Israel and the Antichrist. Are we to believe that an army of such size could actually be gathered in one place? China has the largest standing army in the world with a little over two million soldiers on active duty.

I came across a paper written by Colonel Larry Wortzel, the Director of the Strategic Studies Institute in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. I was skimming through it this week. It is available online. This Colonel Wortzel was in military intelligence. He served as an army attaché in China. Then he was director of Asian Studies at the US Army War College. At one point in this paper he made this statement: **"With a population of over 1.2 billion people, China also has a potential manpower base of another 200 million males fit for military service available at any time."** (Larry M. Wortzel, "China's Military Potential," Strategic Studies Institute, 10/2/1998)

Zechariah 12, Revelation 16, and Revelation 19 give details of the ensuing warfare. At some point, whether sooner or later, the fighting leads to a final battle that centers on Israel. As the fighting reaches its peak and engulfs Jerusalem, which the Antichrist has made his headquarters, the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth with His heavenly armies. Again, good Bible teachers disagree on the details about how this all fits together. But what I have outlined is a possible scenario that fits with the Biblical data which we have.

III.

(III. THE ANTICHRIST COMES TO HIS END) Thus v. 45 in our passage says that THE ANTICHRIST COMES TO HIS END. The last part of that verse says, **"Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him."** Zechariah #14 v. 4 describes in greater detail what that involves. (ZECHARIAH 14:4) It describes the return of Christ, saying, **"On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward."** Apparently the warring forces stop fighting each other and turn to fight the heavenly armies.

(REVELATION 19:14) Revelation #19 vv. 14-15 describe the battle which follows: **"And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. (REVELATION 19:15) From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty."** Thus we have

the physical return of Christ to the earth. The same chapter goes on to say that the armies opposing Christ will be defeated. The Antichrist will be seized and thrown into the Lake of Fire. Thus he meets his end. Thus the good guys win.

IV.

Let's consider then some LESSONS FOR us MODERN CHRISTIANS. (IV. LESSONS FOR MODERN CHRISTIANS) I have been suggesting that the Book of Daniel addresses two questions which are always relevant for the people of God.

A.

The first question is this: IS GOD WORTHY OF OUR TRUST? (IV. A. IS GOD WORTHY OF OUR TRUST) The Book of Daniel along with the other passages that we have referred to today show us the ultimate results of trusting in man. In my interpretation the last days will be a time of world tension and turmoil when people will turn to the Antichrist. He will be instrumental in establishing a time of world peace that will last for 3 ½ years. But at the end of that time man's greed, man's pride, and man's envy will plunge the world into terrible fighting. Deliverance from this world war will not come from science, not from technology, not from philosophy, not from political science, but from the return of Jesus.

Man is not worthy of our ultimate trust, but God is. He is sovereign. The same God who accurately fulfilled the 135 specific prophecies in Daniel 11:1-35 will fulfill the prophecies that we have considered today. The last world war will be a horrible thing, but even that will be within God's sovereign purposes. If we trust Jesus Christ now as our personal Savior, we have assurances in God's Word that we will not be around for that time of the outpouring of God's wrath. For the Bible assures us in 1 Thessalonians #5 that God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 THESSALONIANS 5:9; REVELATION 3:10)

Before the tribulation period begins, Christ will return to earth to raise up those who have died as Christians and those Christians who are still alive. The Bible says that He will take us to a heavenly paradise. The sole prerequisite to be part of that group is trusting in Jesus as our personal Savior. (1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18)

While the Bible and the God it describes ought to be the sources of our trust, our study of the prophetic part of the Book of Daniel ought to also motivate us to tune in to world news to see how the Lord might be lining up world events to set the stage for the tribulation. As we do that, our faith ought to be encouraged by evidence around us that the stage may well be getting set for these final events. (PROJECTOR OFF)

The key factor is that Israel once again, after 2000 years, is a nation with a land of its own. Never in history, to my knowledge, has a country ceased to exist and then been reconstituted after a couple of thousand years. Included within its territory since 1967 is the city of Jerusalem. Among Orthodox Jews discussion goes on about rebuilding the temple, although most Orthodox Jews believe that the temple should be rebuilt only when Messiah comes. There are a couple of groups which claim to be ready to begin to

reinstitute temple worship as it is prescribed in the Hebrew Scriptures. (cf. Temple Mount Faithful and the Temple Institute) One slight obstacle is that the Dome of the Rock, the third holiest site in Islam, occupies the traditional site of the temple mount.

Europe is another place to watch because of its association with Biblical prophecy. The Bible says that a ten nation confederacy will arise in what was once the Roman Empire. The European Union now consists of 27 member nations. In the last few years attempts to move toward greater unity have encountered resistance. Perhaps ten dominant nations will yet emerge out of that group.

Russia could fit the Biblical description of the land that will provide the king of the north. Some type of Arab union could fit the description in our passage involving the king of the south. At times in the past Egypt has taken a lead in attempts to form a greater union of Arab countries. Egypt is specifically mentioned in our passage as being involved in this future kingdom. China to the east could be involved as a major contributor to an army of 200 million that gathers at the Euphrates.

As we read and hear and see some of these events come together, it is not that we believers ought to rejoice to see that Armageddon is coming. But rather it is that our faith ought to be strengthened as we see that God's prophetic Word is true. We should be prompted to greater faith and faithfulness in the God who is worthy of our trust. If He is faithful to His promises made to believers in the Old Testament, He will be faithful to the promises that He has made to us believers in the New Testament.

One of those promises is that Christ will return to earth in visible form. As we see some of these world events coming together, we can rejoice at the prospect of His soon return. The Lord did not reveal these things to us just to satisfy our curiosity. He did it so that our faith in Him would be strengthened--- and so that the way that we live would be different from that of the rest of the world.

B.

That leads us to a consideration of the second question that the Book of Daniel answers for us, which is, HOW SHOULD WE LIVE IN AN OFTEN GODLESS SOCIETY? (IV. A. B. HOW SHOULD WE LIVE...) On one hand our study today shows us that the world is not going to end in a giant nuclear explosion. The earth will not be destroyed by the bomb. That does not mean that we should be unconcerned about nuclear proliferation and the overabundance of nuclear weapons in the world. It does mean that we don't have to live in terror that the world is going to go up in a big mushroom cloud.

On the other hand the prospects for world peace before Christ returns are pretty dim. Should we give up on the world around us, since there is no hope of world peace? No! The Bible also makes it clear that we have a responsibility, and it tells us what that responsibility is. Among other things Christ told His followers, "Go and make disciples of all the nations." (Matthew 28:19-20) "Preach the Gospel." (Mark 16:15) "You are the light of the world. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your

good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16) “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

A tremendous model and example for us who are trying to live godly lives in the midst of an often godless society is Daniel. He wasn't a pastor. He wasn't a college or seminary professor. He wasn't a priest or a rabbi or a prophet. He was a layman. In fact he was a layman who found himself in the midst of the messy world of politics. He was a government employee. But because he was faithful to take advantage of the opportunities that God placed before him, he had a tremendous impact upon the world around him.

One of the best childhood memories that I have is the weekend camping trips and vacations that my family used to take. I have three brothers, and to get ready for these family trips each of us had certain jobs for which we were responsible. Somebody had to put water in the tank of the trailer, somebody had to help pack clothes, somebody had to help stow the food, somebody had to put in the typical camping gear, somebody had to put in the fishing stuff, a couple of us had to help Dad put the boat on the car and so on. It was a fair amount of work, but we usually didn't mind because we were looking forward to what lay ahead. We were excited about going camping with the family.

The time is coming when the Lord Jesus Christ is going to gather His family together. In the meantime He has given us responsibilities to fulfill in preparation for His coming. He has told us about that coming in His Word so that we can be looking forward to it and making preparations for it. But when He comes to take us home, will He find us about our Father's business? Will He find us making preparations for His coming? Will he find us filled with excitement at the sure prospect of being united in a glorious way with the entire family of God?