

Message #15
Daniel

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THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST
DANIEL 11:36-39; REVELATION 13:1-10

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* maintains what is called the Doomsday Clock. Beginning in 1947 this organization of scientists has estimated how close the world is to global catastrophe. Their primary concern is the danger of nuclear war. Usually the group makes any necessary adjustments in January of each year. This past January the organization moved the hands of the clock to ninety seconds before midnight, the time of global catastrophe. This Doomsday Clock has never been closer to the point of anticipated catastrophe.

It is easy to understand why there is this concern. Vladimir Putin has threatened to use nuclear weapons in his war in Ukraine. China has been making major efforts to increase its arsenal of nuclear weapons, as it threatens to take over Taiwan. North Korea has been testing missiles with the potential of sending nuclear weapons in our direction. Iran is moving closer to the point of having nuclear weapons and threatens to wipe out Israel.

For people with little spiritual foundation who have faith only in a material world, there is reason to be fearful. A nuclear war has the potential to destroy the world as we know it. The people of God, however, have reason for hope. For our God has provided us in the Bible the basic outline for how the history of the world will unfold. The underlying claim is that He is sovereign over what happens in this world.

The Bible does tell us that a terrible time is coming. It is referred to in the Bible as the Tribulation. The key figure in this coming time is known popularly as the Antichrist. Chapter 13 in the Book of Revelation is one of several places in the Bible that describes this coming world ruler. According to that chapter, at some time in the future a man will arise who will gain control over a ten nation confederacy which will include at least parts of what was once the Roman Empire. For a period of 42 months his authority will be increased so that he rules over most of the rest of the world as well.

The real source of this man's charismatic authority will be Satan, who will give him and his henchman power to perform miraculous deeds. In fact this ruler will require people to worship himself and Satan. Those who do not will be killed. In order to transact business people will need to have a mark on their forehead or on their right hand, indicating their loyalty to the Antichrist. This Antichrist's authority will be destroyed only by the return to earth of Jesus Christ.

Some regard this chapter in Revelation as a fanciful story. It has no more correspondence to reality than does "Jack and the Beanstalk." No one could seriously believe that the world is going to worship one man, let alone Satan, who is a fictional

character anyway. People would never tolerate a world dictator. People are basically good and want the best for others.

That is why it is so difficult for many Westerners to understand how a Kim Jung Un could remain in power in North Korea or how Vladimir Putin could come to control Russia which has been freed of Communism or how so many Arabs can seemingly be supportive of Islamic radicals. We may tend to think of ourselves in the West as being more civilized.

That is why before, and at the beginning of, World War II when reports began to filter out of Germany about atrocities committed against the Jews, people refused to believe it. Germany was a civilized nation. It had a history of considerable Christian influence. Many Americans traced their ancestry to that country.

(PROJECTOR ON--- SS ST. LOUIS) When a shipload of Jews fleeing Germany sought asylum in the United States, our government refused to take them in. So did Canada. They had to go back to Europe where at least a quarter of them died in the concentration camps of the Nazis. Thus it is that Israelis observed Yom HaShoah, or Holocaust Day, just ten days ago. (PROJECTOR OFF)

The Bible tells us that an evil world dictator is coming who will be much worse than Adolf Hitler. Like Hitler he will have a problem with the Jews. British historian Arnold Toynbee had the reputation for being one of the world's greatest historians. Years ago he wrote, **“Technology has brought mankind to such a degree of distress that we are ripe for the deifying of any new Caesar who might succeed in giving the world unity and peace.”**

It will happen. It was predicted over 2500 years ago in the time of the great Jewish statesman Daniel. We are going to consider his prophecy today in Daniel #11 vv. 36-39.

Chapters 10-12 contain the last revelation given to Daniel in his life. The year was about 536 BC. He was living in the Persian Empire during the reign of King Cyrus. He had been praying, and the focus of his prayers was a concern for understanding what God was doing in his day.

The Lord delights in believers' prayers that are made in regard to understanding and promoting the program of God. In response to Daniel's prayer God sent an angel to tell Daniel what the future holds. Last week we looked at the first 35 verses of #11 and surveyed the 135 specific predictions made in those verses. Those predictions have been fulfilled accurately and completely in past history. But now between vv. 35 & 36 there is a gap of at least 2500 years as the angel talking to Daniel begins to describe events that are future even to our day.

I.

So we are going to consider first THE TRANSITION TO the description of THE ANTICHRIST. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. THE TRANSITION TO THE ANTICHRIST) The

question is: How do we know that the angel in vv. 36-39 is describing events that are still future to us? He has just been describing an ongoing conflict between the king of the south, or Syria, and the king of the north, or Egypt, with Israel caught in the middle. (PTOLEMY VS. SELEUCUS) In vv. 21-35 he has been describing Antiochus Epiphanes, King of Syria, the king of the North. At first glance it may appear that the discussion about Antiochus is continued in our passage.

More liberally minded scholars believe that is what is indeed happening. Because of their presupposition that supernatural prophecy is impossible, they contend that these words were written after the events described happened. So vv. 36-39 continue to talk about Antiochus. But there are at least three problems with that view.

First, as we shall see in a moment, the description in vv. 36-39 does not accurately apply to Antiochus Epiphanes. Second, v. 36 says that this ruler “**shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished.**” “Indignation” is a word that is used to describe the last days. (DANIEL 8:19) In #8 v. 19 the angel Gabriel said, “**Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end.**” The angel in #11, beginning in v. 36, is describing the seventieth week of Daniel #9 v. 27, which is the Tribulation. The ruler described here is going to be in power in the end times. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Third, there is a distinction made in v. 40 between the ruler described in our passage today and the king of the North. Verse 40 reads, “**At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him---** this ruler of vv. 36-39---, **but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind...**” The ruler in vv. 36-39 cannot be Antiochus, because Antiochus was king of the North. Our passage is describing someone who is distinct from Antiochus.

Who then is this ruler? The Christian scholar Jerome as early as the third century wrote, “**The Jews believe that this passage has reference to the Antichrist... We, too, understand this to refer to the Antichrist.**”

The Antichrist is a main character in the prophetic part of the Book of Daniel. In #2 we saw his kingdom described as a revived Roman Empire. In #3 we saw Nebuchadnezzar demand worship of a statue. This action seems to typify the worship that the Antichrist will require in the Tribulation. The pride of Nebuchadnezzar in #4 typifies the pride of the Antichrist. In #5 Belshazzar committed terrible blasphemy against the God of Israel. The coming Antichrist will likewise blaspheme God by committing the abomination of desolation, by setting up a statue of Himself in the temple and requiring people to worship it.

In #6 Darius commanded that worship be mediated through him. The Antichrist will likewise require worship to be directed toward him. Chapters 7 and 8 specifically describe the Antichrist using the terminology of a “little horn.” In #9 the Antichrist is described as “the prince who is to come.” Now in #11 he is again mentioned. So he is a key figure in the book that we are studying. The reason for the transition from Antiochus

in v. 35 to the Antichrist in v. 36 is that Antiochus in the Book of Daniel is seen as typifying the coming Antichrist.

II.

Thus we find in vv. 36-39 THE DESCRIPTION OF THE ANTICHRIST. (PROJECTOR ON--- II. THE DESCRIPTION OF...) We are told first in v. 36 that this king will do as he pleases. He will be an independent person, and apparently he will have the power to fulfill his desires.

Furthermore **“he will exalt and magnify himself above every god.”** There are some world leaders in our day who act like God and who try to stamp out religious worship. This would include people like Kim Jung Un in North Korea and Xi Jinping in China. But few, if any, actually claim to have divine powers. Even Adolf Hitler, as far as I know, made no claim to be God.

Syrian King Antiochus may have claimed to be some kind of god, as did some of the later Roman emperors. Antiochus did put the title “Epiphanes Theos”--- God Manifest--- on one side of the coins that he minted. But on the other side of the coins was a picture of the Greek god Zeus. When Antiochus erected a statue in the temple in Jerusalem, it was not an image of himself but an image of Zeus, or at least some image dedicated to Zeus. So Antiochus still maintained loyalty to the Greek gods. He did not “magnify himself above every God.”

The Antichrist will have no such respect for any gods. He will put himself forth as God and will blaspheme the true God. He will prosper until the indignation, or the wrath, is finished. He will hold sway until the end of the seven year Tribulation.

Verse 37 adds that **“he shall pay no attention to the gods--- [or it could be translated ‘god’]--- of his fathers.”** Some have concluded from this phrase that the Antichrist will be a Jew. That is possible. But there are other reasons for believing that he will be a Gentile who will reject his own religious heritage. That heritage could even be some form of Christianity.

The next phrase in v. 37 is difficult to interpret: **“[He shall pay no attention] to the one beloved by women.”** The translation itself is uncertain. Other translations have: **“[He will show no regard] for the desire of women...”** Some have suggested that this refers to qualities of compassion, mercy or tenderness. The idea would be that this Antichrist will have no regard for such virtues.

Others have suggested that the phrase means that the Antichrist will mistreat and abuse women. Still others have suggested that this is a reference to Christ, the Messiah, whom every Jewish woman desired to bear. Some have suggested that the reference is to one of several gods who were popular with women. The meaning of the clause is uncertain.

Verse 38 tells us that the Antichrist will be a military man. He will find his security not in any god but rather in military power. He will spend gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures to establish his military strength. This will enable him, according to v. 39, to attack any opposing force that he desires. He will do it with the help of a foreign god, who is probably Satan. In Revelation #13 v. 4 (REVELATION 13:4) the question is posed, **“Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”** Those who support this Antichrist will be given honor and power and land.

III.

We want to consider then THE NEW TESTAMENT DESCRIPTION OF THE ANTICHRIST. (III. THE NEW TESTAMENT DESCRIPTION...) Nowhere in this passage is this ruler called the Antichrist. He is called only “the king.” In Revelation #13, which Mick read for us earlier, he is called “the beast.” In fact the title “Antichrist” appears only five times in the Bible--- all in the First and Second Epistles of John. Pastor Steve Tomlinson preached from 1 John #2 two weeks ago. I would like to touch on it for a few moments now.

The Greek prefix “anti” in “Antichrist” originally meant “in place of.” Then it came to often mean “against.” So the term “Antichrist” itself suggests the idea of one who takes the place of Christ and then opposes the purposes of Christ. This man is a usurper who seeks the position and glory that belongs to Christ and also opposes His plans.

(1 JOHN 2:18A) Notice v. 18 of #2 in 1 John: **“Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming...”** The text goes on. The significance here is that there will be one individual in the future who is known as the Antichrist. In Daniel Chapters 7 & 8 he is called “the little horn.” In #9 he is called “the prince who is to come.” In #11 vv. 36-39 he is called simply “the king.” In Revelation #13 he is called “the beast.”

The rest of v. 18 (1 JOHN 2:18B) in 1 John #2 says, **“...so now many antichrists have come.”** There is one individual coming who will be the Antichrist. But the Apostle John indicates that there are those present in the meantime who exhibit in miniature the characteristics of the Antichrist. Thus John also calls them antichrists.

How can these little antichrists be recognized? Look at v. 22 (1 JOHN 2:22): **“Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.”** Those who deny Christ--- who reject His deity or His humanity, who oppose His work--- these are antichrists.

In the fourth chapter of 1 John (1 JOHN 4:1) the Apostle tells us, **“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 JOHN 4:2) By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, (1 JOHN 4:3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.”**

That spirit of Antichrist was present in John's day. It was present before the time of Christ in Antiochus Epiphanes. It has been present in the generation of some of us in people like Adolf Hitler and Mao tse-tung and Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. It may even be present in the lives of some with whom we are personally acquainted.

IV.

So we arrive at the level of application. We want to consider AVOIDING THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST. (IV. AVOIDING THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST) One of the two questions that the Book of Daniel answers is: How should we live in an often godless society? In an often godless society we need to avoid the spirit of the Antichrist. But first we need to be able to recognize it. How can we do that?

Well, one way to do that is to look at the primary characteristics of the Antichrist that we have described for us in Daniel 11:36-39. In doing that there seem to be three such characteristics that stand out.

A.

First, we are told that the coming Antichrist has AN INDEPENDENT SPIRIT. (IV. A. AN INDEPENDENT SPIRIT) He will "do as he pleases." This spirit has as its ultimate goal to be like God. Satan's first sin came when he said, "**I will make myself like the Most High.**" This independent spirit avoids accountability. It speaks not in terms of responsibility but in terms of rights. It craves for power. It focuses on self. In the times of the Old Testament Book of Judges (JUDGES 21:25) it was described in this way: "**Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**"

That description sounds uncomfortably applicable to the attitude of our own society. It is found in men and women around us. Years ago Helen Reddy sang the popular song "I Am Woman," which became a kind of anthem for the women's rights movement. (PROJECTOR OFF) She sang, "**I am woman, hear me roar/ in numbers too big to ignore,/ And I know too much to go back to pretend/ cause I've heard it all before/ and I've been there down on the floor,/ and no one's ever gonna keep me down again.**"

"**Oh, yes, I am wise/ but it's wisdom born of pain./ Yes, I paid the price/ but look how much I gained./ If I have to I can do anything./ I am strong, I am invincible, I am woman...**"

But if that independent spirit is present among many women, it is certainly also present among us men. It is nowhere more evident than in the workplace. Richard Foster in his book *Money, Sex and Power* says of us men, "**It is never enough to enjoy good work. No, we must obtain supremacy; we must possess; we must hoard; we must conquer. The sin of power is the yearning to be more than we are created to be. We want to be gods.**"

B.

Not only will the Antichrist be independent, doing as he pleases, but he will also be A BLASPHEMER. (IV. A. B. A BLASPHEMER) Verse 36 says that the Antichrist “**shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods.**” He will openly defy and criticize and demean the God of the Bible. Verse 37 says that he will show no regard for any god.

There has probably been no other age in which this aspect of the spirit of the Antichrist has been more evident than in our own. For the controlling philosophy of our day is secular humanism. Man is the measure of all things. American poet T. S. Eliot wrote, “**But it seems that something has happened that has never happened before; though we know not just when, or why, or how, or where. Men have left God not for other gods, they say, but for no gods; and this has never happened before.**”

The result is that science becomes our only hope for the future. It provides the only source of truth in the world. In ethics everything becomes relative. There are no absolutes. Human beings become the measure of all things.

Taken to a further extreme the removal of God from the scene leads to a further devaluation of man beyond secular humanism. It leads to the philosophy of radical environmentalism, where the environment becomes something that should not serve mankind but rather should be an absolute goal by itself. Man has no superior right over other creatures. All animal life is of equal value.

When President Obama had an interview on MSNBC years ago, a housefly landed on his arm. He swatted it. The next day PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, criticized him for it. Spokesman Bruce Friedrich said that Obama ought to show compassion toward “**the most curious, smallest and least sympathetic animals.**”

Human beings alone were created in the image of God and, as a result, have a unique position in God’s created order. It is legitimate to have a concern about the well-being of our environment, but that environment was designed to serve mankind and not the other way around.

C.

The Antichrist in Daniel #11 has an independent spirit; he is a blasphemer; and he is ONE WHO FINDS SECURITY IN MATERIAL RESOURCES. (IV. A. B. C. ONE WHO FINDS SECURITY...) He claims to worship no god, but everyone finds his security in something. The Antichrist finds his in the material world. According to vv. 38 & 39 he finds it in financial resources and in military might.

Martin Luther once said, “**Whatever your heart clings to and trusts in--- that indeed is your God.**” The Antichrist’s god is material possessions, especially military armaments. Some in our world also find their security in military armaments. I think that we would be naive and unwise not to want our nation to have a strong military defense. But if that is the primary source for our security, we have a problem.

The real issue on the individual level where the spirit of the Antichrist is at work so often involves the seeking of security and happiness in possessions. But it is a vain pursuit. Yussif Ismail (YUSSIF ISMAIL) was known as the Terrible Turk. He was a wrestler who acquired fame and fortune for his skill in the ring.

After winning every title that was available in Europe he came to the US. His biggest competition was with a guy known as Strangler Lewis. The Turk tossed the Strangler around like a teddy bear and won. The new world champion picked up what he wanted most, the money which came along with the title. He demanded the \$5000 prize in gold. He crammed the gold into the money belt which he wore around his waist. Then he set sail back to Europe in July of 1898 on the *S.S. Burgogne*. Unfortunately the *Burgogne* collided with another ship in a dense fog and sank. There were 549 people who died.

Yussif went over the side with his bulging belt full of his gold strapped around his large frame. The added weight was too much for even the Terrible Turk to stay afloat. Before the lifeboats could reach him, he went down to the bottom. His body was never recovered. His gold proved to be a false source of security. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Having things and saving money is not in itself wrong. The Book of Proverbs encourages saving and investing. The spirit of the Antichrist has everything to do with attitude. That evil spirit that will characterize this coming world ruler will be reflected in a desire to have security and significance in the possession of things. That attitude ought not to characterize the true believer. We need to check ourselves to make sure that our priorities are straight.

The spirit of the Antichrist is strong in the world around us. It is difficult not to be affected by it. What can we do to resist it? The starting point is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That relationship can be started by inviting Jesus into our lives. That can be accomplished by a simple prayer acknowledging that we are sinners, that we believe that Jesus was God who became man and who died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and by trusting Him for eternal life.

But even as Christians we can be influenced by the spirit of the Antichrist around us. We must keep close to the Lord and flee from those bad influences. (JAMES 4:7-8A) In James #4 the writer says, **“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”** Even though Daniel had arrived at the top echelon of power in his society, even though he had access to material wealth, he did not succumb to the spirit of the Antichrist in his day. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Two keys that we have already identified as being central to the success that he experienced in life were the regular study of God’s Word and the regular practice of prayer. Those two keys also enabled him to resist the spirit of the Antichrist.

It comes back to basics, doesn't it? We shouldn't expect that much will change in our ability to resist the spirit of the Antichrist unless we make a commitment to regular Bible study and prayer.

One time when my boys were small, we were visiting my in-laws in Massachusetts. One day someone spotted a raccoon outside during the daytime. There was a concern at the time about rabid raccoons. Suzy told the boys that if they were outside and saw a raccoon, they should come inside right away. Little Scott took that warning very seriously. For the rest of the visit he refused to go outside at all unless an adult was with him. He decided that he absolutely was not going to take any chances in messing with any raccoon.

I wonder if we adults might not benefit from a healthy dose of that childlike fear and innocence in regard to the spirit of the Antichrist in our age. For the Evil One is out to get us. He will use the spirit of independence, the spirit of blasphemy, and the temptation to find security in material resources to do it.

We cannot escape the world around us. But we can escape the spirit of the world by setting apart a little time each day for prayer and Bible study. Then when we enter the world, we can do it as effective, godly leaders like Daniel was, not being transformed by the world but rather transforming the world by our godly influence. May the Lord help us to do just that.