

05–29–2020 Daniel 11.21–35 Bible Study

Read Daniel 11:21–35 in your favorite translation. I will print the NET–2 translation.

21 “Then there will arise in his place a despicable person to whom the royal honor has not been rightfully conferred. He will come on the scene in a time of prosperity and will seize the kingdom through deceit. 22 Armies will be suddenly swept away in defeat before him; both they and a covenant leader will be destroyed. 23 After entering into an alliance with him, he will behave treacherously; he will ascend to power with only a small force. 24 In a time of prosperity for the most productive areas of the province he will come and accomplish what neither his fathers nor their fathers accomplished. He will distribute loot, spoils, and property to his followers, and he will devise plans against fortified cities, but not for long. 25 He will rouse his strength and enthusiasm against the king of the south with a large army. The king of the south will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to prevail because of the plans devised against him. 26 Those who share the king’s fine food will attempt to destroy him, and his army will be swept away; many will be killed in battle. 27 These two kings, their minds filled with evil intentions, will trade lies with one another at the same table. But it will not succeed, for there is still an end at the appointed time. 28 Then the king of the north will return to his own land with much property. His mind will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action, and then return to his own land. 29 At an appointed time he will again invade the south, but this latter visit will not turn out the way the former one did. 30 The ships of Kittim will come against him, leaving him disheartened. He will turn back and direct his indignation against the holy covenant. He will return and honor those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 His forces will rise up and profane the fortified sanctuary, stopping the daily sacrifice. In its place they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. 32 Then with smooth words he will defile those who have rejected the covenant. But the people who are loyal to their God will act valiantly. 33 These who are wise among the people will teach the masses. However, they will fall by the sword and by the flame, and they will be imprisoned and plundered for some time. 34 When they stumble, they will be granted some help. But many will unite with them deceitfully. 35 Even some of the wise will stumble, resulting in their refinement, purification, and cleansing until the time of the end, for it is still for the appointed time.

COMMENTS:

The despicable person referred to in v. 21 is Antiochus IV Epiphanes (ca. 175-164 b.c.). If you are not familiar with him, I encourage you to go to an encyclopedia, search online about him or read 1 Maccabees in the Apocrypha. He marks the darkest time for the Jews and his desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem where he sacrificed a pig, led to the Maccabean Revolt.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes was the eighth in a succession of twenty-six kings who ruled from 175—164 BC over the Syrian section of Alexander’s empire. He is referred to as the “little horn” in Daniel 8:9. The name Epiphanes means the “Illustrious One,” although his contemporaries nicknamed him Epimanes, meaning “madman.”

He differs in many respects with the “little horn” of Daniel Chapter seven seeing that “the little horn of 7:8 appears in the context of the fourth kingdom (Rome), while the little horn of 8:9 appears in the context of the third kingdom (Greece). Yet taken as a whole Antiochus IV Epiphanes is undoubtedly one of the greatest prototypes of the Antichrist in all of God’s Word.

Despite Ptolemy VI Philometor (181–146 BC) attacking with a flood of forces, Antiochus IV would be able to defeat them and depose the covenant prince, the Jewish high priest Onias III. Many believe v. 22 refers to this Jewish high priest.

Antiochus IV consolidated his power by sharing the wealth of his conquests. Those loyal to him received plunder, loot, and wealth from his conquests. It is much the same today. Frequently in political campaigns it seems that those who promise the most win the elections. Those who worship the God of money are always willing to sell their loyalty for a price.

Verses 25 and 26 refer back to the war with Ptolemy VI (v. 22), predicting that not only would the power of Antiochus IV defeat Ptolemy VI, but also that plots ... against him would cause his army to be swept away.

After the defeat of Ptolemy VI, Ptolemy VII took control of Egypt. Then the other two kings, Antiochus IV and Ptolemy VI, would meet, speaking lies at the same table, to plot Ptolemy VI's restoration to the throne. After initial limited success, they would eventually fail.

Then Antiochus IV (the king of the North), having plundered Egypt, would return to his land, with his heart set against God's covenant people. On the way home, he would attack Israel, kill eighty thousand Jewish men, women, and children, and plunder the holy temple (169 BC).

The Maccabees would experience suffering in their battle with Antiochus. In the end, the Maccabees would defeat Antiochus, rededicate the holy temple in Jerusalem, and establish the festival of Chanukah (aka, Hanukkah) which the Lord Jesus celebrated (Jn 10:22) and which Jewish people still observe today.

Our reading for today ends with Antiochus IV launching another attack against Egypt, but this time ships of Kittim (cp. Nm 24:24)—the Roman fleet led by Gaius Popilius Laenas—would force him to withdraw in humiliation.

Tomorrows reading will bring an end to this sad chapter in the life of God's People.

REFLECTION QUESTION: This wild history of nations, kings and kingdoms reminds us that only God knows the past, present and future of time. I find v. 35 most interesting. It shows how God can have good plans in the midst of some of our worst times. God said even some of the wise would stumble in that persecution and terror. However, God was using it to refine their faith, purify them again and make them white (holy), prepared for Judgment Day. In the midst of our Covid-19 pandemic, God is doing the same today. Plus, he is softening the hearts of many to reach out and care for the unemployed, poor, and hungry. Our privilege is as we share our daily bread with those who are hungry we can also share the bread of life, Jesus with them as well. Organizations can be useful in getting help to people, but be sure to get involved personally as well. That is where you get to experience the heart of God. Some will think you owe them something and not show or express joy in your gift. That happens again and again to God when he gives his gifts. Other times you will see how your helping hand was a blessing beyond measure to them. Then you will experience the joy of the Lord.