

Lesson 32

We have reached a big turning point in verse 36, although it is not immediately apparent why that is so. So our first task will be to look at that question - is verse 36 a big turning point, and if so, why?

Daniel 11:36

36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.

Who is the king mentioned in verse 36?

The first thing we note about the "king" in verse 36 is that he is not designated as either the king of the north or the king of the south, but is just called "the king."

Verses 28-35 have been discussing the "king of the north" so perhaps verse 36 is also discussing the "king of the north."

If so, then the most likely king of the north in verse 36 is Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who we have been reading about since verse 21. This view has at least one thing in its favor - it does not require a sudden and perhaps unexpected break in the narrative. When we read verse 36 after verse 35, we could very easily conclude that verse 36 is still talking about Antiochus IV.

Why should we even consider another view?

First, as we just saw, verse 36 introduces "the king" who is not described as either the king of the north or the king of the south. That may be a pretty strong indication that there has been a change in subject.

Second, we should consider the possibility of a break between verses 35 and 36 because we have seen such sudden breaks before, not just in this chapter but elsewhere in the book. In fact, we should have been on the lookout for such breaks all throughout this chapter because we saw one near the very beginning of the chapter between verses 2 and 3.

That break in verses 2 and 3 involved a skip over six Persian kings and 134 years to a king of another

nation, Alexander the Great of Greece. So, if verse 36 also skips over a hundred years without warning to another nation, it would not be the first time that has happened in this chapter.

Also, back in Chapter 5, the narrative jumped from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the very end of the Babylonian empire. Abrupt changes are not at all uncommon in Daniel. We can think of it as fast forwarding a cassette tape past the part that is not of interest!

How did we know about the break between verses 2 and 3? Because we knew about Alexander the Great. There was no doubt at all about who verse 3 was talking about, so we knew with certainty that a break in time must have occurred.

Likewise, here in verse 36 we need to apply that same methodology. If verses 36-45 do not fit with Antiochus IV but instead fit with someone else, then we need to consider the possibility of a break, just as we saw in verse 3.

Do verses 36-45 fit with Antiochus IV?

In a word, no. They do not.

In fact, liberals argue that Daniel was written between verses 35 and 36, and that Daniel knew the history of verses 1-35 because it had already happened, and verses 36-43 are wrong (they argue) because Daniel was just guessing after verse 35.

 McGuigan: "It is true that the thought processes of the Liberals are decidedly uncomplicated."

We know Daniel was a prophet for many reasons, but the main reason we know that is because Jesus told us Daniel was a prophet in Matthew 24:15.

Let's look at why verses 36-45 do not fit with Antiochus IV.

For starters, history tells us that Antiochus IV never fought a war against Egypt after 168 BC. And so, if that history is correct, then verses 40-43 (which we will consider soon) cannot apply to Antiochus IV.

Verse 40, for example, will tell us that the king of the north will come against the king of the south like a whirlwind. Rome expelled Antiochus IV from Egypt with just a word in 168 BC, and (as far as we know) he never went back. Egypt supplied Rome with its entire grain supply for four months of each year, so it was imperative to Rome that Antiochus not be in charge of Egypt. Verse 40 cannot be

describing Antiochus.

Also, Antiochus IV never conquered Libya and Ethiopia as verse 43 suggests the king of the north would do.

And Antiochus IV never had all the riches mentioned in verse 43. In fact, he robbed temples in his spare time to pay the heavy Roman taxes that were levied against him.

So where are we? Verses 21-35 are definitely talking about Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and verses 36-45 are definitely not talking about Antiochus IV Epiphanes. So what is the logical conclusion? There must be a break between verse 35 and verses 36, just as we saw a break between verses 2 and 3.

Some commentators try to make verses 36-43 fit with Antiochus, but not (in my opinion) with any success.

Finally, some might object that if verse 36 refers to another king of the north, then Daniel 11 seems to have just dropped the subject of Antiochus IV Epiphanes rather than to have concluded it.

But we already know all about Antiochus IV from Daniel 8 (including his death in Daniel 8:25), so what more is there left to say here in Daniel 11? Rather than asking why Daniel 11 doesn't say more about Antiochus, the real question might be why Daniel 11 says as much as it does about him. But, of course, it does so because Antiochus was a major part of Jewish history, and a major threat to God's plan.

So who is the subject of verse 36?

The most popular view today in the denominational world is that the king in verse 36 is the Antichrist, who premillennialists say will show up just before Christ returns to reign on earth for a thousand years. But we know this view is false because of all of the problems associated with premillennialism, which as we have seen are legion. The premillennial view also violates the context and the time frame of this vision.

So far in Chapter 11, we have been marching through history from the time of Daniel up to the time of Christ, and I don't see any reason to think anything other than that is happening here in verse 36.

I think we have two options for the king in verse 36, either of which might be correct. Either the king in verse 36 is Rome, or the king in verse 36 is Herod the Great.

I have previously taught the book of Daniel three times, starting in the mid-90's, and up until this time I have always taught that the king in verse 36 is Rome. But having studied it a bit more, I now think that Herod may be the more likely subject. Let's look at both possibilities.

But first, why was verse 36 written this way? Why the lack of a clear transition in moving from Antiochus to either Rome or Herod?

I think it was to reinforce what I think we are seeing as a theme of Daniel 11 - the sameness of history apart from God. When God acts, we see unique events. When man acts, we see the same events over and over.

We look at the historical events of Greece and of Rome today, and we see two completely separate sets of events, separated by many years and involving different nations. I think God looks at them differently. I think God sees the same prideful arrogance of man that he has always seen, and perhaps God wants us to see it that way as well. There is truly nothing new under the sun. We still see that same prideful arrogance in our leaders today.

So, let's look at our two leading possibilities: Rome and Herod, starting with Rome. What is the evidence for identifying Rome with the king in verse 36?

Well, let's look at the problem in reverse. We have said that this vision deals with Jewish history up to the first century. And we have seen the Persians and the Greeks so far, with just a hint of Rome. Who haven't we seen yet on center stage? Rome!

How could a vision describe the history of the Jews up to the first century and not mention Rome? Rome was firmly in control of Palestine when Christ was born, and Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70! A discussion of Rome is required by the declared scope of this vision (and this point is true whether we take the king in verse 36 to be a Roman king or Herod).

What about Rome?

If the focus switches to **Rome** in verse 36, then which Roman king is being referred to in that verse?

We earlier looked at the first eleven Roman kings, from Augustus to Domitian, but I don't think we necessarily have to choose one in particular. Instead, it is possible that these verses are treating Rome itself as the king of the north - that here we are seeing the "king" refer to the "kingdom" just as we

have earlier seen the "kingdom" refer to the "king."

Why not a particular king? Well, for starters, some of what we will see in these verses happened toward the end of the Roman Republic and prior to Augustus becoming the first emperor in 27 BC. The famous Battle of Actium occurred a few years earlier in 31 BC, and in fact was what led to Octavian becoming Augustus, the first emperor, a few years later.

Also, if the sameness of history is something that Daniel 11 is telling us about, then one way to drive that point home is to point out the sameness of the Roman emperors. And perhaps that is done here by showing us a composite description of many Roman rulers, which in fact is a description of Rome itself.

This king does whatever he wants, he magnifies himself above every god, and sets himself against the true God. As we know, this fits very well with what we might call the "typical" Roman emperor. It certainly fits well with how Paul described the emperor Domitian:

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 - Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Under this view, what is the indignation in verse 36?

The indignation would be the final outpouring of God's wrath on Rome. Although the official fall of Rome occurred long after AD 70, Rome was judged by God and found wanting much earlier in the first century.

What that would mean is that Rome's judgment (and ultimate fall) is mentioned in this vision as just a side comment. But is that surprising? Don't we see the same thing in Luke 21:24. There, Jesus is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Rome, and he makes the following comment:

Luke 21:24 - And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

In that verse, Jesus says "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the

Gentiles are fulfilled." Here in Daniel 11:36, the angel says "he shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished." Perhaps verse 36, like Luke 21, is saying that "yes, Jerusalem will be destroyed by the Romans, but the Romans are going to be destroyed as well."

What about Herod?

To begin, let's note something about Herod the Great that is particularly interesting - he is called Herod **the Great**!

If verse 36 is about Herod, then we have seen **three** people in Daniel 11 who were called "great" - Alexander the Great, Antiochus the Great, and Herod the Great. If the goal here is to show the arrogant pride of human kings, then you could hardly do any better than to look at these three! And note how each is described in this chapter:

Verse 3 - And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, **and do according to his will.**

Verse 16 - But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will.

Verse 36 - And the king shall do according to his will.

There is a theme here - these three kings did what they wanted to do with no thought of God and with no thought of those they were leading.

How did Herod the Great come to power?

That story begins with Herod's grandfather, Antipas.

John Hyrcanus was a Hasmonean (Maccabean) leader and the Jewish high priest. He reigned over the Jews as ethnarch from 134 BC until his death in 104 BC. He appointed Antipas to be the general over all Idumea or Edom. That may have seemed like a good idea at the time, but it proved not to be.

Just before his death, John Hyrcanus I wanted his wife to rule, but his son, Aristobulus I, grabbed the throne. Aristobulus I had his mother imprisoned and slowly starved her to death.

Aristobulus I's reign was short-lived, however. His brother, Alexander Jannaeus, was able to grab power and became high priest and king of Judea. His oppressive rule, together with his bitter feud

with the Pharisees, led to open civil war, resulting in the slaughter of six thousand of his own people in a single day.

After his death, the feuding continued between Alexander Jannaeus's two sons, Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II.

But now Antipater (Herod's father) made his bid for power.

Sensing instability among the Jews, Antipater cast his lot with Hyrcanus II, and they together tried to wrest power from Aristobulus II.

This regional dispute attracted the attention of the Romans.

Antipater quickly conveyed his allegiance to the Roman legions even as they marched toward Jerusalem.

The Roman general Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 BC. During the campaign, Aristobulus II took refuge in the temple, and the temple mount was besieged for three months.

The streets of Jerusalem flowed with blood. The priests were cut down at the altar as they performed their duties. Twelve thousand Jews were killed. Pompey and his men defiled the temple by entering into the holy of holies.

When the dust settled, Antipater convinced Pompey that Hyrcanus II would be loyal to Rome, and so Hyrcanus II was appointed ethnarch and high priest of the Jews.

At this time, the Romans came to see that the real help and money lay with Antipater, not with Hyrcanus II.

An opportunity for Antipater came in 49 BC, when the tensions between Julius Caesar and Pompey exploded into civil war.

As usual, Antipater waited until the balance of power tilted in a certain direction, and then he set his course accordingly.

As Caesar triumphed over Pompey, Antipater transferred all of his resources and influence behind the winner. And he was greatly rewarded by Caesar, who conferred Roman citizenship on Antipater and

made him the governor of all Judea.

But Caesar realized that he had more than one player on the field in Jerusalem, and so he was careful to seek a balance of power among the Jews. To that end, he allowed Hyrcanus II to stay on as high priest.

When the Jews realized that the power of the Hasmoneans was being siphoned off by Antipater, they had Antipater poisoned at a banquet in about 43 BC.

But it was too little and too late. Before his assassination, Antipater had already appointed his son Herod to be ruler over Galilee.

Early on, Herod proved himself to be a friend of Rome, once again by exploiting the infighting of the Jews.

Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II, was the last surviving Maccabean, and he had no desire to compromise with Rome. He also was the last great hope of the Jews to get rid of Herod.

Antigonus's bid for power succeeded through an alliance with the Parthians, the archenemies of Rome. Herod and Hyrcanus were driven from Jerusalem, and the latter's ears were sheared off so as to disqualify him from ever regaining the high priesthood.

Herod fled to Rome and used the Parthian-Antigonus alliance to get the full support of Octavian and Antony.

Josephus records that in 40 BC, with great fanfare and before the entire Roman senate, the Caesars declared the 33 year old "Herod the Great" to be "King of the Jews."

All that remained was to drive the remnants of the Maccabees out of Jerusalem. The Romans defeated the Parthian forces in 39 BC, and Jerusalem fell after a 5 month siege in 37 BC.

King Herod took his place as king over Judea and Galilee, and the time of the Maccabeans came to an end.

But does Herod the Great fit the descriptions in these verses?

Let's see. We have a lot of information about Herod given that he is the subject of about one fifth of

all of Josephus' writings.

Verse 36 says: "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done."

Let's take those descriptions one at a time.

And the king shall do according to his will.

If we are looking for a king who wanted to do things his own way with no thought of God, we have found such a person in Herod the Great. In fact, the entire Herodian dynasty fits this description.

It was Herod the Great who sought the death of Christ soon after his birth. And it successors of his own family who put to death John the Baptist (this was done by Herod Antipas) and James the brother of John (by Herod Agrippa I, who also imprisoned Peter, intending to deliver him to the Jews) and who sent Paul in chains to Rome (which was done by Herod Agrippa II, the last of the dynasty, the man who is best known as he who was "almost persuaded").

Herod was not just self-willed (such people are a dime a dozen). Herod the Great, as the verse says, was in a position **to do** according to his will. And again, verse 3 says the same thing about Alexander the Great, and verse 16 says the same thing about Antiochus the Great.

Herod rose up from a lowly origin to the rank and authority of king, and he retained that despotic power through all the political changes of the times. He used his power to accomplish his own will, whether it was the rebuilding of the temple or the murder of his own wife, Mariamme, and three of his own sons. Augustus is reported to have said, "I would rather be Herod's pig than his son."

Along the way, Herod managed to secure the favor of Julius Caesar, then of Mark Antony, and then even of Octavius Caesar (later Augustus), although Herod had assisted Antony and Cleopatra against him.

He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god.

Herod was Herod's god. He knew no other. He magnified himself above God and above every rule and authority in Israel.

He placed his own brother-in-law, Aristobulus, Mariamme's brother, in the office of High Priest, and shortly afterwards had him murdered.

Herod's way of making himself secure upon the throne was to put to death every suspected rival. And Herod tried to do that even with the long promised Messiah, who the Jews believed would come to occupy Herod's throne on earth.

"He was a most impious king. His ambition, and selfish desires, and violent and angry passions, gave the law to his whole life; and every part of his conduct, down to his expiring moments, gave proof that he had no regard to God, that there was, in his breast, no feeling of responsibility to Him, and that all sense of religion was totally deadened within him."

He shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods.

I think a better translation of this phrase is that this king would speak marvelous things **concerning** the God of gods, rather than **against** the God of gods.

Despite being an irreligious and self-willed leader, Herod could talk the talk and put on quite a show of piety when it suited his purposes. (We don't know any leaders like that today, do we?)

Josephus gives us several examples. Herod once told his soldiers that "we have learnt from God the most excellent of our doctrines, and the most holy part of our law, by angels, or ambassadors." And when Herod proposed to rebuild the temple, he said it was "to make a thankful return, after the most pious manner, to God, for what blessings he had received from him, by giving him the kingdom, and that, by rendering his temple as complete as he was able."

Knowing Herod and seeing his true motives, we know that this was all just talk to placate the Jews and keep his own position of power secure.

He shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished.

This verse could have several meanings.

First, it could refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, an event that we have seen prophesied already in the book of Daniel.

Although Herod the Great died long before that event, his dynasty was there to see it happen. In fact,

Herod Agrippa II stood with the Roman army, as had all the Herods before him. He fought side by side with the Roman general Vespasian against the Jews and was wounded in battle. After the fall of Jerusalem, he and Bernice moved to Rome, where he remained until his death, which marked the end of the Herodian dynasty.

A second possibility, is that the "indignation" or "wrath" in verse 36 refers to the activities that caused that wrath to come upon those who rejected Christ.

Herod the Great was alive when Christ came, and Herod tried to murder him. The rejection of Christ did not occur just at the cross; that rejection started shortly after his birth. Herod knew the prophecies, and Herod rejected the promised Messiah.

1 Thessalonians 2:15-16 - Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: **for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.**

Matthew 3:7 - But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from **the wrath to come?**

Yes, there was a wrath **to come**, but there was also a wrath that **is come** upon them to the uttermost. Why? Because the Jews rejected and killed the Messiah, and Herod the Great was the first to reject and seek to kill Jesus. Herod was the first viper of that generation of vipers.

As we have seen with judgment, the wrath was certain once the rejection of God's promised Messiah occurred, and so perhaps, in that sense, the wrath was accomplished during the lifetime of Herod. And Herod's dynasty was still around to see the actual day of wrath in AD 70.

Daniel 11:37

37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.

Let's continue checking whether these descriptions can apply to Herod.

Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers.

This phrase suggests that we are not talking about a king of Syria or a king of Rome here. Why? Because what would it matter if such a king had no regard for the god of his fathers?

Who was "the God of his fathers"? We have two choices.

Before we look at them, let's look at another question that may help us identify who the "fathers" are in the phrase "god of his fathers."

Was Herod Jewish?

Ethnically, he was not. Herod's father, Antipater, was an Idumean, and his mother was Cypros, an Arab princess from Petra, east of the Jordan River.

Herod clearly saw himself as Jewish, and more importantly wanted others to see him as Jewish, although his credentials as a Jew were challenged by his opponents throughout his career

When the Hasmonean Jewish ruler John Hyrcanus I conquered Idumea in 130-140 BC, he required all Idumaeans to obey Jewish law or to leave, and most Idumaeans converted to Judaism, including Herod's family. So Herod was a Jewish proselyte.

Idumea was the Greek name for the territory south of Judea that was inhabited by the Edomites until they were later displaced by the Nabateans. It is located west of the Dead Sea, about 15 miles from Jerusalem.

Idumea is mentioned only once in the New Testament, where it is simply stated that part of the great crowd that followed Jesus came from Idumea (Mark 3:8).

And so who was the god of his fathers?

If we look for Herod's literal fathers (his ancestors), then perhaps "the god of his fathers" is the god of the Idumeans? Who was that?

Josephus answers that question when he describes another Idumean, Costobarus, who was Herod's brother-in-law until Herod had him killed:

 Costobarus was an Idumean by birth, and one of the principal dignity among them, and one

whose ancestors had been priests to the Koze, whom the Idumeans had [formerly] esteemed as a god; but after Hyrcanus had made a change in their political government, and made them receive the Jewish customs and law, Herod made Costobarus governor of Idumea and Gaza, and gave him his sister Salome to wife.

Josephus tells us that the Idumeans worshiped a false god called Koze. Who was that?

The Idumean god called Koze by Josephus seems to be the Greek name for Qos, the god of the Edomites. Edom was founded by Esau, and Qos seems to be the Edomites' corrupted conception of God, much like Allah is the Muslims' corrupted conception of God. The name of the Edomite god is found in Ezra 2:53, which mentions a man named Barkos, or Son of Qos.

That seems a bit remote for the context here, but it does suggest that we are on the right track.

I think we have find better fit for "the god of his fathers" if we understand verse 37 to be telling us that Herod had no regard for God (the true God as opposed to the flawed Edomite conception of God). And I think that view is bolstered by the next phrase in verse 37.

In this case, "his fathers" might be better translated "our fathers," a phrase that Josephus tells us Herod frequently used in addressing the Jews.

Under this view, Herod's lack of regard for God can be seen both by Herod's attempt to murder the son of God, and also be Herod's embrace of Rome, even to the point of erecting shrines to Augustus.

#daniel