

Sermon – 16/12/2007 pm

Man of Sin

Study Text: Daniel 11:36–45

Writing to the Thessalonians Paul spoke of the man of sin/lawlessness...*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* (II Thessalonians 2:3, 4). Who is this man of sin that Paul is referring to? This ‘man of sin’ is often called the antichrist. To find out more about the antichrist we need to go back to the Old Testament and to this passage in Daniel 11.

In Daniel 11 we read of a king who will *exalt and magnify himself above every god* (11:36). We have also come across such a person previously in Daniel as the ‘little horn’ who will speak pompous words against the Most High (7:25) and exalt himself in his heart (8:25).

In the previous section of this chapter Daniel spoke a vile person who will become king of the north. He was prophesying of Antiochus Epiphanies, the historical person who attacked the temple and stopped the Jews from worshipping God. As we come to vs. 36 we find things about this king that do not fit Antiochus Epiphanies.

We find a subtle change from the historical person to an eschatological figure, a king who will come at the end of time (11:35, 40). Many try to identify this figure and indeed have identified him down through history. As John tells us *even now many antichrists have come...* but speaks of *the antichrist as coming* (I John 2:18). The antichrist has not yet come because when he does come it will be the end.

‘History is full of prominent individuals who have set themselves up and tried to put down the people of God’ (Olyott). ‘They are forerunners of the final Antichrist’. We have in our confession (WCF) reference to the Pope as the antichrist. I am sure some Christians thought Hitler was the antichrist. I remember one of the Beatles band claimed he was more popular than Jesus Christ. He is now dead, as is Hitler, and all who have exalted themselves against God down through history. But when the antichrist comes there will be a final battle and it will be the end of the kingdoms of men and of this world.

Greater than God

The previous section of this final vision given to Daniel spoke of the people of God enduring under the terrible persecution of Antiochus Epiphanies. It was all in the *appointed time*. But Antiochus Epiphanies, who like many other kings of his day did claim divinity, did not seek to destroy all religion – just true religion. Of him it could not be said ‘nor regard any god’ (11:37).

This king shall *magnify himself above every god and speak blasphemies against the God of gods* (11:37). This king is viler than Antiochus Epiphanies, or any other earthly king. Antiochus Epiphanies is spoken of in detail because he points forward to such a king, but this king is worse by far.

The antichrist will *honour a god of fortresses* (11:38). He will get everything he wants by brute force. 'Might is right' will be his motto. Here is sin that is fully matured. Like the devil he is a liar and murderer. He will have total disregard for love and relationships, even love between a man and a woman. He will engage in unbridled corruption and violence as he promotes his own power and glory.

The antichrist will appear invincible as he advances across the face of the earth crushing all before him. No human being will be able to withstand him. But God will bring him down according to what has been determined.

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs and lying wonders. He will sit as God in the temple of God showing himself that he is God (II Thessalonians 9, 4)

Last Battle

At the time of the end (11:40). This verse tells of a battle at the end of time. Many readers point to particular nations as they link this battle with Armageddon in Revelation 16: 16. The passages may well be related but they are apocalyptic in genre. What Daniel is now writing is not historical as was the case previously. How can we say this? Well look at 11:41. Edom, Moab and Ammon were not in existence in Daniel's time, or after him. These were nations that opposed Moses as he led Israel to the promise land. Like Armageddon which symbolises the place of battles in Israel, these nations symbolise the enemies of Israel.

Those who wish to take these verses literally must also contend with another anachronism – that of the nature of the last battle. *The king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind with chariot, horsemen and many ships* (11:40). If this refers to a literal future battle then such equipment will need to be revived!

The kings of the north and the south are again in battle in this passage, but they are engaged in battle against a third king, namely antichrist. The antichrist will strike many countries but not those that are already enemies of God's people. He *will enter the glorious land* (11:41) in this time of the end.

'This should come as no surprise' writes Allan Harman, because 'as part of prophetic symbolism the idea of major battles in the land of Israel at the end times has already been introduced by Ezekiel in his reference to God and Magog attacking Israel (Ezekiel 38:18)'. The book of Revelation also picks up on this battle as we have also seen, referring to Gog and Magog being gathered together for battle (Revelation 20:8).

His End

The antichrist *will come to his end, and no one will help him*, according to this word of Daniel (11:45). Just what is the news from the east and the north that troubles him is not clear, except that it leads him to great fury and destruction.

We might recall the news the wise men brought from the east to King Herod and the savage pogrom he launched against baby boys in the holy land. With deception and violence Herod sought to kill the newborn Son of God. Herod is another king who prefigures the antichrist. He reminded the people at that time of the power of evil in this present fallen world.

Do you really understand the depth of what God was doing in sending his Son into this world? How shallow is the understanding of many as they sing and celebrate at this time of the year.

Daniel writes of the antichrist planting his tents between the seas on the holy mountain. He will make a last ditched effort to destroy the people of God; but he will fail. He is now restrained but will be revealed at the end. However, as Paul tells us, *the Lord will consume him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him with the brightness of his coming* (II Thessalonians 2:8). Jesus Christ will simply 'blow him out of the water' when he returns in all his power and glory.

Let us be comforted by these words, even as we are made aware of terrible times ahead for the people of God. There will be martyrs again. Evil will increase before the Lord returns (II Timothy 3:13). We must be serious about our faith. There is too much flippant and light-hearted Christianity today. There is too much careless Christianity today. We must be alert to the truth of the antichrist and the power of evil. But we need not be alarmed for Jesus is coming and he will bring an end to the antichrist.

'We will be better prepared for those days if we can learn from this chapter a lesson we have already learned several times in our studies of the book of Daniel. It is that nothing happens without the approval of our heavenly Father. History is in God's hands'.

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