THE LAST KING
DANIEL 11:36-45

STUDY GUIDE
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DANIEL 11:36-45 ESV

36 "And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done. 37 He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. 38 He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. 39 He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price. 40 "At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, 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. 41 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. 42 He 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. 45 And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.

STRUCTURE

I. **The heart of the final tyrant (36-39a)**
   a. He insists on his own way (36a)
   b. He exalts himself above God (36b)
   c. He prospers on God's timetable (36c)
   d. He devotes himself—religiously—to imperial ambition (37-39a)

II. **The career of the final tyrant (39b-45a)**
   a. He buys loyalty (39b)
   b. He overwhelms resistance (40)
   c. He divides the nations (41b-43)—*some escape, others fall, and others follow*
   d. He reacts with fury (44)
   e. He threatens God's people (41a, 45a)

III. **The end of the final tyrant (45b)**
   a. His power cannot save him—*"he shall come to his end"*
   b. His allies cannot rescue him—*"with none to help him"*
   c. <u>The Last King will destroy the last tyrant</u> (2 Thess. 2:8).

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

Like so many other passages, this one blends near- and far- term horizons to predict a final Antichrist in the likeness of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. That is the view I defend below.

In the background of this passage is the spiritual warfare of Daniel 10. Neither Antiochus nor the Antichrist rise independently of dark spiritual powers. This correlation agrees with the New Testament teaching about a final "man of lawlessness" who comes "by the activity of Satan" (2 Thess. 2:9) and about a "beast" that is empowered by the Evil One (Rev. 12:18-13:2). Paul's "man of lawlessness" draws directly from Daniel 11:36, and John's "beast" pulls from the imagery of Daniel 7. Behind this earthly tyrant is the most diabolical ruler of all: the devil himself.

This passage can be broken down into three parts. Verses 36-39a focus on the heart of the Antichrist. He is arrogant, not accountable. He exalts himself, not God. And to whatever degree he worships, it serves his own ambition. He will sacrifice his own citizens on the altar of conquest.

In the second section, we follow the career of the tyrant. Like Antiochus before him, the Antichrist will purchase loyalty with land and power. As pride increases, so will military aggression. His rise will divide the nations—some escaping, some falling, and others supporting (perhaps forcibly). God's people will be caught in the middle. Disturbing news of some kind will provoke persecution.

This brings us to the final section—the final verse: "he shall come to his end, with none to help him" (v. 45). The saints won't always suffer; the monster won't always reign. Daniel prophesies the Antichrist's demise, but Paul expands the picture: *"And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming."*

The Last King will destroy the last tyrant.

That's good news, but it gets better. Israel had learned painfully that the fall of one tyrant means the rise of another. It can be no other way, so long as the devil remains. By the work of Jesus, however, the devil won't always remain. His future is the lake of fire, where he "will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). Tyrants will no longer rise, but we will.

Jesus doesn't just end the Antichrist.

He ends the devilish cycle.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

36 "And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done.

--"And the king": The big debate is—which king? Some say the passage continues to address Antiochus, who has been the subject since v. 21. Others say that beginning in verse 36, the passage seems to telescope beyond Antiochus to a final Antichrist. **Below I present the argument from each side, as articulated by Dr. House and Dr. Longman III**. I am spelling out the arguments because this single question defines the whole passage.

- "Verses 36-45 continue to address Antiochus" (House):
    - **"The king" is the king we already know from prior context.** Antiochus has been the focus since verse 21, and the text provides no reason to expect a change of subject. It lacks a transition to signal someone different, which we see throughout Daniel 11 (vv. 7, 20-21).
    - **The king's religion and his rewards fit Antiochus.** He honored a god of fortresses, possibly Zeus, who represented the military power he prized (vv. 37-38). He also rewarded those who supported his rule, recalling his dealings with Jewish collaborators (vv. 30, 32, 39).
    - **Verses 40-44 revisit the Egyptian campaign of 168 BC.** Antiochus swept through much of Egypt before Rome ordered him to withdraw (v. 30). House identifies that ultimatum with the alarming news in v. 44 and the fury that followed with his attack on Jerusalem (cf. vv. 30-31).
    - **"The time of the end" points to the king's own end.** House connects "the end" in v. 40 with "his end" in v. 45. The royal tents near Zion represent Antiochus's continuing authority in Judea, while the verse leaves room for his death in Persia.
- "Verses 36-45 telescope beyond Antiochus to a final Antichrist" (Longman):
    - **In v. 36, the king's pride takes on cosmic proportions, foreshadowing the Antichrist.** From v. 21 onward, Antiochus has fought rival kings and attacked God's covenant people. Now he exalts himself above *every god* and speaks against the *God of gods* (vv. 36-37), language Longman reads as portraying the final enemy through the familiar figure of Antiochus.
    - **The final campaign exceeds what we know of Antiochus's career.** Rome forced him to withdraw from Egypt, whereas vv. 42-43 picture Egypt's treasures under the king's control, with Libya and Cush at his feet. The narrative then moves from a royal camp near Zion to the king's downfall, but Antiochus's final expedition took him east, not south to Jerusalem (v. 45).
    - **"The time of the end" reaches all the way to resurrection.** The king comes to his end in 11:45, and "at that time" Michael arises to deliver God's people (12:1). When the dead awake to everlasting life or contempt (12:2), the vision has carried us well beyond the death of Antiochus.
    - **Biblical prophecy can bring near and distant events into one picture.** Longman compares Jesus' prophecy in Mark 13, where Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70 anticipates his second coming. In the same way, Daniel portrays the final enemy in the likeness of Antiochus without announcing precisely where one gives way to the other.
- Where I land:
    - House is right that the text provides no transition to signal the rise of a king besides Antiochus. The text naturally reads as though Antiochus is in view. However, House seems to overstate the way Antiochus fits the historical details in vv. 37-45. Some of his proposals are plausible; many are not.
    - I side with Longman, who says, "The king is Antiochus, but he is also something more (i.e., worse) than Antiochus."

- I am comfortable with saying Antiochus fulfills some of vv. 36-45, but he certainly never fulfilled some of it. Biblical prophecy often blends near- and far- horizons.
- A positive case for this view would be the inspired interpretation of both Jesus and Paul. Jesus alludes to Daniel 11 in the Olivet Discourse when he identifies a future "abomination of desolation," and Paul uses language almost identical to 11:36 to depict a future "man of lawlessness." Jesus and Paul would probably have interpreted these verses to be about Antiochus, just as their contemporaries did. But they clearly saw a future fulfillment too.

--"shall do as he wills":

- Appears three times in the passage (11:3, 16, 36).
- Antiochus follows the tyrant's playbook. Unchecked arrogance swells and swallows every rival. The final tyrant will fit that mold. No one can tell him no: No one, except God. Dan. 4:35: *"all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and* ***he does according to his will*** *among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and* ***none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'"***
- As we addressed extensively in Dan. 11:2-35, God is sovereign over all, including the rise of wicked kings. He tolerates tyrants, but he also limits them. They fulfill his sovereign purposes, but he ultimately judges them.

--"He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods":

- Here's Paul's wording about a future "man of lawlessness" in 2 Thess. 2:4: *"[He] opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God."*
- On one hand, Antiochus fulfilled Dan. 11:36, claiming to be God and speaking against Yahweh. On the other hand, Paul envisions the rise of Antiochus 2.0.
- Below is a chart comparing Dan. 11:36 and 2 Thes. 2:4:

Point of comparison	**Dan. 11:36**	**2 Thess. 2:4**
Who is in view?	The "**king of the north"**	The **"man of lawlessness"** and **"son of perdition"** (v. 3).
How high does he exalt himself?	He magnifies himself "**above every god**."	He exalts himself above **"every so-called god or object of worship**." Paul's wording extends to anything that people (of any religion) treat as sacred.
How does he challenge Israel's God?	He **speaks "against the God of gods."**	He **proclaims "himself to be God**."
What role does the temple play?	Verse 36 names no location. Earlier, the king's forces profane the sanctuary, stop the regular offering, and set up the abomination (11:31).	The lawless one **personally takes his seat in God's temple**.
What limits his power?	**Within the latter half of v. 36**, his success lasts only until God's decreed indignation is complete.	**Later, in v. 8**, Paul identifies who ends his career and when: the Lord Jesus destroys him at his coming.

- Paul's "man of lawlessness" appears to represent a king, since he is patterned after the king of the north, Antiochus.
- He also seems to arise at the very end of the age for the following reasons:
  - Second Thessalonians 2:1 associates this tyrant with "the coming (Gk, *parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together with him [the rapture]," which occur together at the end of the age.
  - Second Thessalonians 2:2 links the tyrant, the second coming, and the rapture with "the day of the Lord"—God's decisive intervention whereby Christ returns to judge his enemies.
  - Second Thessalonians 2:8 states that Jesus will kill the lawless one "with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming (Gk, *parousia*)."
    - The first description of judgment matches Isaiah 11:4, where the Messiah will "strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked." This verse was not fulfilled in the first century. What Paul identifies as Christ's

personal judgment "with the breath of his mouth" against the man of lawlessness, Isaiah 11:4 considers a general judgment against "the earth" and "the wicked." A synthesis of these texts suggests that Jesus will return to judge the wicked, including the man of lawlessness.
        - The second description of judgment uses the Greek word, "parousia," which literally means "presence." The term denotes both an "arrival" and consequent "presence with" (Strong's definition). Considering its prior usage in 2:1, this cannot be a "spiritual coming" to judge the man of lawlessness. It refers to the personal, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ to judge the world and be present with his people. The Antichrist will not survive this coming of Christ.
    - Preterist proposals for a historical "man of lawlessness" such as Nero or the leader of the Jewish revolt, John Gischala, do not fit the description of 2 Thessalonians 2. Not only were neither of them destroyed by the second coming of Jesus; also, neither of them performed signs and wonders like we read in 2 Thess. 2:9: *"The coming [Gk, parousia] of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders."*
        - Here, we see that the man of lawlessness has a counterfeit "parousia." He arrives on the scene, performs signs and wonders to deceive, and then Christ arrives on the scene.
        - The man of lawlessness will be replaced by the One who fulfilled God's law perfectly and paid for our deeds of lawlessness.
    - First John 2:18 seems to support belief in a final antichrist: "*Children, it is the last hour, and as **you have heard that antichrist is coming**, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour."*
        - The "last hour" refers to the period between Christ's resurrection and return. The age in which we live is the fourth quarter of history.
        - "you have heard": John seems to affirm what they heard.
        - "that antichrist is coming": Even though he acknowledges that "many antichrists have come," he seems to expect a single figure.
        - This interpretation is not certain. John elsewhere says that "many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. **Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist**" (2 John 7).
            - Here, John uses the article "the" in reference to a plurality of antichrists. The singular "antichrist" could be used to describe "a kind of person"—not just one person.
            - Still, I lean toward 1 John 2:18 referring to a singular antichrist because it doesn't say, "many antichrists have come and will continue to come." Instead, he distinguishes between the *many antichrists who have come* and the *singular antichrist who will come*. The singular could describe a category to which the many belong, but that reading leaves me wondering why John shifts both the number and the timing within the same verse.
    - Revelation 13 depicts a beast of the sea, representing godless empires. However, the beast also closely matches the "little horn" of Daniel 7, which points toward a singular tyrant who blasphemes and persecutes. This probably represents antichristian tyrants who arise throughout history, but we have reason to expect a final tyrant when we compare Revelation 17. There, we see an eighth head of the beast, whom I view as a final antichrist. For more, see the excursus from my book below.
    - Notably, Paul calls the "man of lawlessness" the "son of perdition" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Besides the final antichrist, this word is used in the New Testament only to depict Judas (John 17:12). Just as Satan entered Judas to hand Jesus over to destruction—only to be destroyed himself—Satan will likewise empower the man of lawlessness to hand the body of Christ over to destruction, only to be destroyed by the return of Jesus.
- Now, let's put all this together: Daniel 11:36-45 is fulfilled only partially by Antiochus. It finds ultimate fulfillment in a man of lawlessness, a final Antichrist, the ultimate little horn, the eighth head of the beast, and the last Antiochus. This king will arise to blaspheme and persecute God's people. He will lead a mass rebellion against Jesus, proclaiming to be God and amplifying his message with signs and wonders. But far from being God, he is Satan's henchman. His "coming" (Gk. *parousia*) will be disrupted by the "coming" (Gk, *parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- The last tyrant will be replaced by the last king.

Excursus: The Eighth Head of the Beast in Revelation 17 – a final antichristian tyrant – quoted directly from *The World Made Right: Finding Confident Hope in the Book of Revelation*

The beast who in some sense "is not" (17:8), in another "is" (17:10). This lends credence to our interpretation that the beast was defeated in the first advent, although he lives on in the sense that persecuting powers were granted an extension (Dan. 7:12; Rev. 13:3, 12, 14). Nevertheless, his greatest manifestation occurs at the return, pictured as an eighth head of state (17:11). John's vision portrays the eighth head as equivalent to the beast himself. Every head of the beast, every expression of godless empire, is nasty. But the eighth and final expression is pure beast—a counterfeit incarnation, a fusion of man and devil.

If the beast's death indicates the death of tyranny on the cross—and if the healing of his mortal wound (his "resurrection") transpired through persecuting tyrants—then the eighth head of the beast constitutes his faux return as Nero Junior. He is the unnamed despot of the last anti-Christian empire.

Many Christians conflate the beast's resurrection (Revelation 13) with his return (Revelation 17), as if they both refer to the same Roman resurgence. Yet just as we distinguish between the resurrection and return of the Lamb, we must not blur those categories for the beast. The beast's resurrection occurred in the first century. His return remains in the future when the dragonish beast or beastly dragon rises from the abyss, an image that also correlates with the mysterious eighth king.

Preterists contend that the eighth king is not so mysterious. They identify the seven kings (17:10) as Roman rulers—typically Julius through Claudius ("five of whom have fallen"), Nero ("one is"), and Galba, who reigned for only seven months ("the other . . . only a little while"). On this reading, Revelation was written during Nero's reign. Some preterists further identify Caesar Vespasian as the eighth king, though Vespasian reigned tenth from Julius. They argue that John's article shift—from "the" seventh to "an" eighth (17:9, 11)—whispers that the eighth king would break the sequence; he need not arise immediately after the seventh (Galba).

I agree that John's eighth king disrupts the chronology, but Vespasian doesn't match the forensic sketch. Historian Josephus considered the reigning emperor a "chaste" and "good governor" rather than a "barbarous tyrant." In no way could Vespasian have fit the label of Nero Part Two, the beast of all beasts, or the dragon incarnate.

The world has yet to suffer the horrific eighth king.

When he comes, the elect will know.

The debate will be over.

--"*He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done*": God's wrathful indignation against Israel would be fulfilled through Antiochus, who fulfilled against Israel only "what is decreed." Despite his wickedness, Antiochus was a tool. God used an evil pagan to judge Israel's evil. The remnant of the wise would endure, even to the resurrection (11:32-35; 12:2-3). But Antiochus would "prosper" only for his appointed time.

37 He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.

--"He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers":

- **Some early Christians expected a Jewish Antichrist from the tribe of Dan**. Irenaeus connected that expectation to Jeremiah's warning that an invader would be heard coming from Dan (Jer. 8:16) and to Dan's omission from the list of sealed tribes (Rev. 7:4-8). Hippolytus also appealed to Jacob's description of Dan as a serpent that bites a horse's heels (Gen. 49:17). On this interpretation, a descendant of Dan would reject "the gods [or God] of his fathers" and lead a global rebellion.
- **Daniel's wording fits a tyrant raised among pagan gods**. The Hebrew can mean either "God of his fathers" or "gods of his fathers," but the surrounding verses favor the plural: the king exalts himself above every god, disregards his ancestral gods, and lavishes treasure on a foreign god his fathers never knew (Dan. 11:36-39). That portrait fits Antiochus's pagan background, though it leaves the ancestry of any final Antichrist an open question.
- Note that verse 37 seems to look beyond Antiochus. This Greek tyrant had the Jerusalem temple dedicated to Olympian Zeus, a god his own fathers had worshiped (2 Macc. 6:2). That makes it difficult to say without qualification that Antiochus paid "no attention to the gods of his fathers."

--“or to the one beloved by women”:

- Some interpret this to mean, “The Antichrist will be gay.” The verse says nothing about the man’s affections, however. The verse literally reads “or to the desire of women.” The focus is on women’s desires, not his own. Those who interpret it to suggest homosexuality would respond, “The ‘desire of women’ speaks of their advances, which he will ‘pay no attention to.’” I don’t think this is what it means.
- Others interpret “desire of women” to refer to Jesus, based on the interpretation that Haggai 2:7 depicts Jesus as “the desire of the nations.” Again, I don’t think this fits Dan. 11:37 well.
- The main reason these interpretations fall short is context.
    - Just before “desire of women,” we read that this figure will “pay no attention to the **gods** of his fathers.” Just after “desire of women,” we read that this figure “shall not pay attention to **any other god**, for he shall magnify himself above all. He shall honor **the god of fortresses** instead of these. **A god** whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a **foreign god**.”
    - The entire context is about his religious life, not his sexual life.
    - Longman: *“‘The one desired by women’ is often an epithet of Tammuz, whose cult of the dying and rising god features a prominent place for women, but is more likely the Syrian reflex that features Adonis as the object of attention.”*
    - Longman’s view best fits the context of religion in Dan. 11. “Tammuz” was a god who would exit and enter the underworld (Longman: “the dying and rising god”), and Ezekiel mentions the prominence of females among his devotees: “there sat women weeping for Tammuz” (Ezek. 8:14). As Antiochus reigned from modern Syria, the regional equivalent of Tammuz was Adonis. The point seems to be that Antiochus would not pay attention to the worship of Adonis, whose devotees were mostly women. As a prediction of a future Antichrist, it probably just emphasizes that he won’t worship traditional gods.
    - That’s precisely what we read in the next line: “He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.”

--“He shall pay no attention to any other god”: Considering that the next verse describes him as honoring the god of fortresses, this clause is probably not absolute, but relative. He may honor a god who serves his ambitions, but his supreme allegiance is to himself. And he will not pay attention to the God or gods of his fathers.

--"for he shall magnify himself above all”: The reason he will not worship traditional gods is because they are beneath him.

38 He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. 39 He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.

--“He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these”:

- Some interpret this to mean that he will worship some kind of military deity.
- Others believe he will worship his own military success.
- Of these, the first interpretation seems favorable, since he will honor this “god of fortresses” with “gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.” This sounds like making a religious offering—not just worshiping your own success.
- It could be that Antiochus fulfilled this verse partially. He worshiped Jupiter, who was a Roman god, not a god of his fathers. Furthermore, Jupiter was credited by Roman generals for victory in battle. His temple rested on a fortified hill in Rome (“god of fortresses”). The Roman historian, Livy, reports that Antiochus planned a magnificent temple for Jupiter at Antioch, with gold covering both the ceiling and the walls (*History of Rome* 41.20.9). That gives us a concrete parallel to both details in Dan. 11:38: a god associated with a fortress and a king honoring him with gold.
- Would this necessitate that the future Antichrist will worship Jupiter? Or a literal god of fortresses? I don’t think so. Biblical typology (think, “prophetic foreshadowing”) does not work that way. Typology is like viewing a black-and-white ultrasound. You make out shades and contours, but not clearly. If the future Antichrist devoted himself to military exploits and mass bloodshed, I think it would fulfill this prophetic foreshadowing. The final tyrant may not worship a literal god of fortresses. Quite possibly, he will sacrifice his own citizens on the altar of military ambition—religious devotion, indeed.

--"He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god”:

- Again, I see a partial fulfillment in Antiochus, who worshiped Jupiter.

- Again, I don't think this necessitates that the Antichrist will worship Jupiter. In the least, his army will ravage innocent nations. Perhaps he will even leverage occultic powers. In the twentieth century, senior officials in Hitler's regime (such as Heinrich Himmler) consulted occult practitioners in hopes of gaining an advantage in war.

--"Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor":

- We already observed in v. 24 how Antiochus would buy loyalty with war spoils. Then in verse 32, he would seduce Israel with flattery. In the context of waging war ("He shall deal with the strongest fortresses"), this verse probably means that he will grant favorable terms to defeated foes who honor his leadership.
- The pattern set by Antiochus applies to "the last Antiochus" too. We can expect him to be a seducer and a flatterer who buys loyalty, perhaps with seized resources.

--"He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price":

- This fits what we know of Antiochus. He did not just disperse plunder to loyalists. He also gave power and land.
- We should also expect the Antichrist to reward loyalty. Above all else, tyrants love loyalty (because they love themselves). Recall King Saul: he accused his son Jonathan of betrayal for opposing *murder*.
- Wise people say no to tyrants. They refuse to betray their conscience, even if it means they'll be called, "betrayer." They fear the Lord, not man.

40 "At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, 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. 41 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. 42 He 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. 45 And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.

--"At the time of the end":

- The near horizon is Antiochus' reign, when "he shall come to his end" (v. 45).
- The far horizon is the Antichrist's reign. The next verse in this section will twice refer to "that time" (12:1), but it speaks of a tribulation and resurrection following (12:1-3). Therefore, "time of the end" in 11:40 speaks beyond Antiochus to the very end.
- Verse 40 initiates the section most distinct from Antiochus' actual career. Verses 36-39 blended Antiochus and Antichrist almost imperceptibly. Here, the divergence grows. This corroborates the case for a near- and far-term horizon. Unless we acknowledge the latter, we are forcing our interpretive foot into an undersized shoe.

--"the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him":

- House does not see a final Antichrist in this passage. Here in v. 40, he finds fulfillment in the clash of 168 BC. In my view, that doesn't fit the prophecy. The angel depicts Egypt ("the king of the south") as the aggressor who provoked the northern king. Historically, however, Antiochus was the aggressor. Egypt just defended itself.
- One might argue that verse 40 recapitulates Egypt's aggression in vv. 25-28, but the story still doesn't match. Verse 27 says the end is still to come, and verse 35 looks forward to "the time of the end." Then, in verse 40, "the time of the end" has arrived. In short, a recapitulation view does not fit the chronology of the text.
- Antiochus does not seem to match verses 40-45 very well at all, and this reinforces my interpretation that a final Antichrist is ultimately in view.

--How are verses 40-45 fulfilled in a final Antichrist?

- One option is to take these details literally. In this case, the Antichrist would rule a kingdom north of Israel, perhaps centered in Syria, and an Egyptian ruler would attack him. The Antichrist would literally attack with chariots and horses. He would literally subdue Egypt. Edom, Moab, and the main part of the Ammonites would literally escape, and the Libyans and Cushites would follow him, perhaps forcibly.
    - It is problematic to expect a final Antichrist to use chariots and horses. One might respond that "tanks and hummers" didn't exist yet, so the angel used language Daniel could understand. And I would agree. But if we allow for this objection, we have already broken from literalism.
    - Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Cush no longer exist. The land obviously never disintegrated, but their governments and populations changed drastically. If we are aiming for near-perfect

literalism, it is difficult to decide whether to expect the prophesied events to occur among descendants of these nations or among the geographical locations themselves. Literalists inevitably choose the latter because it's almost impossible to identify who qualifies as a descendant and because geographical labels have been used throughout Daniel 11 (the latter is a stronger argument). But problems remain:
        - Verse 41 identifies "the Ammonites"—a people group, not just a nation. And Ammonites no longer exist. The angel seems to equate people groups and geography rather than making a hard distinction between them, which a literal interpretation requires.
        - Ancient boundaries don't align with modern ones. The king of the north ruled from modern Syria, but his territory stretched across multiple modern nations. Every nation listed encompassed multiple countries, or else it was located entirely inside of another. The more literal we get, the more difficult it becomes to know what the angel could intend by referring to a map that's become entirely outdated.
    - With all this said, it can reasonably be objected: "The angel used language that fit ancient maps because future maps would have made no sense to Daniel. It does not follow that every nation or people group automatically represented nations and people groups with no connection to the ancient ones. It makes more sense to see at least some correlation between past and future representations." These interpreters generally see fulfillment middle eastern nations that most closely correlate to ancient boundaries. They might be right.
- Another option is to interpret these verses symbolically.
    - Daniel 7-12 is apocalyptic, which is highly symbolic.
    - We have precedent for interpreting geographical territories and peoples symbolically. Throughout the book of Revelation, for instance, John pictures the world turning on the church using Old Testament imagery about Ancient Near Eastern nations turning on Israel.
- Here's where I (very tentatively) land on vv. 40-45:
    - The angel predicted the future using people groups, geographical locations, and military technology readers could comprehend at that time. It would have made no sense for the angel to mention nations, people groups, and technologies that would have made Daniel go cross-eyed.
    - The general contours of the prophecy can be upheld without requiring us to track down literal Ammonites or force ancient geography into modern maps.
    - Despite the challenges to a literal interpretation (in terms of geography and people groups), symbolism cannot be a cop-out for wrestling with the details. For example, it seems hard to interpret conventional warfare in these verses as a symbol of the Antichrist turning on the church (as we see, for instance, in Armageddon passages in the New Testament). Most of the nations involved in Daniel 11 are pagan nations. Even if we interpret "Edom" or "Cushites" symbolically, they seem to at least represent how nations will respond to the rise of the Antichrist.
    - Because these are general contours, we should not be dogmatic.
    - I don't think the Antichrist must rise from Syria or Greece (the geographical and ethnic origin of Antiochus). It could be that "king of the north" suggests he will come from the north, but even that creates difficulty: north of Judah, as throughout Daniel 11? Or just a region generally understood to be "the north"? I don't have the answer.
    - It seems like this final Antichrist will be provoked militarily by another nation, perhaps from the south, and he will react with overwhelming force (v. 40).
    - Then he will turn his wrath against both God's people and surrounding nations (v. 41a). Some of the latter will escape (v. 41b), others will not (v. 42), and still others will join his team, either forcibly or voluntarily (v. 43). In short, the rise of the Antichrist will divide the nations and endanger God's people.
    - The Antichrist will hear disturbing news and turn to attack (v. 44). Positioning himself in holy territory, he will come to his end with none to help (v. 45).
- Again, I would not be dogmatic about the degree of symbolism in Daniel 11. I can more confidently say that the final Antichrist will desecrate sacred space, persecute God's people, and meet his demise in God's time. I also think that given the background of Antiochus, we should expect him to be militarily aggressive.

--"He shall come into the glorious land… he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain":

- Israel was caught in the middle of warring Greek kings—the king of the north and the king of the south. Antiochus III seized Judea from Egypt's control. Later, his son Antiochus IV invaded Egypt and

turned his fury against Jerusalem, bringing horrific persecution upon the people his father had conquered. This history provides a backdrop for the career of the future Antichrist and the suffering of God's people.

- The central question is how we interpret the land of Israel ("the glorious land") and the temple ("the glorious holy mountain") in these verses.
    - People who understand the ancient nations and people groups as pointing to future Middle Eastern locations will tend to interpret Israel's land and temple more literally.
    - People who understand those references as pointing to future realities not necessarily confined to the Middle East will be more open to interpreting Israel's land and temple symbolically.
    - I tentatively lean toward a symbolic interpretation. The New Testament identifies the church as God's temple and describes believers as having come to Mount Zion and heavenly Jerusalem (Eph. 2:19-22; Heb. 12:22-24). Moreover, on my reading of Revelation 20:7-9, Ezekiel's invasion of Israel becomes a picture of the nations' final assault on God's people throughout the world. Perhaps Daniel's invasion of "the glorious land" and encampment near "the glorious holy mountain" should be understood similarly: the final tyrant directs his fury against God's people, wherever they live.
    - Sidenote: I do not believe the land promises of the Old Testament were just metaphorical bait—just symbols of heaven with no terrestrial import. Rather, I see them fulfilled in the new creation (Rom. 4:13; Rev. 21-22).

--"Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him":

- The king who once swept across the earth—conquering foes, recruiting allies, and amassing wealth—dies helpless and alone. This reflects a pattern we have observed throughout Daniel 11, where God breaks proud and powerful kings (vv. 3-4, 18-19).
- We know this is not just a prediction about his future death; it is a final judgment. The pattern suggests as much, but verse 36 clarifies God's role in his demise. There we learn that the final tyrant will "prosper" only according to what God has "decreed," and only until God's purpose is "accomplished."
- The New Testament reveals how judgment unfolds for the Antichrist: "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming" (2 Thess. 2:8).

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