THE WILLFUL KING

Daniel 11:36-45

Key Verse: 36

“The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.”

In the previous passage, the angel unfolded the Book of Truth, which gave the incredible laying out of the sufferings of the Jews through the reign of Persians and the reign of Greeks. The divine purpose of God was manifested for his people to be refined, purified and made spotless, fit for Christ’s kingdom. This chastening of God will continue till the end of the time. We have seen the Persian era, the Greek era, and now in today’s passage, we see the final form of the Roman era, which marks the end of the chastening of the people of Israel. As we sweep across thousands of years of history to the end time, we come across a figure who embodies all the evil power of Ahasuerus, Alexander, Antiochus the Great, Antiochus Epiphanes combined and more. In the last part of chapter 11, the angel unfolds the final king, the counterfeit. As we studied in Daniel’s three visions, all point to the time of the end, mentioning the final Antichrist. In this passage, we can think of his character, conflict, and condemnation.

Verse 36a says, “The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.” First of all, this king does as he pleases or as he wills; he is to be a willful king. He is an absolute sovereign; he is an absolute dictator. He will rule alone. He rules in a self-centred and self-energized approach. Behind the scenes, moving it all along is Satan himself. It is as written in 8:24, “He becomes very strong, but not by his own power.” Revelation 13:2 says, “The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.” He will have full demon cooperation. He will establish an absolute world monarchy, and his credentials for pulling it off will be his ability to do signs and wonders and powerful miracles to deceive people. He will literally rule the world.

And he will exalt and magnify himself above every god. It is claiming the worship of himself by all in his extreme pride. The Antichrist will be an absolutely atheistic, irreligious figure, setting himself above every god. Paul makes this same point and says in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, “He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.” He is the egotist of all egotists. He exalts himself and opposes all other forms of religion, all that is called god, all deities, all shrines, all images, all altars; everything takes a second place to him. It is well expressed in Revelation 17 that he seems to unite all the religions in the great prostitute and then all of a sudden lets the prostitute be ruined completely. He exalts himself to be the object of worship. He lets Israel exist in their temple, and then all of a sudden in the middle of the tribulation he devastates the place, commits the abomination of desolation, desecrates the temple and the holy people, and make himself to be worshipped in the temple of God.

And he will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. In chapter 7, the final Antichrist is depicted as a little horn that had eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully (7:8, 20). He will speak against the Most High (7:25). He is a blasphemer without equal, unprecedented. In Revelation 13:5,6 is written, “The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies…He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.” He is the very mouth of hell. He opens his mouth and hell talks. He is profane. He even tries to change God's moral laws in accordance of [Daniel 7:25](https://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Dan%207.25), “He will…try to change the set times and the laws.” And “unheard-of things” is “astonishing things” (ESV) or “marvellous things” in other translations. It means he will speak things that are unbelievable and unique. He will be more blasphemous than anyone else. He will blaspheme God with insolence and self-exaltation that exceeds what anyone has ever done.

And he will be successful until the time of wrath is completed. In Daniel 8:19, the angel Gabriel said to Daniel, “I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end.” We have learned in Daniel 9:27 that the prince, the final Antichrist, will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven’, *shabua*, which is the seven of years. During these seven years God’s wrath is poured out on the earth according to Revelation 6-19. It is the time of seven years of tribulation. In the second half of the time, called the great tribulation, God’s wrath becomes even more intense. We read in Revelation 6:16-17, “They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” This wrath is the wrath of God and also the wrath of the Lamb. Here the point is that the Antichrist is successful in the limited time.

And the angel says in verse 37, “He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all.” He does not show any regard for the traditional religions, the traditional worship of his fathers. He has no proper perspective of a family with no normal family love. He has no capacity for normal affection for a family. He has no capacity for normal affection for a wife, a mother, a sister. He is the perversion of a normal human response. He has no family love, no love for women, and no love for god of any kind. He is perverted.

And verse 38 says, “Instead of them, he will honour a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honour with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.” What an expression, ‘a god of fortresses.’ The word “fortress” appears 6 times in the previous passage, 11:1-35 (1, 7, 10, 19, 24, 31), and here in verse 38 and in verse 39. We can think that fortress is related to military power. We know that a military genius, Alexander the Great, fought a battle riding on a horse. That was around 330 BC. The battle was like that even at the time of Napoleon in the 18th century. But for the last several hundred years, military weapons had been amazingly developed. Nowadays, the nations that have nuclear weapons threaten and scare other nations. Military power is like a god. This expression ‘a god of fortresses’ makes sense to us. Truly this god was unknown to the previous generations. The angel says, “a god unknown to his fathers he will honour with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.” When we honour and worship God, we offer our precious things to God. Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt 6:21). But the willful and perverted king honours a god of military power with all his valuable things. It can mean that he captures the riches of the world to buy his war machine. It seems that the military power and the money are combined. He worships such power, with which he seems to conquer the world.

So verse 39 says, “he will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honour those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price/for a reward.” Many will follow him and he raises rulers and kings among those who follow and support him. According to Revelation the beast had 10 horns and 10 crowns on his horns (13:1). Ten horns are ten kings (17:12). They are like sub kings under him.

It does not mean that the Antichrist will have no conflict. Now verse 40 says, “At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships.” Now we understand that the king of the South is not any king from Ptolemaic dynasty, and the king of the North is also not any king from Seleucid dynasty, for the angel has been talking about the time of the end, and here the angel clearly mentioned one more time, “at the time of the end.” Yet, the king of the South comes from the south and the king of the North, from the north. The king of the South seems to refer to the African army, and the king of the North, to the Russian army and its Arab allies. The king of the North seems to be powerful, storming out against him with a massive army.

To understand this part, we can refer to Ezekiel 38. Verse 2 say, “Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him.” These are ancient names of people who lived in northern Mesopotamia and the region of the Caucasus mountains, which is modern-day Russia. And verse 6 says, “also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with its troops” and verse 15, “You will come from your place in the far north…” and 39:2, “…I will bring you from the far north…” Far north of Israel is only Russia. And when Russia comes, she will not come alone. 38:5 says, “Persia, Cush and Put will be with them…” “Persia” is Iran, “Cush” is the ancient name for Ethiopia, and “Put,” seems to be ancient Libya. What it tells us is that these are representatives of an Arab alliance. Some of the Arab nations are going to irritate under the power of the Antichrist in the western alliance. They are going to unite with Russia and come in against him in the Middle East. Here in Daniel 11:40, they will come “with chariots, horsemen, many ships.” Of course, they’ll come with a modern counterpart, all of the forces they have got.

Eventually they all want to occupy Israel. Ezekiel 38 tells us about the Russian army that comes, the king of the north. Verse 8 says, “…In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate.” When the king of the North comes down, Israel will already be in the land. We are again surprised that the nation Israel was established in 1948 after non-existence of the nation for nearly 2000 years. And the Beautiful Land is mentioned not only in Daniel 8:9 and 11:16 related to the time of the Seleucid dynasty but also here in 11:41, relating to the time of the end. And it is written in Ezekiel 38:11, “You will say, ‘I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people—all of them living without walls and without gates and bars.” According to this verse the land will be a land of unwalled villages, and its people will be at rest in safety without walls and gates and bars. For it will be in the first three-and-a-half years of the tribulation during which the Antichrist becomes the protector for the land according to a pact or covenant made between them.

What is the result when the king of the South engages the Antichrist in battle and the king of the North storms out with their powerful weapons? Verse 40b says, “He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood.” Then Antichrist wins. Russia will substantially be decimated to retreat back to the north. The angel is telling the history. It just has not happened, but we believe that it will.

Having defeated the king of the south and defeated the king of the north, the African army and Russian army and its Arab allies, what will he do? Verse 41 says, “He will also invade the Beautiful land.” Now the time is in the middle of the seven years of the tribulation as written in Daniel 9:27, “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the seven he will put an end to sacrifice and offering…”

The angel says continually in verses 41-42, “Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape.” It seems that when the Antichrist wins the big battle, he is going to wipe out the Russian army, and devast the south including the land of Egypt. He mops up after his victory. He will not do anything to Edom, Moab and Ammon, which are southeast of Israel. Egypt and the African army come from the southwest. It seems that he is going to be busy in the southwest and not bother with the southeast. In fact, Edom, Ammon, and Moab put together do not have a whole lot to bother with. There are a lot of camels and a few Bedouin people/ nomadic Arab tribes running around in the desert. God just gives you specifics. He goes to the southwest, so he leaves the southeast alone. And verse 43 says, “He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with three Libyans and Nbuians/Cushites /Ethiopians.” He not only wipes out southern army, the northern army, but all of those Arabs who got involved with the north as well. Although we do not understand completely, God has all the pictures according to the Book of the Truth.

Verse 44 says, “But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many.” Perhaps it is related to Revelation 16:12, “The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from East.” Also probably Russian army comes back to battle with the willful king. But the Antichrist will defeat them all and be victorious.

And the angel says in verse 45, “he will pitch his royal tents between the sea at the beautiful holy mountain.” He sits on the Mount Zion, Jerusalem, between the Euphrates and the Dead Sea to rule. Verse 45b says, “Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.” It is also written in 8:25, “…Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.” He will be defeated and destroyed by the splendor of the coming of Christ, which is related to Armageddon battle. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming.” It is related to the Armageddon battle (Rev 16:16; 19:11-21). In Revelation 19 it is written, “His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns” (19:12). He has many victories knowing no defeat. Out of his moth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations (19:15). His weapon is the sword of his mouth, the breath of his mouth (2 Thess. 2:8) or the rod of his mouth (Isa 11:4). “On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: He is KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16). Praise Jesus, our victorious King, forever victorious.

We have thought of the willful king, the Antichrist, his character, his conflict, and his condemnation. What a contrast he is to Christ Jesus! He does as he please and exalts himself above every god and everything takes a second place to him. But Jesus said in John 8:29, “The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.” And before the cross, he prayed at Gethsemane, “yet not my will, but yours be done” (Lk 22:42). As he was dying on the cross, he called out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Lk 23:46).

The followers of Christ are different in this world, rejecting the spirit of the Antichrist. They strive to please God in every area of life, not pleasing themselves. It is good to please others and encourage those who are around us. Yet, the top priority of the followers of Christ is to please God. And we know that it is impossible to please God without faith (Heb 11:6). With faith we seek to please God believing that when we please God, he will bless all those who are near us, our children and God’s flock of sheep and family member and neighbours. Pleasing God is to be the guideline of our lives, deeply imbedded in our mindset.

Paul wrote about Christ’s humility, obedience and escalation in Philippians 2:5-11, “…Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider himself equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Thank God for our humble and obedient Christ who was finally exalted by God as the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In this study we thought of the willful king, the final Antichrist, his character, his conflict and his condemnation. Be aware of the Antichrist, may we really follow Christ, refusing the spirit of the Antichrist prevalent in this world, striving to please him in all we do and growing in his humility and obedience, being assured of his victory with the hope of the coming kingdom of Christ.