

IS THE ANTICHRIST IN DANIEL 11?

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DANIEL'S VISION IN DANIEL 10–12 offers fertile ground for critical scholars who view Daniel as pseudo-prophecy. Only four Persian kings following Cyrus are mentioned (11:2), although there were six more (plus a few insurgents who attempted to seize the throne). The kings of the north and the south seem to be the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings, and they are mentioned as late as 11:40, almost immediately before the eschatological climax of the vision in 12:1–4. Moreover, the last part of the discussion of various kings (11:36–45) does not seem to match what is known about any Seleucid or Ptolemaic king, but the verses immediately preceding this section are a description of events from the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.).

Therefore it is commonly argued that 11:36–40 is an ideologically motivated description of the king designed to condemn his actions, whereas verses 41–45 are an attempt by the author to predict the end of Antiochus's reign. According to this interpretation these verses are not at all accurate. Therefore critical scholars argue that Daniel 11 must have been written about 165 B.C., since 11:41–45 speak of events unknown to Daniel.¹

Traditional Christian exegesis has interpreted Daniel 11:36–45 differently, tending to read these verses as a prophecy

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¹ John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 403; Donald E. Gowan, *Daniel*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 150–51; Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 303–5; James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: Clark, 1927), 464–70; and D. S. Russell, *Daniel*, Daily Study Bible (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1981), 210–14.

about an eschatological king, often identified as the Antichrist (to use a New Testament term). This was the position of several church fathers, including Chrysostom, Hippolytus, Theodoret, and Jerome.² Luther also adopted this interpretation, and contemporary evangelical scholars often advocate it.³ It views the end of Daniel 11 not as inaccurate prophecy but as prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled. It is part of the larger teaching of Scripture concerning the events leading up to Jesus' second advent.

Moreover, it is not unreasonable to view these verses as a separate section of Daniel's vision. Virtually every commentator recognizes that a new section begins with verse 36. This has been true from antiquity. The medieval Jewish scholars Rashi and Ibn Ezra saw these verses as fulfilled in Constantine the Great. In the Reformation Calvin thought they applied to the Roman Empire.⁴

In addition the prominent views of verses 36–45 are tied to the corresponding views of the four kingdoms symbolized earlier in Daniel. Either the fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire or the fourth kingdom corresponds to the Greek empires in the ancient Near East beginning with Alexander the Great. These two views are summarized in the chart on the following page.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss all the evidence for and against these two interpretations, one can note that the critical interpretation of Daniel 11:36–45 would seem to argue that there is no room for the Roman Empire as one of the four kingdoms in Daniel. Advocates of the critical view claim the author of Daniel 10–12 was historically inaccurate at times (e.g., he mentioned only four Persian kings) and at other times he was attempting to give genuine predictive prophecy, but got it wrong (e.g., 11:36–45).

² Jerome saw some application to the Antichrist starting at 11:21, but he said verses 36–45 refer exclusively to the Antichrist. See Jerome's commentary on 11:21–45 in Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 306–17. Hippolytus and Theodoret understood 11:36 as the beginning of the prophecy about the Antichrist, but Chrysostom applied the whole chapter to the Antichrist (see Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 468–70).

³ C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, trans. M. G. Easton (Edinburgh: Clark, 1877; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 463–74; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1949; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969), 511; Martin Luther, "Preface to Daniel," ed. E. Theodore Bachmann, in *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960), 35:313; John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 270; and Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*, 247.

⁴ John Calvin, *A Commentary on Daniel*, Geneva Series of Commentaries (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), 339.

Traditional View

<i>Chapter 2</i>	<i>Chapter 7</i>	<i>Chapter 8</i>	<i>Chapters 10-12</i>	<i>Identification</i>
Gold	Lion			Babylon
Silver	Bear	Ram	11:2	Persia
Bronze	Leopard	Male goat	11:3-35	Greek kingdoms
Iron and clay	Beast		11:36-45	Rome
Mountain	Coming of the Son of Man		12:1-4	God's kingdom

Critical View

<i>Chapter 2</i>	<i>Chapter 7</i>	<i>Chapter 8</i>	<i>Chapters 10-12</i>	<i>Identification</i>
Gold	Lion			Babylon
Silver	Bear	Ram (first horn)		Media
Bronze	Leopard	Ram (second horn)	11:2	Persia
Iron and clay	Beast	Male goat	11:3-45	Greek kingdoms
Mountain	Coming of the Son of Man		12:1-4	God's Kingdom

In addition critics argue that Daniel expected God's eschatological kingdom to appear in the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (12:1-4), but it did not. Thus they say that the resurrection depicted in 12:1-3 was expected during the Hellenistic era, leaving no room for a Roman Empire before the eschaton.

Given this approach and the fact that critical scholars often imply that any interpretation that claims 11:36-45 is about the Antichrist is motivated more by theology and ideology rather than by sound exegesis, it is imperative for those who affirm the accuracy of the passage to offer good reasons for understanding that 11:36-45 was intended by the author of Daniel to apply to someone other than Antiochus. A careful look at Daniel 10-12 finds two reasons: (a) the structure and logic of 11:2-12:4, and (b) the parallel nature of 11:21-35 and 11:36-45.

THE STRUCTURE OF DANIEL 11:2–12:4

Daniel 10–12 begins with someone like a man who appeared to Daniel and explained that he had been involved in heavenly warfare that effects human events as recorded in the “Book of Truth” (10:21). He had been embroiled in warfare with the demonic “prince of Persia” since the fall of Babylon. When that battle would finally end, a new battle would take place with the “prince of Greece.” Thus the events to be related are the earthly manifestation of this heavenly warfare.

Beginning with 11:2 the events as they will play out on earth are related in the main body of the revelation, which ends at 12:4. The epilogue (12:5–13) reveals a few more details, including some cryptic chronological information. Thus the structure of this vision may be seen as follows.

- I. Introduction—A man appeared to Daniel to reveal coming events in the “Book of Truth” (10:1–11:1)
- II. Events from the “Book of Truth” (11:2–12:4)
 1. 11:2. Three more kings for Persia with a fourth stirring up everyone against Greece.
 2. 11:3–4. A mighty (Greek) king whose kingdom will be broken up toward the four winds (directions, v. 4) of heaven.
 3. 11:5–35. The history of the kings of the north and south, culminating in the purification of “those who have insight” (vv. 33, 35) until the time of the end (v. 35).
 4. 11:36–12:4. The king who does as he pleases at “the time of the end” (11:40) along with events that will happen when Michael will arise and “those who have insight will shine” (12:3).
- III. Epilogue—Further explanation of “the time of the end” (12:5–13)

The main body of this revelation is divided into four sections that are marked by different types of kings mentioned at the beginning of each section. Also the sections are tied together by a variation of a wisdom technique, namely, the catchword. This technique is used at times in Proverbs to string together seemingly unrelated sayings or groups of sayings, with a common word or phrase tying one proverb or set of proverbs to the subsequent prov-

erb or set of proverbs. A good example is Proverbs 6:1–19. It contains four sections linked to one another by catchwords or phrases.⁵

1–5	Slumber (6:4)	}
6–11	Slumber (6:10)	
6–11	Bandit (רִמָּוֶה, 6:11)	}
12–15	Wicked man (רִשָּׁע, 6:12)	
12–15	Spreads conflict (6:14)	}
16–19	Spreads conflict (6:19)	

In Daniel 11:2–12:4 the sections are bound together by concepts that link one section to the next:

Kings of Persia	Section 1 (Dan. 11:2)	Greece	
Mighty king	Section 2 (Dan. 11:3–4)	Greek king Four winds (directions)	
King of the north, king of the south	Section 3 (Dan. 11:5–35)	Kings of two directions Time of the end; those who have insight	
The king	Section 4 (Dan. 11:36–12:4)	Time of the end; those who have insight	

Thus Section 1 (11:2), the section on Persian kings, progresses only until a king who interacts with Greece is encountered. Then the revelation continues immediately in Section 2 (11:3–4) with a discussion of the Greek king Alexander without mentioning any subsequent Persian kings. This section ends with Alexander’s kingdom being split toward the four winds of heaven. Once again details of the split, a description of the struggles for domination of Alexander’s empire, or any mention of two of the four winds (east and west) are skipped so that Section 3 (11:5–35) can focus on the kings of the north and the south (Seleucid and Ptolemaic). This section continues down to one particularly evil king of the north (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) during whose activity many who have insight will be purified for the time of the end. With the mention of the

⁵ Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 95–96. Another example is Proverbs 11:3–11, in which nine sayings are bound together by several catchwords.

time of the end, the rest of the Seleucids and Ptolemies as well as the Roman Empire are skipped, and in Section 4 (11:36–12:4) the author moves ahead to the time of the end and its events, including the activity of the eschatological king, the Antichrist.

Once one understands the method used to link the various persons and events in the main body of Daniel's vision, what seem to be historical inaccuracies or failures in predictive prophecy can be seen for what they are: intentional gaps as the revelation moves from one era to another by means of catch concepts.

Moreover, each section begins with the introduction of a king or kings whose characterization is unique to that section. In section 1 the kings are "kings . . . in Persia." In section 2 the king is a "mighty king." In section 3 the kings are kings of the north and of the south. In section 4 the king is simply "the king."

PARALLEL PASSAGES AND THE IDENTITY OF THE KING IN 11:36–45

Who, then, is the king in 11:36–45? Many answers have been given, but there are two main interpretations. One view is that these verses continue to describe Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The other view is that they describe an eschatological figure, the Antichrist of the New Testament. The first assumes that verses 36–45 continue the description of Antiochus IV in verses 21–35, whereas the other assumes some discontinuity between the two.

REASONS TO DOUBT THAT 11:36–45 DESCRIBES ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES

Most critical scholars as well as a few evangelicals interpret the end of Daniel 11 as applying to Antiochus.⁶ According to this interpretation verses 36–39 depict in general terms Antiochus's religious attitudes, and verses 40–45 are an attempt by the Maccabean-era author to write predictive prophecy concerning the end of Antiochus's reign. Since verses 36–45 do not mention Antiochus's eastern campaign in 165 B.C. or the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem in 164 or Antiochus's death in 164, critics often hold that this passage's unsuccessful attempt at predictive prophecy serves to date Daniel 10–12 to about 165 B.C.

⁶ Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 387–88; John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1989), 304; Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, 301; Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 289–90; and Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 460.

There are a few verbal connections between the description of the king in 11:36 and the description of Antiochus in chapter 8 and in 11:21–35. The word *נִפְלְאוֹת*, “wonderful things,” is used in 8:24 to describe Antiochus’s attacks against Jewish religion, most probably his sacking of the temple in Jerusalem. In 11:36 the word describes the king’s verbal attacks against God. Likewise the word *צַדִּיק*, “indignant anger,” refers in 8:19 to God’s wrath against Antiochus, and in 11:30 it refers to Antiochus’s indignation against God’s holy covenant with Israel. Thus there are some parallels between the king described in verse 36 and other passages that clearly apply to Antiochus.

Yet one faces several problems in seeking to identify the king of 11:36–45 with Antiochus. First, no historical facts suggest that Antiochus exalted and magnified “himself above every god” (v. 36), or showed “no regard for the gods of his fathers” (v. 37), or honored “a god whom his fathers did not know” (v. 38). While Antiochus had his coins inscribed “King Antiochus, God Manifest,” these coins also bore the likeness of Zeus on the reverse, while other coins he issued depicted Apollo. Moreover, Antiochus was known for his devotion to the Greek gods in general, and in Jerusalem he erected a statue of Olympian Zeus and ordered that sacrifices be made to it. He also promoted worship of Dionysius in Jerusalem (2 Macc. 6:7). Greek historian Polybius, a contemporary of Antiochus, reported that in 166 B.C. Antiochus held a festival at Daphne where he honored “all gods or spirits worshiped by people.”⁷ In addition Apollo was honored on the festival’s coinage.

Second, critics do not agree on the meaning of the phrase “the desire of women” (v. 37), for which this king had no regard. A number of critics say this refers to one of the pagan gods whose cult was especially popular with women. Since the late nineteenth century many critics have viewed this as a reference to Tammuz/Adonis (cf. Ezek. 8:14), although some have claimed that the Greek god Dionysius was intended.⁸ The problem with this is that there is no evidence that Antiochus ever discouraged the cult of either of these gods, and he promoted Dionysius in Jerusalem itself.

Given these problems, a recent critical commentator has claimed that the author engaged in “deliberate polemical distortion, to depict the impiety of the king in the most extreme terms

⁷ Polybius, *Histories* 30.25–26.

⁸ Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 461–62.

possible” and was “probably indulging in polemical exaggeration.”⁹ Baldwin, an evangelical, believes that these verses are about Antiochus. But she admits, “Although the chapter finds its first fulfillment in the character and reign of Antiochus IV, the matter does not stop there.”¹⁰ However, this raises a problem of its own. If there is a distortion, exaggeration, or a further application beyond Antiochus, how does one know that is what the author intended and that the modern interpreter is correct in his assertions? Could it be that the interpretation is wrong and is distorting the text instead of the text distorting the facts about Antiochus? Could it be that the “first fulfillment” is more in the perception of the interpreter than the intention of the author of Daniel? That is, how does one distinguish between the author’s supposed polemic and the possibility that there is no extreme distortion or exaggeration based on his polemics? Or how does one distinguish between some type of double application intended by the author and a mistake by the interpreter in attempting to have a passage say more than it was intended to say? It seems more likely that the author never intended 11:36–45 to be about Antiochus.

When this is added to the fact that scholars who apply these verses to Antiochus admit that verses 40–45 do not fit what is known about Antiochus, it is very probable that it is the Antiochene theory, and not some distortion by the author of Daniel, that is the cause of these problems. The attempt to rescue the Antiochene interpretation of verses 36–45 by resorting to a theory of extreme polemics that distorted the depiction of Antiochus is more special pleading than reasoned exegesis, especially since the author demonstrated hostility toward Greek rulers elsewhere (e.g., vv. 11–12, 17–18 [Antiochus III]). Yet these polemics did not distort the depiction of other kings so severely as to make identifications a problem for scholars of any stripe. Even given the fact that Antiochus was the most reviled Hellenistic king among Jews because of his policies, why does this not distort verses 21–35 so that the identity of the king of the north in these passages (Antiochus IV) becomes similarly a problem for anyone? Clearly the Antiochene view is far from being proved and depends more on assertion than evidence.

⁹ Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 377–78.

¹⁰ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978), 199.

REASONS FOR AFFIRMING THAT 11:36–45 DESCRIBES AN
ESCHATOLOGICAL KING

While it is often claimed that there is no indication of a change of time frame or subject in Daniel 11:36,¹¹ two good factors indicate that the king in verse 36 is not the same as the king of the north in verses 21–35. First, verse 35 ends with the notice that the persecution of Antiochus will refine God's people for "the time of the end." It is reasonable to think that the prophecy will immediately begin a discussion of the time of the end, in keeping with the catch-concept organizing principle seen elsewhere in this prophecy. Earlier the prophecy skipped from a Persian emperor who stirred up Greece to a Greek king (vv. 2–3) and from the breakup of the Greek Empire toward the four winds of heaven to kings that represent only two of those four winds, the kings of the north and the south (vv. 4–5).

Second, verse 36 introduces the king in a unique way. He is simply referred to as "the king." No Hellenistic king in this chapter before verse 36 is referred to simply as "the king," even when having been recently mentioned (cf. v. 25). Alexander is "a mighty king" (v. 3). Various Seleucid kings are always "the king of the north" (vv. 6–8, 11, 13, 15), and various Ptolemaic kings are always "the king of the south" (vv. 5–6, 9, 11, 14, 25 [twice]). The king of the north and south together are called "the two kings" (v. 27).

Therefore both the time frame and the subject change from verse 35 to 36. When "the king" is introduced in verse 36, it is dramatic and unexpected. It is a signal that this king is not a Hellenistic king, but a king who will arise at "the time of the end" (vv. 35, 40; 12:4, 9).

But what about the verbal ties between the king in 11:36 and the descriptions of Antiochus? Antiochus is depicted throughout the visions in Daniel as foreshadowing the Antichrist. For instance Antiochus is prophesied as attacking the "wonderful things" in God's temple, and the Antichrist will attack God by his words (8:24; 11:36). And both Antiochus and the Antichrist will arouse God's indignation and anger (8:19; 11:30, 36).

This also explains the similarities and differences between the little horn in Daniel 7 and the little horn in Daniel 8. Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 8; 11:21–35) is a foreshadowing of the Antichrist (Dan. 7; 11:36–45), and this revelation clarifies why the two resemble each other yet are distinct. This can be seen by a comparison of the two little horns, as seen on the next page.

¹¹ For example Lucas, *Daniel*, 301.

This is why Daniel 11 has verbal and thematic links between Antiochus (vv. 21–35) and the eschatological king (vv. 36–45) and makes an almost seamless move from one to the other. It is easy to miss this shift unless one is paying close attention to the markers that signal the move from one section to another (catch-concept and the way the kings are introduced).

The Little Horn in Daniel 7

A. “Another horn, a little one” is never said to become large (7:8), but it is “larger in appearance than its associates” (v. 20)

B. A horn grows up among ten horns (v. 8)

C. Is different from the horns that preceded it (v. 24)

D. Uproots three horns (vv. 8, 20, 24)

E. Has human features (eyes, mouth; vv. 8, 11, 20, 25)

F. *No similar statement*

G. Oppresses the saints for “a times, times, and half a time” (v. 25)

H. Its dominion is taken away by the divine court (v. 26)

H. Its dominion is given to the saints of the Highest One (v. 27)

The Little Horn in Daniel 8

A. A single horn that began small and became very large (8:9)

B. A horn grows out of one of four horns (vv. 8–9)

C. *No similar statement*

D. *No similar statement*

E. *No similar statement*

F. Understands enigmas (v. 23)

G. Takes away the continual sacrifice for 2,300 evenings and mornings (vv. 11, 14)

H. Is broken, but not by a hand (v. 25)

H. *No mention of what happens to its dominion*

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL KING AS FORESHADOWED BY ANTIOCHUS IV

An ominous note is sounded by the opening sentence of 11:36, “The king will do as he pleases.” This arrogance is also said to be characteristic of Persia (the ram in 8:4), Alexander the Great (11:3), and Antiochus III (v. 16). However, unlike the description of those kings, this is the first thing said about this king. The eschatological king is chiefly characterized by his willful arrogance. Unlike those other kings, his arrogance is characterized as primarily religious in nature (vv. 36–39). This king will be a religious figure, and his

power will be exercised in ways that challenge what is godly instead of challenging the geopolitical order as the other kings' actions did. Therefore Antiochus IV was a foreshadowing of this king, because he was the only one of the Hellenistic kings whose actions directly challenged the worship of the God of Israel. However, Antiochus's other acts mentioned in this prophecy were primarily geopolitical in nature.

The main characteristic of the eschatological king is that he will elevate himself over every other god and will speak "wonderful things" against the true God, making him the same as the little horn in the vision in Daniel 7:25. The Hebrew word for "wonderful things" occurs forty-six times in the Old Testament. In forty of these instances it is used nominally as "wonderful acts," most often meaning miraculous acts of God. Clearly the Antichrist's words against the true God are designed to replace the wonderful acts of God by which He redeems His people, and which are God's alone (Pss. 40:6 [Eng., v. 5]; 72:18; 86:10; 98:1; 136:4).

Interestingly Theodotion translates this word as "arrogant things," a word used by both Peter and Jude in their descriptions of false teachers who will arise among Christians. Peter warned, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. . . . For speaking out arrogant things [*ὑπέρογκα*] of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error" (2 Pet. 2:1, 18). Jude used similar language about such people. He said they are "ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. . . . These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly [*ὑπέρογκα*], flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage" (Jude 4, 16). The prophecy given to Daniel by the heavenly man who appeared to him predicts the coming of an eschatological figure whose words will be the epitome of such false teaching.

Daniel was also told that this king will prosper until God's anger against him is completed, since God has determined that his actions should run their course. Paul called this person "the man of lawlessness," described him in terms similar to Daniel 11:36–37, and noted that Christ will end his power. "Let no one in any way deceive you, for [that day] will not come unless [or, until] the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god [cf. Dan 11:36a] or object of worship, so that he takes his seat

in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God [cf. Dan. 11:37]. . . . Then that lawless one will be revealed *whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming* [cf. Dan. 11:36b] . . . [the man of lawlessness] whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders [τέρασιν; cf. Dan. 11:36]¹² (2 Thess. 2:3–4, 8–9, italics added).

This king will not favor “the God of his fathers” (Dan. 11:37). This phrase (with “his” and with other pronouns) occurs forty-five times in the Old Testament and is always a description of Yahweh.¹³ Therefore this king will come from among the people of God. Some interpreters see this as an indication that the Antichrist will be Jewish. However, this phrase is a religious identification, not an ethnic one. It indicates that the eschatological king will come from those whose ancestral tradition is to worship the true God. In Paul’s terms he will be seated “in the temple of God” (2 Thess. 2:4).

The king will also favor neither normal human marital relations (“the desire of women”) nor any god, because he will make himself greater than all (Dan. 11:37), rendering him incapable of the loving devotion that is required by both marriage and true piety.¹⁴ Some, however, say that this phrase refers to the Messiah as

¹² The Greek *τέρας* can correspond to the Hebrew מַלְאָכָה (see Exod. 5:11, LXX; Isa. 28:29, LXX).

¹³ Exodus 3:13, 15–16; 4:5; Deuteronomy 1:11, 21; 4:1; 6:3; 12:1; 26:7; 27:3; 29:24; Joshua 18:3; Judges 2:12; 2 Kings 21:22; 1 Chronicles 5:25; 12:18; 29:20; 2 Chronicles 7:22; 11:16; 13:12, 18; 14:3; 15:12; 19:4; 20:6, 33; 21:10; 24:18, 24; 28:6, 9, 25; 29:5; 30:7, 19, 22; 33:12; 34:32–33; 36:15; Ezra 7:27; 8:28; 10:11; Daniel 11:37. Only Daniel 11:37; 1 Chronicles 5:25; 12:18; and 2 Chronicles 20:33 do not explicitly identify “the God of the fathers” with Yahweh.

The suggestion by most commentators is that this phrase in Daniel 11:37 should be translated “the gods of his fathers.” See Gleason L. Archer Jr., “Daniel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 145; Calvin, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 2:346; Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 386; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 280; Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, 301; Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 463; Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 515; Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, 274; and Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*, 248. While grammatically possible, this rendering is not supported by the rest of the Old Testament, where it is always “the God of his fathers” (cf. Lucas, *Daniel*, 257).

¹⁴ Luther suggested that “the desire of women” is a reference to marital love (“Preface to Daniel,” 313). He is followed in this by Archer, “Daniel”; Calvin, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 2:345–46; Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 464–65; Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 515–16; and Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*, 249.

One whom women desire to bear.¹⁵ To support this theory it is noted that in the other occurrences of the construct noun *הַמְדָּרָה* the following genitive is always subjective (“desired by”) not objective (“desire for”), and that it is used in what may be a messianic designation in Haggai 2:7 (“the desired of the nations”). However, there are only three other uses of the construct noun (1 Sam. 9:20; 2 Chron. 36:10; Hag. 2:7), which is hardly enough to establish any pattern of usage, and there are many examples of construct nouns that are followed by both subjective and objective genitives.

The context suggests that the king will not have an intimate loving relationship with any god or with humans¹⁶ because he will honor something else, namely, “a god of fortresses” (Dan. 11:38). What is this god of fortresses, a “god whom his fathers did not know”? It is temporal power as signified by fortresses.¹⁷ This is what he will value above all else, making it his “god.”¹⁸ He will honor temporal power because it will give him the things that fortresses provide—a way to project his power, a means of defense and a place of security. Ironically, *קָטֵר*, “fortress,” is used most often in the Old Testament as a metaphor for God as the strength, protection, and salvation of His people (2 Sam. 22:33; Pss. 27:1; 28:8; 31:5 [Eng., v. 4]; 37:39; 43:2; Prov. 10:29; Isa. 17:10; 25:4–5; Jer. 16:19; Joel 4:16 [Eng., 3:16]; Nah. 1:7). When the eschatological king rejects the God of his fathers, he will seek to use temporal power to replace what only God can supply.

Therefore this eschatological king will deal with other temporal threats (“strong fortresses”) with the help of a “foreign god,” a god whom his fathers did not know (Dan. 11:38). That is, instead of relying on God and His Word as a fortress to protect him, he will rely on temporal power to deal with the powers of this world. He will honor those who acknowledge him and his power, and he will give them power in this world over people and territory (v. 39).

With this understanding of the eschatological king, one can see that he and Antiochus are mirror images of each other, one being a

¹⁵ Miller, *Daniel*, 307; and Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, 274.

¹⁶ He relates to other humans only on the basis of power (Dan 11:39).

¹⁷ The identification of this god as warfare is partly true but too narrow (Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 466; Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 517; Miller, *Daniel*, 308; Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, 276; and Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*, 249).

¹⁸ “A god is that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time of need” (Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*, Ten Commandments, par. 2, in Theodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959], 365).

geopolitical figure who stirs up problems of a religious nature, the other being a religious figure who stirs up problems of a geopolitical nature.

Antiochus IV
(11:21–35)

1. A geopolitical figure occupied in warfare (vv. 21–30a)
2. He uses his political power to attack God’s people and meddle in their religious practices (vv. 30b–32)

Eschatological King
(11:36–45)

1. A religious figure occupied with temporal power (vv. 36–39)
2. Because of his use of religious authority in geopolitical affairs, he is attacked and becomes involved in warfare (vv. 40–45)

The description of the eschatological king in verses 36–45 is parallel to the description of Antiochus in verses 21–35. Both passages begin with a general description of their reigns and of events not related to warfare (vv. 21–24, Antiochus; vv. 36–39, eschatological king). This is followed by descriptions of warfare. Twice Antiochus engages in war with Egypt and then enters Palestine (vv. 25–28, 29–35). The same pattern holds true for the king in verses 40–45. He will battle the king of the south (v. 40) and then will invade Palestine, “the beautiful land” (v. 41). Then he will conquer Egypt (vv. 42–43) and once again will enter Palestine “between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain” (v. 45). Therefore the parallel between Antiochus as oppressor of God’s people and the eschatological king’s oppression of God’s people is tightly drawn.

The eschatological king will be like Antiochus IV, who foreshadowed him. Both use temporal power, and both attack God and His people. Antiochus was primarily a geopolitical figure who used his status to attack the religious practices of the Jews. But the eschatological king will be primarily a religious figure who will use his religious position to wield temporal power. This is exactly how Paul described the Antichrist, “the man of lawlessness,” in 2 Thesalonians 2:3–12.

CONCLUSION

The contention of critical scholars that Daniel 11:36–45 is a continuation of the description of the actions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes fails when scrutinized closely. The dismissive attitude of critical scholars toward the traditional Christian view that these verses speak of an eschatological king identified in the New Testament as “the man of lawlessness,” the Antichrist, has blinded

many interpreters to the structural features of the revelation in 11:2–12:3 and has led them to miss the tightly drawn parallels between the Antiochus, the king described in 11:21–35, and the Antichrist, the king described in verses 36–45.

Before the rise of modern higher criticism there was a long-standing interpretive tradition among both Jews and Christians that the king described in verses 36–45 differs from the one prophesied in previous verses. The consensus of such diverse figures as Chrysostom, Hippolytus, Theodoret, Jerome, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Luther, and Calvin was that one should not see these verses as a description of Antiochus. While they may have made this interpretive assertion partly on intuition about the text and its structure and partly on the grounds that these verses were not descriptive of Antiochus as known from extrabiblical sources, they nevertheless recognized that something was signaling a change in referent from verse 35 to verse 36. A close analysis of the revelation received by Daniel in his final vision testifies that the exegetical intuition exhibited by interpreters from antiquity through the Reformation has a strong basis in the text itself.