

## Lesson 33

Last week, we looked at verse 36, and what we found there was a big turning point in the historical prophecy of Daniel 11.

One clue of that turning point was the mention in verse 36 of "the king" - not the king of the north or the king of the south, but just the king.

We looked at two possibilities for that king.

The first possibility is that the king in verse 36 is Rome, either as Rome itself or possibly as a composite description of the Roman emperors.

The second possibility we considered is that the king in verse 36 is Herod the Great, and we reviewed his rise to power, and we saw how he fits the descriptions of the king in verse 36 and verse 37.

When we ended last week, we were just about to look at what is likely the most puzzling description of the king that we see in these closing verses.

**Neither shall he regard the desire of women.**

This is a difficult phrase, and again we have a few choices.

Herod had ten wives, which might cause some to think that he did regard the desire of women, but, of course, it really shows just the opposite.

As Herod had no regard for God, Herod likewise had no regard for his wives. In fact, he had his favorite wife, Mariamme, killed, along with their two sons.

Another possibility is that this phrase is describing Herod's lack of regard for Cleopatra and his mistrust of her.

But, I think, a better possibility is that the desire of women in verse 37 is a reference to Christ, and that the opening phrases of this verse are telling us that Herod had no regard for God the Father or God the Son.

But how can "the desire of women" be a reference to Christ and events in the life of Christ?

**Matthew 2:17-18** - Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Each of those murdered baby boys was the desire of his mother, and Herod had them slaughtered. Herod had no regard for those mothers or for their desire, their sons. And as for the long promised Messiah, Herod clearly had no regard for Jesus having attempted to murder him as an infant.

And again, for any of the liberal critics who doubt that Herod did this foul deed, I would point out that we know Herod killed three of his own sons to prevent them from taking his throne. Does anyone really think Herod would be reluctant in any way to do the same thing to other people's sons?

I think this final view has an edge given what we will see in the next phrase and also what we will see in verse 44.

**Neither shall he regard any god.**

This description seems to bolster the view the "the desire of women" is a reference to Christ. Why? Because the verse seems to be listing gods! It seems to be saying that Herod would not have regard for any god, true or false.

He would not regard God the Father, he would not regard God the Son, and he would not regard any false god. Herod was irreligious, and we see that in every action in his life.

**For he shall magnify himself above all.**

And, of course, this is what one would expect to see in a man who has no regard for any god. Herod was his own god, and he magnified himself above all.

But wasn't Herod in subjugation to Rome? Yes, and Herod put on quite a show to demonstrate his loyalty to Rome. But did Herod do that because he loved Rome? Did Herod have regard for Rome? No. Herod flattered Rome so that he could remain in power, and it worked.

**Daniel 11:38**

38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.

How about verse 38? Does it apply to Herod the Great?

**But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces.**

Here we see Herod's relation with Rome. I don't think the "god of forces" could apply to any other but Rome in this time frame. Rome was built by force, and Rome worshipped force. Force was Rome's god.

And how did Herod honor Rome?

Herod's honor of Rome went first to Julius Caesar, then to Antony, and then to Antony's conqueror, Augustus. Josephus tells us how Herod sent delegations to Rome, and also to Antony and Cleopatra in Egypt, with many costly presents. Herod converted the ancient Strata's Tower into a magnificent seaport, and named it Caesarea, in honor of Caesar. Herod rebuilt Samaria, and renamed it in honor of Augustus. Herod built many other fortified cities and named them in honor of Caesar.

**And a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.**

How we interpret "the god whom his fathers knew not" in this verse depends on how we interpret "the god of his fathers" in verse 37.

If "the god of his fathers" in verse 37 is the false god of the Idumeans, then "the god whom his fathers knew not" in verse 38 is most likely God himself, and the second half of verse 38 would then be describing Herod's rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

Josephus describes Herod's rebuilding of the temple, telling us that Herod honored it with gold, and with silver, and with costly stones, and with pleasant things. Josephus says, the stones were white and strong, and that the expenses Herod laid out upon the temple were "vastly large, and the riches about it unspeakable."

Did Herod build the temple to honor God. We know he did not, which is something that Josephus confirms. Herod rebuilt the temple and turned it into a fortress to firmly establish his own rule.

Josephus tells us that a fortress built into the temple was such that "those that could get [it] into their hands had the whole nation under their power, for without the command of [it] it was not possible to offer their sacrifices; and to think of leaving off those sacrifices, is to every Jew plainly impossible, who are still more ready to lose their lives, than to leave off that divine worship which they have been wont to pay unto God."

Herod could close the temple whenever he wanted to, and that gave him almost complete control over the Jewish populace.

If, instead, "the god of his fathers" in verse 37 is God (which I think is the better view), then "the god whom his fathers knew not" in verse 38 would be Rome, and the second half of verse 38 would be showing us the same thing as the first half of verse 38 - namely, how Herod honored Rome. We will see more evidence of what Herod did to honor Rome in the next verse.

In any event, Herod's motivations for rebuilding the temple provide more evidence that Herod had no regard for God, but only for himself. As one commentator noted:

Herod's relationship to Judaism consistently appears more functional and pragmatic than personal or devotional. When power or money were at stake, Herod did not let any religious convictions stand in the way of advancing his personal fortunes, even at the expense of the Jews whom he ruled.

## Daniel 11:39

39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.

Does verse 39 also apply to Herod?

**Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory.**

I think "the God of forces" in verse 38, the "god whom his fathers knew not" in verse 39, and the "strange god" in verse 39 are all the same false god - Rome in general, and the deification of Caesar in particular.

Herod built many fortified cities in honor of Augustus Caesar, calling them by his name. In those cities, Herod erected temples, dedicated to Augustus as a divinity.

Here is how Josephus describes it:

Yet did he [Herod] not preserve their memory [the Roman leaders] by particular buildings only, with their names given them, but his generosity went as far as entire cities; for when he had built a most beautiful wall round a country in Samaria, twenty furlongs long, and had brought six thousand inhabitants into it, and had allotted to it a most fruitful piece of land, and in the midst of this city, thus built, had **[erected a very large temple to Caesar]**, and had laid round about it a portion of sacred land of three furlongs and a half, he called the city Sebaste, from Sebastus, or Augustus, and settled the affairs of the city after a most regular manner.

To say all at once, there was not any place of his kingdom fit for the purpose, that was permitted to be without somewhat that was for Caesar's honor; and when he had filled his own country with temples, he poured out the like plentiful marks of his esteem into his province, and built many cities which he called Cesareas.

That is how Josephus describes it. Here is how verse 39 describes it: "Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory."

What about the next phrase?

**And he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.**

Herod's loyalty to Rome and dependence upon Rome meant that Herod did everything he could to cement Rome's rule over Judea. Herod was a client king of Rome, and Herod never forgot who the client was!

And finally, Herod parceled out land to his friends and supporters to buy and keep their loyalty to him. Herod also was in the habit of parceling out to his friends the land adjacent to places that it was important for him to control in case of emergency.

**So where are we at the end of verse 39?**

So far we have seen a very close fit of these prophecies to Herod the Great. In fact, I think the fit is

closer than the fit to Rome.

What about verse 40?

## Daniel 11:40

40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.

The time of the end in verse 40, as it did earlier, simply points to the time appointed by God for the events in the vision to come to pass. All it likely means here is that we are nearing the end of the vision.

We should avoid the temptation to mindlessly leap to the end of the world every time we see the word "end" in the Bible. I wish more commentaries on Daniel would avoid that temptation!

But we do see a shift in focus when we get to verse 40. Instead of describing "the king" who was introduced in verse 36, we are back to seeing the king of the north and the king of the south.

So who are these two kings in verse 40, and why have we changed the subject?

First, we haven't changed the subject as much as it might seem. Both of these kings are somehow related to "the king" in verse 36 - "shall the king of the south push **at him**: and the king of the north shall come **against him**."

So who are the king of the north and the king of the south, and how are they related to Herod the Great?

What we see starting in verse 40 is a description of one of the most famous battles that ever occurred - the Battle of Actium.

The Battle of Actium was a naval battle fought between Octavian (who later became Augustus, the first emperor of Rome) and the combined fleets of Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII Philopator. This Cleopatra is the "Elizabeth Taylor" Cleopatra, and if you have seen that movie you have seen the Battle of Actium!) The battle took place on September 2, 31 BC in the Ionian Sea, near the former

Roman colony of Actium, Greece, and it was the climax of over a decade of rivalry between Octavian and Mark Antony.

As for the horsemen in verse 40, the battle also had a land component. A recent book about the Battle of Actium called "The War That Made the Roman Empire" says that each side had 12,000 cavalrymen.

Octavian's victory enabled him to consolidate his power over Rome and its dominions. In 27 BC, he was awarded the title of Augustus ("revered") by the Roman Senate. This marked the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire.

The battle ended the Ptolemaic kingdom, which itself was the last vestige of the Greek kingdom. Egypt itself fell to Octavian in 30 BC. Cleopatra and Marc Antony committed suicide in Alexandria.

And for any who doubt the lasting impact of Actium, I would know that we still see its effects today, even in some unexpected ways.

In 8 BC, the Roman Senate decided to honor Augustus by naming a month after him. And so, the month in which Augustus entered Alexandria, in which his enemies Antony and Cleopatra died, and in which he announced the annexation of Egypt, became Augustus, which is our month of August.

So, back to the text, who is the "king of the south"? Cleopatra VII of the Ptolemies, aided by Marc Antony.

And the "king of the north"? Octavian of Rome. No longer is the king of north a Syrian ruler; now the king of the north is a Roman ruler!

But how are these events related to Herod the Great?

Herod fortunes were tied to the fate of Rome, and so Herod had to be careful to steer a safe course between the warring Roman factions.

Herod was very distrustful of Cleopatra, having staved off a push by Cleopatra to reinstate Ptolemaic influence in Judea. But ultimately Herod sided with Antony against Octavian. Although Herod was not personally present at Actium, he sent troops to fight for Antony against Octavian.

One might have thought that Herod's end would have come with Antony's end, but that is not what

happened. When Antony was defeated by Octavian at Actium, Herod switched his allegiance to the victor.

To demonstrate his commitment to Octavian, Herod helped him purge Jerusalem of all Jews hostile to Rome. Josephus records that Jews of all ages, including women and infants, were slaughtered without mercy, their bodies piled up in heaps.

Here is how one author describes the situation:

In this way, Herod the Great, through treachery and shameless political opportunism, now served as Rome's pawn in Jerusalem. In return, Augustus placed the full might of imperial Rome behind Herod. One can only imagine the ill will that the local Jewish populace had for Herod. He was so hated in Jerusalem that the Romans were forced to keep a permanent garrison there to protect their puppet king.

And so back to verse 40: "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind."

Under this view, the phrase "at him" in verse 40 should be likely better translated as "with him." That is, Antony and Cleopatra came "with" Herod, and Octavian then came "against" Herod. As always, Judea found itself in the middle of a fight between north and south!

What about the final phrase - "and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over"?

Quoting "The War That Made the Roman Empire" again:

Augustus did not stop expansion [after Actium] - far from it. Romans expected their leaders to conquer new territory and thereby demonstrate the favor of the gods. Augustus carried out this responsibility with enthusiasm. As his favored poet, Virgil, wrote, Rome had a duty to achieve "empire without end." So, Augustus won new lands in Hispania and the northern Balkans, as well as annexing Egypt. A huge effort to conquer Germany as far east as the Elbe River ended in a military disaster late in Augustus's life, although the Romans were able to hold on to the left bank of the Rhine.

And how important was the Battle of Actium to God's plans for bringing Christ into the world at the perfect time and in the perfect setting? Again, I quote from that secular history book:



Victory at Actium meant **peace**. ... [Augustus] ended a century of civil war and laid the foundations of two hundred years of peace and prosperity: the famous [**Pax Romana**, or "**Roman Peace**." Trade flourished in the Augustan peace. The cheapest way to transport goods was by sea. Thanks to Agrippa's victories, Rome ruled the waves, and piracy virtually disappeared. Rome represented a huge market for grain imports, but many other goods were traded as well. Stability and the security of Roman law encouraged money lending. A military drawdown took pressure off taxes. In short, conditions were ripe for **good times**.

Or, as Paul would later describe it:

**Galatians 4:4** - But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman.

Yes, Jesus was born in a manger, but in a larger sense God had prepared a perfect cradle for his son.

## Daniel 11:41

41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.

The "he" in verse 41 is still Augustus, the king of the north.

In 30 BC, after the Battle of Actium, Octavian prepared to invade Egypt. He wanted Antony dead, he wanted Cleopatra to be his prisoner, and he wanted her treasure to be his property.

Octavian marched his army south from Asia Minor through Syria. At Ptolemais, he was met by King Herod, and the two men rode side by side in an inspection of the troops. Herod fed his troops and gave Octavian two thousand talents of silver. It was perfect example of how Herod switched sides throughout his life, considering that Herod had not only been Antony's ally but also owed his throne to Antony.

When Antony was defeated, Herod had switched sides. Octavian realized the importance of Herod as a client king and so confirmed his royal status.

The glorious land in verse 41 is Palestine, and verse 41 is describing Octavian's invasion of Egypt after the Battle of Actium, during which he passed through Palestine as we just saw. That invasion led to

the death of Antony and Cleopatra by suicide.

Cleopatra died on August 10, and, on August 29, Octavian announced the annexation of Egypt. Henceforth, Egypt would belong to Rome or, more precisely, to Octavian, because he claimed the country as his personal estate.

Octavian's annexation of Egypt was the end of the 300 year old Ptolemaic dynasty. It was also the end of something even grander: the 3000 year old history of Egyptian kings. It was the beginning of Imperial Rome and, with it, the foundations of the modern West.

From 30 BC on and for the next five centuries, until the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, the Mediterranean would become simply Mare Nostrum: "Our Sea." Few expressions better express the arrogance of an empire that considered the world to be its own.

The many countries that shall be overthrown in verse 41 includes Egypt, of course, but also includes other countries as Rome continued to expand under Augustus, including Hispania, the northern Balkans, and parts of Germany.

Another possible translation for "many countries shall be overthrown" is "tens of thousands shall fall." Those "tens of thousands" who fell would be those who were on the losing end of Rome's continued expansion.

What about that final phrase in verse 41? "But these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon."

That phrase tells us that Rome also had its share of failures. One in particular may be in view in the final half of verse 41.

In 26 BC, Augustus commanded Gallus to undertake a military expedition to Arabia, where he was to either conclude treaties making the Arabian people a client state, or to subdue them if they resisted. That expedition ended in complete failure due to a desert guide who proved untrustworthy, along with a combination of disease, over-extended supply lines, and a tougher desert environment than the Romans had expected.

As for the names Edom, Moab, and Ammon, I like a point that was made by one commentary:

The reference in verse 41 to the countries of Edom, Moab and Ammon should be enough,

without anything further, to show that we must seek the fulfillment of this part of the prophecy in Bible times. Those names had a geographical significance to Daniel, and to others of his day, who would understand by them the mingled peoples of the lands adjacent to Judea on the east and south.

We are not looking at the end of the world in these verses!

### **Daniel 11:42-43**

42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.  
43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.

Yes, parts of Arabia escaped the Romans, but Egypt did not escape.

"But he [Augustus] shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt."

After the defeat of Cleopatra, Octavian confiscated the royal treasures of Egypt. Michael Grant says that Octavian's "seizure of the Cleopatra's treasure made him wealthier than the Roman state itself."

As for Libya and Ethiopia being at his steps, here is how one commentary describes it:

The conquest of Egypt and maritime Libya laid inner Libya and Ethiopia open to the steps, that is, as we may interpret the term, to the inroads of Augustus Caesar, and his officers, of which advantage was soon after taken by them.

The later conquest of Lybia by Cornelius Balbus was considered so great an achievement that Balbus, though not a native Roman, was allowed a triumphal procession. Petronius the governor of Egypt made an expedition into Ethiopia about the same time as Gallus' failed expedition into Arabia.

So, while Augustus did not himself subdue those countries himself, they were "at his steps," as the verse says, at the time he left Africa and returned to Rome.

The reference to "his steps" may also be a reference to the triumphal procession that Augustus received after his victory over Egypt, which looked forward to the later triumph enjoyed by Balbus.

Antony and Cleopatra killed themselves to avoid appearing in this procession.

The procession, the famous Roman triumph, was a ritual marking the end of a victorious military campaign. Only the most successful generals received the privilege of celebrating a triumph, an honor granted by vote of the Senate. Octavian had been honored with not one but three triumphs, a rare distinction, which he celebrated in an unprecedented way, by back-to-back, three-day ceremonies. The first day would be a triumph for the Illyrian War of 35 to 33 BC. The second day would be a triumph for the Actium War of 32 to 31 BC. And the third day would be a triumph for the Alexandrian War of 30 BC.

## Daniel 11:44

44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.

Who is the subject of verse 44?

Again, we might be tempted to think that the subject of verse 44 is the same as the subject of verse 43 (Augustus), and that would be a natural way to read the two verses. But, once again, let's remember that we have seen some sudden unannounced shifts in subject in this chapter, so we should also be on the lookout for that.

Is that happening here between verses 43 and 44? Yes, I think it is. I think verse 44 is shifting back to the king we met in verse 36, and that we last saw in verse 40.

Why do I think that? Because verse 44 fits better with Herod than it does with Augustus. Here is how one commentary describes the situation:

Verses 40-43 assume a parenthetical form, within the predictions that refer to the king of the 36th verse, and the parenthesis forms a distinct and complete series of actions: opening up with a war between a king of the south and a king of the north, and ending with the overthrow of the kingdom of the south. Looking at the passage in this light, the antecedent to the pronouns in the 44th verse is to be found at a considerable distance backwards from them. But this is in consistency with a practice, which is not unfrequent in the Hebrew prophets.

So perhaps we should think of verses 40-43 as having parentheses around them.

If so, then the focus in verse 44 switches back to Herod the Great, who was introduced in verse 36. Absent such a switch of focus back to that king the text would have left us hanging with regard to his fate.

We learned what would happen to Alexander the Great in verse 4. We learned what would happen to Antiochus the Great in verse 19. What would happen to Herod the Great?

If verse 44 is again talking about Herod, how did Herod fulfill this verse?

"But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many."

What are we looking for? We are looking for tidings from the east and tidings from the north that caused Herod to go forth with great fury.

### **Let's start with the tidings out of the north.**

I earlier mentioned that Herod killed three of his own sons, but we haven't yet looked at the details of how that happened.

While his son Antipater was at Rome, he sent letters to Herod in an attempt to convince him that two of his other sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, were conspiring against him and were making false accusations about him to Augustus. These letters certainly qualify as tidings out of the north that troubled Herod.

In fact, they troubled Herod so much that Herod returned with the three princes to Jerusalem, where eventually had all three of them executed.

### **What about the tidings out of the east?**

Were there any tidings from the east that caused Herod to go forth with fury?

**Matthew 2:1-4** - Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men **from the east** came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief

priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

**Matthew 2:16-18** - Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, **became furious**, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

There could be no closer fit than that! In response to the tidings he received from the north and from the east, Herod went forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many, just as verse 44 tells us.

Verse 44 is the primary reason why I believe that "the king" in verse 36 is Herod the Great.

In the history of the Jewish people the next and last stage was occupied by a king, whose character was one of the most detestable, and whose doings were among the most atrocious, of any that have been recorded in the annals of the human race, he being, moreover, the only "king" over the Jewish nation in all this long period of more than 500 years.

## Daniel 11:45

45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

So far, we have seen that neither Alexander the Great nor Antiochus the Great ended in greatness, and the same is true of Herod the Great.

Herod had two palaces in Jerusalem (the glorious holy mountain), one in the temple area and the other in the upper city. Both of these palaces were between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea (between the seas).

As for the final phrase ("he shall come to his end, and none shall help him"), here is how Josephus describes the death of Herod the Great:

But now Herod's distemper greatly increased upon him after a severe manner, and this by God's

judgment upon him for his sins: for a fire glowed in him slowly, which did not so much appear to the touch outwardly as it augmented his pains inwardly; for it brought upon him a vehement appetite to eating, which he could not avoid to supply with one sort of food or other. His entrails were also ex-ulcerated, and the chief violence of his pain lay on his colon; an aqueous and transparent liquor also settled itself about his feet, and a like matter afflicted him at the bottom of his belly. ... When he sat upright he had a difficulty of breathing, which was very loathsome, on account of the stench of his breath, and the quickness of its returns; he had also convulsions in all parts of his body, which increased his strength to an insufferable degree.

[And] he died, the fifth day after he had caused Antipater to be slain; having reigned, since he had procured Antigonus to be slain, thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven. A man he was of great barbarity towards all men equally, and a slave to his passions; but above the consideration of what was right; yet was he favored by fortune as much as any man ever was, for from a private man he became a king; and though he were encompassed with ten thousand dangers, he got clear of them all, and continued his life till a very old age.

And there ends one of the most remarkable chapters in the Bible.

So where are we at the end of Chapter 11?

We have marched verse by verse through the history of the world from the days of Daniel and King Cyrus up to the days of Christ and Herod the Great. As we end Chapter 11 with the death of King Herod in 4 BC, Jesus has been born, Rome is in charge of Palestine, and all the world around is enjoying the Roman peace that followed the Battle of Actium.

We should keep this timeframe in mind as we move into the final chapter of this wonderful book!

#daniel