

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## God's Prophecy of Kingdoms: Setting the Stage

(Daniel 11:31-45)

At the end of our last study, Antiochus is king of Syria to the north of Israel. He had once again invaded Egypt, but Rome, the rising power, had forced him out again. As a result, Syria's authority over Israel was threatened, so Antiochus turned his attention to Jerusalem. Like so many before and since, Antiochus desired to abolish the worship of Jehovah. Antiochus sent mercenaries to occupy Jerusalem with a strong military force and gave up the city to be sacked and pillaged by his soldiers for three consecutive days. Over 40,000 citizens of Jerusalem were massacred and thousands more were sold into slavery. The place was pillaged and ransacked, the temple was desecrated, and its treasury was robbed. A new fortress was built on Mount Zion, and a body of royal troops, "Macedonians", was established in it to dominate the city.

Following the military occupation, a Greek altar to Zeus was erected upon the Rock Moriah and swine sacrificed upon it. Partaking of the "broth of abominable things" became a test of allegiance to Antiochus. The Temple sanctuary was smeared with the blood of pigs, and in the ensuing riot soldiers committed the grossest indecencies in the revered courts. (v.31) Antiochus had already declared himself to be the manifestation of Zeus on earth, and the day of the king's birth became a holy day to be celebrated every month. The triumph of Antiochus over the "Prince of the Covenant" seemed complete (v.22).

This was not to be the last time that sacrileges and an "abominable thing" would stand in the holy place. We recall once again the warning of Jesus in Matthew 24:15: "So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by Daniel standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)..."

Many Jews participated in the corruption instigated by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, but many did not. The acts of Antiochus were to precipitate the Maccabean Revolt (c. 164-142 BCE) by many Jews who "knew their God". (v.32) The Jews eventually succeeded in winning national independence after a bitter but heroic struggle that lasted over two decades. The success of the Maccabean Revolt is commemorated by the Jewish Feast of Lights, also called the Feast of

the Dedication (see John 10:22), which we know today as Hanukkah. (vv.32-35)

The remainder of this prophecy (vv.36-45) is heavily discussed (i.e. disputed) and opinions vary. Many commentators view a giant leap in time (centuries) from verse 35 to verse 36. However, some believe that it is a continuation of the story of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Others believe that it is the story of the 4<sup>th</sup> empire, i.e. the Roman Empire, and thus is referring to Constantine the Great. Some believe it to refer to Herod the Great. Some believe it turns to the story of Napoleon Bonaparte.

A large majority believe that the remainder of this prophecy refers to some individual who shall rise up as The Antichrist and as being commiserate with the "little horn" of Daniel chapter 7 and "the prince that shall come" of Daniel 9:26. These people equate him with New Testament scriptures such as 2 Thes. 2:3 ("man of sin...son of perdition"), 1 John 2:18 ("antichrist"), and Revelation chapters 11-20 (the "beast").

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Ironically, although he is lifted up in his own eyes, he is going to fulfill the purpose of God. (v.36) How comforting for us to remember, especially in this present day, that our God is not intimidated by any arrogant human. Example after example could be given to show how God is sovereign over the affairs of mankind, and that there is "none that can stay His hand, or say unto Him 'what doest thou?'" And so it was with Antiochus also. God knows how to handle one who is lifted up with pride, and even to have that person fulfill His will and purposes. He may reject God (v.37), build up a big military (v.38), accumulate power and wealth (v.39), seemingly take rule over God's heritage (v.41), and even the whole world (vv.42-43). But God...!

He may attempt to plant his throne in the tabernacles of the righteous, but it will be temporary. He will come to his end, and there will be no one that can help him. (v.44) The God who created all things, who hangs the earth in space, who stops the mouths of lions, who protects in the fiery furnace, who delivers from

bondage, who has the power over death – that God – the one true and living God, has authority over any Antiochus who may be lifted up in his own mind.

(Joe's Observations)

Elder Rodgers has provided us with literally years of historical research in the last two chapters. I am thankful for his studies and for the concise manner in which he has summarized this information.

He observes near the conclusion of his thoughts above, "There is no plausible reason why we would believe that there are decades, centuries, millennia between verses 35 and 36." I refer you to my discussion of this dangerous habit in the section in which I deal with the seventy week prophecy of Daniel the ninth chapter. It, I believe, reflects a low view of Scripture, one that freely imposes private, personal opinion into the text of Scripture. More alarming, it reveals preconceptions that do not harmonize with Scripture, so its initiators recreate their own version of Scripture by their illogical interpretations, and then attempt to impose their private views onto the Bible.

A subtle thread appears from early in Daniel's writing that continually questions the future of his beloved people, the Jews, or more specifically, the nation of Judah.

1. Will Judah survive this exile?
2. Will Judah ever return to their beloved homeland and their worship of God?
3. When "Messiah the Prince" comes, how will His coming affect the Jews?
4. Will the Jews have a national existence in Messiah's kingdom after He comes?

God consistently assured Daniel in the various revelations that we read in Daniel's book that He would preserve Judah until Messiah came, despite atrocities imposed on them by demonic leaders such as Antiochus, and despite their own stubborn and unbelieving posture at times. God always seems to go quiet when Daniel tries to probe the question, "But what about my people after Messiah comes?"

In the New Testament we find evidence that many Jews in the first century were expecting a military messiah who would inspire the nation, build a powerful army, drive out all invading powers once and for all, and establish a new messianic Judah. Interestingly among the twelve men whom Jesus first chose to be His witnesses, followers, and leaders/teachers of His kingdom after His ascension, we find two men of opposite political orientation. Matthew was a tax collector,

a Jew who worked for the Roman government, collecting taxes that he forwarded to the Romans after taking a share for himself. Simon, the Zealot, was an insurrectionist who believed that the Jews should form military bands and rebel against Rome. Think of the incredible difference between these two men. It would be the equivalent of having a devoted Internal Revenue agent and a John Birch (or other extreme right-wing politico) leader in one church.

I offer an observation that God's people in our day and country need to consider and imitate. Once these two men started following Jesus we never read even one time that they turned from their following Jesus to argue about their vast political differences. Matthew never defended Rome, and Simon never made an impassioned speech about the values of national independence from Rome.

**Both men immediately embraced the life changing reality that following Jesus made their citizenship in heaven's kingdom the most important fact of their lives, and they turned all of their energy and actions toward that kingdom. We should be their children.**

The New Testament teaches that Christians should be good—exemplary—citizens of the country in which they live. They should exercise their civic duty in every way possible. They should never become confused about their heavenly citizenship. Our heavenly kingdom—and our heavenly King—also commands us to exercise some duties as citizens of His kingdom that we need to hold in preeminence above every other interest or activity of our lives, including our political activities toward our nation. Regardless of our political leanings, do we imitate Matthew and Simon after they obeyed Jesus' call, or do we imitate them prior to their call? Is our favorite topic of conversation the present political turmoil, or is it about our King and His Kingdom? A citizen of any country, living in a foreign country, may conduct himself so as to honor his homeland in the foreign country, or he may become the "ugly American" and dishonor his homeland. How clear is our heavenly citizenship? What impression does our conduct make on people regarding our King and His Kingdom? Does our conduct lead them to respect our King and country, or does it motivate them to contempt toward our King?

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Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor