THE BENEFACIONS
ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES AND DAN 11:37-38
AN EXEGETICAL NOTE

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Daniel 11:37-38 cannot refer to Antiochus IV Epiphanes as four of the five views regarding Dan 11:36-45 hold. The two verses indicate that the individual in view will not show favor to any gods and will honor a god of fortresses who was not worshiped by his ancestors. Antiochus does not fit either of these descriptions, particularly in his religious gifts to Greek cities that were of a religious nature. The balance of evidence favors the fifth view that holds Dan 11:36-45 is a prophecy to be fulfilled by a future king.

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One of the most difficult problems in the survey of the Hellenistic period in Daniel 11 is the relationship of the King of the North in vv. 36-45 to Antiochus IV Epiphanes.¹ Five different views on the problem exist: (1) all ten verses are a historical account of the reign of Antiochus IV;² (2) vv. 36-39 are a historical account of Antiochus and vv. 40-45 are a prophecy of the latter part of his reign;³ (3)

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³Porphyry (Jerome, Commentary on Daniel 11:24).

vv. 36-45 were historically fulfilled by Antiochus and vv. 40-45 are a summary of his entire reign; 4 (4) vv. 36-45 refer both to Antiochus and a future king; 5 and (5) vv. 36-45 were not fulfilled by Antiochus, but will be fulfilled by a future king. 6

In discussions favoring the fifth view not much has been done to exhaust the argument that the king in vv. 36-39 cannot refer to Antiochus because his benefactions to various cults contradict what is said about the religion of the king of the North. These gifts show that in contrast to what is said about the king in vv. 37-38, Antiochus did honor the ancestral gods and that he did not honor a god of fortresses in place of them.

Verses 37 and 38 read,

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. Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts (NIV).

In regard to the religion of the king of the North, these verses state that (1) he will not show favor to any gods, particularly his ancestral gods and the one desired by women, but will honor himself more than any of them. Instead of honoring the ancestral gods and the one desired by women, v. 38 states that (2) he will honor a god of fortresses who was not worshiped by his own ancestors.

Verse 37 says that the King of the North will show no regard for the gods of his fathers. 7 The gods of the Seleucid ancestors of Antiochus IV were Apollo, the patron and ancestor of the dynasty, as well as Zeus. 8 Walbank points out, however,
that these special relationships did not, of course, deter the various royal houses from the worship of other gods and goddesses as well and from founding cults and temples to them.\textsuperscript{10} There are numerous examples of this.\textsuperscript{11} Seleucus I sent some gold and silver articles to be dedicated to the Savior gods at the sanctuary of Apollo near Miletos.\textsuperscript{12} Antiochus I had some restorations done to the temple of Nebo\textsuperscript{13} and he showed piety toward the sanctuary of Athena.\textsuperscript{14} Seleucus II showed favor to the temple of Aphrodite Stratoni\kappa\iota\iota\iota kis in Smyrna.\textsuperscript{15} Antiochus III supported the cult of the goddess Artemis Dait\iota\alpha\iota\iota\iota\iota and showed piety toward the temple of Dionysus in Teos.\textsuperscript{17}

Verse 37 also says that in addition to showing no regard for his ancestral gods, the king will show no regard for the one desired by women. Numerous proposals have been made concerning the identity of the god\textsuperscript{18} who was desired by women: Dionysus,\textsuperscript{19} Tammuz/Adonis,\textsuperscript{20} or Nanaia/Artemis/Aphrodite, the goddess of the temple in Elymais which Antiochus plundered in his eastern campaign.\textsuperscript{21}

Instead of honoring the ancestral gods and the god desired by women,
according to v. 38 he will honor a god of forresses\textsuperscript{22} who was not recognized\textsuperscript{23} by his own ancestors. Several suggestions concerning the identity of this god are Akraios,\textsuperscript{24} Zeus Olympios,\textsuperscript{25} Jupiter Capitolinus,\textsuperscript{26} Kronos-Helios,\textsuperscript{27} Mars,\textsuperscript{28} or Baal Shamem-Melcarth.\textsuperscript{29}

How do the benefactions of Antiochus\textsuperscript{30} contribute to an understanding of vv. 37-38? Many of his gifts to Greek cities were of a religious nature, and they benefitted the cults of the gods of his fathers, mentioned above, for whom the text says the king showed no regard. In addition, these gifts to various cult centers demonstrate that to say Antiochus IV did not regard any god is inaccurate (v. 37). To be specific, he resumed the construction of the temple of Zeus in Athens.\textsuperscript{31} He also made contributions to the temple of Zeus in Olympia.\textsuperscript{32} He built a temple for Jupiter Capitolinus at Antioch.\textsuperscript{33} He contributed in some way to the building\textsuperscript{34} or rebuilding\textsuperscript{35} of the temple of Apollo at Daphne. The imposition of the edict of 167 B.C. involved the introduction of the Dionysus cult.\textsuperscript{36} Finally, during the panyguric

\textsuperscript{22}The noun ΔΥΣ is not used figuratively here for a thing of supreme value as some have interpreted it (e.g., C. F. Keil, Daniel, vol. 6: Ezekiel, Daniel, 10 vols. (n.p., reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 466; H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Daniel (n.p.: Wartburg Press assigned to Augsburg, 1949; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969) 517; Walvoord, Daniel 2:76). Not only is the noun never used in this sense, but the gifts mentioned in the latter part of the verse suggest that the word refers to a deity.

\textsuperscript{23}The verb ЯЗ (“known”) has the idea of recognition or acknowledgement (1 Sam 2:12; Hos 5:4).


\textsuperscript{25}Bunge, Der ‘Gott der Festungen’ 181-82.

\textsuperscript{26}Charles, Book of Daniel 316; cf. Livy 41.20.9.


\textsuperscript{28}A suggestion of Driver, Daniel 195.

\textsuperscript{29}J. Morgenstern, The King-God Among the Western Semites and the Meaning of Epiphanes, VT 10 (1960):167 n. 1.


\textsuperscript{31}Livy 41.20.8; Polybius 26.1.11; Strabo 9.1.17; Velleius Paterculus 1.10.1; Vitruvius 7.15.

\textsuperscript{32}Pausanias 5.12.4-5.

\textsuperscript{33}Livy 41.20.9.

\textsuperscript{34}Ammianus Marcellinus 22.13.1.

\textsuperscript{35}Mørkholm, Antiochus IV of Syria 119, 122.

\textsuperscript{36}2 Macc 6:7.
at Daphne in the summer of 166, a vast number of images were involved in the procession and following these games Apollo was honored with a new coinage of gold staters and tetradrachms. Antiochus also contributed some statues around the altar at Delos. Delos was thought to be the birthplace of Apollo and was considered sacred to him.

The above facts show that Antiochus did indeed show regard for the gods of his fathers, Apollo and Zeus, as well as to others—unlike the King of the North in Dan 11:37-38. In conclusion, the opinions of two ancient historians note the character of Antiochus IV Epiphanes as it relates to religion:

Nevertheless in two great and important respects his soul was truly royal—in his benefactions to cities and in the honours paid to the gods (Livy 41.20.5)

But in the sacrifices he furnished to cities and in the honours he paid to the gods he far surpassed all his predecessors . . . (Polybius 26.1.10)

From what Livy and Polybius have to say about Antiochus IV Epiphanes, to view him as the King of the North in Dan 11:36-45 is difficult. This factor favors the fifth view regarding Dan 11:36-45, that a yet-future king will fulfil the prophecy.

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37Polybius 30.25.13-14.


39Polybius 26.1.11.

40Homer, Hymn to Apollo 3.50-60, 140-49.