

THE BENEFACIONS OF 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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¹I dealt briefly with this passage in my dissertation, "An Historical, Exegetical, and Theological Study of Daniel 11:2b-12:4" (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1987) 184-203. Two other articles have discussed the passage: J. Paul Tanner, "Daniel's 'King of the North': Do We Owe Russia an Apology?," JETS 35 (1992):315-28, and George M. Harton, "An Interpretation of Daniel 11:36-45," *Grace Theological Journal* 4 (1983):205-31.

²Porphry (Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel* 11.24).

³Robert A. Anderson, *Signs and Wonders: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 142; A. A. Bevan, *A Short Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1892) 198; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1929) lxxv, 317-18; S. R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel*, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: University Press, 1936) lxxv-lxxvi; Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. DiLella, *The Book of Daniel, AB 23* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978) 276, 294, 303; John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1989) 305; J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ICC (Edinburgh:

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,⁸ as well as Zeus.⁹ Walbank points out, however,

Clark, 1927) 464-66, 470; Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979) 169-70.

⁴Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Critical, Explanatory, and Practical, The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 2 vols. (London: Knight & Hawkes, n.d.) 2:246-47; E. W. Faulstich, *History, Harmony, & Daniel: A New Computerized Evaluation* (Spencer, Iowa: Chronology, 1988) 134, 148.

⁵Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945), vol. 4, *Jeremiah-Malachi*, by A. R. Fausset, 450-51.

⁶Jerome 11:36; E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949) 311-12; John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Interpretation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971) 270-73; Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973) 304-5.

⁷The phrase אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי does not refer to the God of his fathers. The divine name is a simple plural instead of a plural of majesty because if the author had intended a supreme deity as in v. 37a, he would have used the singular אֱלֹהֵי as he does in vv. 37b, 38, and 39 (Wood, *Daniel* 306).

⁸F. W. Walbank, *Monarchies and Monarchic Ideas*, *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2d ed.; vol. 7, pt. 1: *The Hellenistic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1984) 85; M. M. Austin, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest: A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation* (New York: Cambridge, 1981) #139 (OGIS 219, ll. 25-30) and #186 (OGIS 227).

⁹Austin, *Hellenistic World* #177 (OGIS 245).

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.¹⁰ There are numerous examples of this.¹¹ Seleucus I sent some gold and silver articles to be dedicated to the Savior gods at the sanctuary of Apollo near Miletos.¹² Antiochus I had some restorations done to the temple of Nebo¹³ and he showed piety toward the sanctuary of Athena.¹⁴ Seleucus II showed favor to the temple of Aphrodite Stratonikis in Smyrna.¹⁵ Antiochus III supported the cult of the goddess Artemis Daittae¹⁶ and showed piety toward the temple of Dionysus in Teos.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 god¹⁸ who was desired by women: Dionysus,¹⁹ Tammuz/Adonis,²⁰ or Nanaia/Artemis/Aphrodite, the goddess of the temple in Elymais which Antiochus plundered in his eastern campaign.²¹

Instead of honoring the ancestral gods and the god desired by women,

¹⁰Walbank, *Monarchies and Monarchic Ideas* 85.

¹¹For other cults supported by the Seleucids, see M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University, 1941) 1:434-39.

¹²C. Bradford Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period: A Study in Greek Epigraphy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 1934) #5, ll. 4-5.

¹³James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d. ed. with suppl. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1969) 317.

¹⁴Austin, *Hellenistic World* #139 (OGIS 219, ll. 35-40).

¹⁵Roger S. Bagnall and Peter Derow, *Greek Historical Documents: The Hellenistic Period, Sources for Biblical Study*, 16 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1981) #28 (OGIS 228).

¹⁶Welles, *Royal Correspondence* #31 and #44, ll. 17-28.

¹⁷Austin, *Hellenistic World* #151, ll. 15-19, cf. l. 45.

¹⁸The phrase *הַיְחֲמֵת אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי־נָשִׁים* (“the one desired by women”) must refer to a god. This is clear from its position between two prepositional phrases, *עַל־אֱלֹהֵי־אֲבוֹתָיו* (“for the gods of his fathers”) and *עַל־כָּל־אֱלֹהֵי* (“[for] any god”), the objects of which refer to deities. In addition, it is suggested by the fact that v. 38 refers to the worship of gods.

¹⁹J. G. Bunge, *Der ‘Gott der Festungen’ und der ‘Liebling der Frauen’: Zur Identifizierung der Götter in Dan. 11, 36-39, JSJ 4* (1973):181-82.

²⁰Driver, *Daniel* 194-95.

²¹1 Macc 6:1-4; 2 Macc 1:13-16.

according to v. 38 he will honor a god of fortresses²² who was not recognized²³ by his own ancestors. Several suggestions concerning the identity of this god are Akraios,²⁴ Zeus Olympios,²⁵ Jupiter Capitolinus,²⁶ Kronos-Helios,²⁷ Mars,²⁸ or Baal Shamem-Melcarth.²⁹

How do the benefactions of Antiochus³⁰ 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.³¹ He also made contributions to the temple of Zeus in Olympia.³² He built a temple for Jupiter Capitolinus at Antioch.³³ He contributed in some way to the building³⁴ or rebuilding³⁵ of the temple of Apollo at Daphne. The imposition of the edict of 167 B.C. involved the introduction of the Dionysus cult.³⁶ Finally, during the panyguric

²²The noun מַלְאָכָה 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* 276). 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.

²³The verb יָדָע ("known") has the idea of recognition or acknowledgement (1 Sam 2:12; Hos 5:4).

²⁴Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) 1:284.

²⁵Bunge, *Der 'Gott der Festungen'* 181-82.

²⁶Charles, *Book of Daniel* 316; cf. Livy 41.20.9.

²⁷O. S. Rankin, *The Festival of Hanukkah, The Labyrinth: Further Studies in the Relation between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. S. H. Hooke (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1935) 198.

²⁸A suggestion of Driver, *Daniel* 195.

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

³⁰For Antiochus IV's benefactions, see Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* 1:285-86; *Bezalel Bar-Kochva, Judas Maccabaeus: The Jewish Struggle against the Seleucids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989) 230-31; Otto Mørkholm, *Antiochus IV of Syria*, *Classica et Mediaevalia: Dissertationes*, 8 (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1966) 55-63, 118-22, 131-32.

³¹Livy 41.20.8; Polybius 26.1.11; Strabo 9.1.17; Velleius Paterculus 1.10.1; Vitruvius 7.15.

³²Pausanias 5.12.4-5.

³³Livy 41.20.9.

³⁴Ammianus Marcellinus 22.13.1.

³⁵Mørkholm, *Antiochus IV of Syria* 119, 122.

³⁶2 Macc 6:7.

at Daphne in the summer of 166, a vast number of images were involved in the procession³⁷ and following these games Apollo was honored with a new coinage of gold staters and tetradrachms.³⁸ Antiochus also contributed some statues around the altar at Delos.³⁹ Delos was thought to be the birthplace of Apollo and was considered sacred to him.⁴⁰

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.

³⁷Polybius 30.25.13-14.

³⁸Otto Mørkholm, *Studies in the Coinage of Antiochus IV of Syria*, Historisk-filosofiske Meddelelser udgivet af Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, 40, n. 3 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1963) 30, 33-34.

³⁹Polybius 26.1.11.

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