

The Papal King Who Exalts Himself above All Gods

Daniel 11:36

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We have begun our consideration of the last section of Daniel 11 (Daniel 11:36-45). We are confronted in Daniel 11:36 with a reference to “the king”. I will not review all that was said about this king in the previous sermon, but we noted there were basically four primary views of who this king might be: (1) Antiochus Epiphanes; (2) Nero (if not Nero in particular then one of the other Roman Caesars or all of them collectively from Julius to Vespasian); (3) the Papacy; (4) a yet future political world leader. Admittedly, there are descriptions of this king in these verses that may apply to any of these among the views mentioned above. But which of these views seems best to accord with what New Testament revelation and history reveal? I have in the previous sermon and will give reasons as we go along why I have adopted the view that “the king” identified here is the Papacy and why the other views seem to fall short biblically and historically of the description given in Daniel 11:36-45.

As I said, sound biblical scholars (past and present) disagree among themselves over this question, so let us seek in humility the Holy Spirit’s illumination as we pursue this study together (without the Holy Spirit, we are left to our own imagination).

The main points today continue the description of this particular king in Daniel 11:36ff: (1) He Has an Absolute Will; (2) He Exalts Himself above All Earthly Authority; (3) He Usurps God’s Authority; (4) He Prospers until God’s Indignation Is Finished.

I. The King Has an Absolute Will (“And the king shall do according to his will”).

A. This characteristic of an absolute and supreme will is likewise spoken of Alexander the Great (Daniel 11:3). The will of Alexander prevailed over all his princes and enemies, and this aptly describes the absolute will of the Papacy in history as well.

1. As we have seen in the previous sermon, the Papacy was/is an absolute monarchy that rules with supreme authority and whose will is absolute. The Pope is an earthly king (not just an ecclesiastical bishop), having reigned over the papal states from 756-1870, and presently reigns as king (monarch) over Vatican City (a recognized earthly state with diplomatic relations with 179 nations).

2. The Papacy has claimed and exercised a greater power than kings in crowning/deposing them according to his will (that is not an ecclesiastical power, but a political power greater than any king), in banning the national loyalty between citizens and their king, in calling forth the military forces of nations against heretics/infidels according to his will, and until 1963 the Papacy had all the pomp and circumstance of a royal coronation with a crown (tiara) placed upon his head and seated upon his throne. Pontifex Maximus (Supreme Pontiff) was a title taken by the emperors of Rome and was likewise assumed by the popes of Rome.

3. There has not been a more powerful (or longer living) dynasty ruling in the Western world as the Papacy has ruled from its throne in Rome.

B. The Pope claims infallibility (the impossibility of erring in matters of faith and morals) when speaking in his official capacity.

1. The *Dictatus Papae*, written by Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085), asserts that no one can judge the pope (Proposition 19).

2. Papal infallibility was formalized at Vatican I (1870):

We teach and define that it is a dogma Divinely revealed that the Roman pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the Divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, **is possessed of that**

infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals.... So then, should anyone, which God forbid, have the temerity [rashness] to reject this definition of ours: let him be anathema [cursed—a mortal sin] (Vatican Council, Sess. IV, Const. de Ecclesiâ Christi, Chapter iv).

3. In the Code of Canon Law of the Church of Rome, we see the absolute authority of the Papacy clearly established to change laws.

Canon 331

By virtue of his [the pope's] office he possesses supreme, full, immediate, and universal ordinary power in the Church, which he is always able to exercise freely.

Canon 333 (Par.3)

No appeal or recourse is permitted against a sentence or decree of the Roman Pontiff.

C. Such power claimed over kings/nations and over the Universal Church fits well with “and the king shall do according to his will”.

II. The King Exalts Himself above All Earthly Authority (“and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself [make himself great] above every god”).

A. To exalt oneself above every god does not simply mean above every false god, but in a more general sense “every god” refers to all those claiming authority upon earth (whether political rulers or ecclesiastical ministers—“minister of God” Romans 13:4; read Psalm 82). Scripture refers to earthly leaders as “gods” not because they necessarily claim to be divine but because they are called to rule on behalf of God as His ministers. So this characteristic of this king claims universal authority.

B. Since Jesus is King of kings and is Head of the Church, the Papacy claims Christ's supreme authority over all kings and over the Universal Church upon earth (and has in history acted accordingly).

C. Pope Gregory VII (1075) decreed “that it may be permitted to him to depose emperors” and asserted the papal power to “absolve [release] subjects from their fealty [loyalty]” to wicked kings.

D. When Pope Innocent III came to power (1198), he declared, “Who am I myself or what was the house of my father that I am permitted to sit above kings, to possess the throne of glory?”

E. Pope Boniface VIII in 1302 issued the papal proclamation, *Unam sanctam*, which declared that the “spiritual power has to institute the earthly power and judge it” and that “it is entirely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman pontiff.” This decree has never been rejected by subsequent popes/councils.

F. Does the Papacy exalt itself above all earthly authority? It claims to rule on earth in the place of Christ, and no earthly power is greater than that of Jesus Christ who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

III. The King Usurps God's Authority (“and shall speak marvellous [extraordinary] things against the God of gods”).

A. Does one have to curse God directly in order to speak against God? I submit that one can usurp God's titles, attributes, and authority (rob God of them) and in so doing is speaking marvellous things against the God of gods. We cannot rob God of what is uniquely His without also speaking against Him.

1. What husband would not consider it to be speaking against him for another man to claim the husband's wife as his own wife?

2. It is one thing to falsely claim a universal power over kings and over the whole church on earth, but it is a greater aggravation of that sin to claim a power upon earth that is equivalent to that of God and to that of Jesus Christ. Does the Papacy do so?

B. In his encyclical, "The Reunion of Christendom" (1885), Pope Leo XIII stated that the pope holds "upon this earth the place of God Almighty." This is speaking extraordinary words against God.

C. Pope John XXIII in his homily to the bishops at his papal coronation on November 4, 1958 said:

The Saviour Himself is the door of the sheepfold: 'I am the door of the sheep.' Into this fold of Jesus Christ, no man may enter unless he be led by the Sovereign Pontiff; and only if they be united to him [not to Christ] can men be saved, for the Roman Pontiff is the Vicar of Christ and His personal representative on earth.

Need I point out that salvation is only and ever granted to those who are united to Christ by faith alone, not to any mere human being (Romans 8:1; 1 Corinthians 1:30). This is blasphemy and speaking against God.

D. There were made two commemorative medallions (with the approval of the Papacy and the Church of Rome) honoring the election and coronation of Pope Martin V (1417) and of Pope Eugene IV (1431), which depict two Cardinals crowning the Pope and Cardinals bowing to adore/worship the Pope with the Holy Spirit descending from heaven in the form of a dove with this inscription, "Whom they create [i.e. whom the cardinals create by way of their election and coronation], they worship [adore not venerate]" (Latin, *Quem creant adorant*). This is usurping that which belongs to God alone (Matthew 4:10).

E. The Papacy falsely claims power to forgive sins and to convey that power to priests (*A New Catechism of the Catholic Faith*, p. 62).

Does the priest really forgive your sins?

With the power of Christ given to him in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest really forgives your sins.

Who alone can forgive and set one free from the guilt of sin against God, but God alone (Luke 5:21; 1 John 1:9). This is to usurp the right of God. We can forgive a personal offense against one another, but we cannot forgive/remove the guilt of sin. As ministers, we can upon the authority of Christ proclaim the forgiveness of God to sinners and assure those who sincerely repent that God forgives them, but God must alone forgive.

F. In the early church fathers, pastors/bishops were called vicars of Christ as being the ministers of Christ, but by the 13th century that title took on a unique meaning as the one and only replacement for Christ upon earth with special divine authority given to it that is not given to anyone else. It is now declared to be a particular title of the Pope. However, it was not the Papacy that Jesus sent to the earth to be His replacement, but the Holy Spirit that was sent by the Father as the stated and official Vicar of Christ (John 14:16-17a,26). This title usually also includes in it the title assumed by the Papacy as "head of the Universal Church". In *Unam Sanctam* (1302), Pope Boniface VIII declared that the Church must be united to the People and that he was its head on earth:

Therefore, of the one and only Church there is one body and one head [namely, the Papacy], not two heads like a monster.

G. This does indeed depict the Church as having two heads: Jesus in heaven and the pope on earth (contrary to Colossians 1:18). Never is Peter or any apostle ever said to be the head of the Universal Church. This is to usurp the authority of Christ and thus to speak against Him.

IV. The King Prospers until God's Indignation Is Finished ("and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished").

A. I won't say much at this time about this, for it will be addressed later in Daniel 11-12. But let me add that this depicts "the king" as having an extended period of rule that will continue until he is destroyed by the Lord Jesus (Revelation 19:20). I say with all seriousness that he has deluded and deceived countless

millions in following him rather than Jesus Christ, the alone Head of the Church in heaven and on earth. I submit that this brief overview should at least alert us to the possibility (and likelihood) of “the king” here in Daniel 11:36ff being most fully realized in the Papacy (and further description is yet to come).

B. Application.

1. This message is not anti-Catholic (as to the people themselves). We love and care for them. We are to pray for them that they might escape the deception of the papal false prophet (Revelation 13). The Lord appeals to dear family members and friends with these words, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4). God’s Word and my appeal come not from hatred/pride, but come from a sincere and loving warning to look to Christ alone who is Head and can forgive sins.

2. The gradual growth over time of the power/authority that came to be centralized in the Papacy illustrates the extreme danger of placing oral tradition alongside Scripture as infallible revelation. That which is not clearly taught in Scripture becomes essential to be believed. It misleads millions away from Christ/the pure gospel. Jesus condemned the tradition of the elders because it rendered the authority of Scripture of none effect (Mark 7:13). So does the tradition of the Papacy.

3. Just as one does not have to directly curse God to speak against Him, so likewise one does not have to become an atheist in order to deny God. One may do so by one’s words and deeds (Titus 1:16).

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