

Contrasting King Herod with the King of Kings

Daniel 11:36-45

By Way of Review: The first half of Daniel 11 outlines the history of the world from the time of Daniel's death (535 BC) to the inauguration of the eternal kingdom of the King of kings (AD 30). The events outlined in Daniel 11 pertain to the nation of Israel and the "great conflict" for Daniel's people (10:1-3). The outline of history from the Babylonians to the Persians, to the Greeks, to the Romans, and finally to King Herod (King of the Jews) is so precise that skeptics refuted Daniel wrote it. "How can anyone tell the future?" Answer: The Creator of the world is outside of time, and His story is history. God knows. In this last section of Daniel 11 (ten verses), we have a prophecy of the man named "Herod" and what would occur in the time of his reign as "King of the Jews." It was during his time that "*Michael will rise.*"

Daniel 11:36-45 – there is some discussion among Christians over who "the king" is. But in my mind, it is beyond any doubt that "the king" described in Daniel 11:36-45 is Herod, King of the Jews (Matt. 2:2). The flow of the entire chapter leads up to Daniel 12:1 – "at that time Michael (the Messiah) shall arise." In this section of Hebrews 11, I'd like to contrast King Herod of the Jews with the King of Kings.

1. King Herod lived his life for himself and had no greater purpose – Daniel 11:36.

A. "*The king shall do according to his own will.*" (v. 36).

In Daniel 11:3, the same words are used of Alexander of Greece. The words are used of Antiochus the Great in Daniel 11:16. Both these rulers (Alexander and Antiochus) were very successful. But this expression "he shall do as he pleases" shows a moral corruption. Herod was ruthless and cruel.

B. "*He will exalt and magnify himself above every god*" (v. 36).

The word "god" here is the Hebrew 'el. It's clear that Herod exalted and magnified himself above all "mighty ones" in Israel, whether priests or rulers. He appointed whomever he chose the office of high priest. However, because he owed true allegiance only to himself in his lust for absolute power, Herod truthfully could be said to have exalted and magnified himself above all other gods.

C. "*He will speak monstrous things against the God of gods*" (v. 36).

The Hebrew word *niphla'ot* is "*blasphemies*" in some translations. God means nothing to him.

*But Jesus, the KING of kings lived for a greater purpose; His Father's will to redeem the nations.

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of those He has given Me" (John 6:38-39).

II. King Herod put to death his own sons as well as many sons of women – Daniel 11:37.

"He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all" (v. 37).

Herod extensively remodeled the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, but then placed a huge golden Roman eagle at the main entrance, which the Jews saw as a blasphemous idol. The desire of every Jewish woman to bear the promised Messiah. The fact that Herod attempted to murder the infant Messiah by destroying numerous babies shows that King had no regard for the maternal nature of women. Each one of the slain infants was "the desire" of his own mother. Herod had his wife, Mariamne, executed on a false charge of adultery, as well as his sons since he thought they wanted to rule.

"It is better to be Herod's god than his son."

*But Jesus, the King of kings, gives life to all and makes the sons of God "co-heirs with Christ."

"For you are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). *"Co-heirs with Christ"* (Rom. 8:17).

III. King Herod put his trust in earthly possessions, including the fortresses he built – Daniel 11:38-39.

It could be said that King Herod was a religious man - *“he honors the god of fortresses”* (vv. 38-39). The phrase “god of forces fortresses,” is uncommon enough that it provides us a ready means of identification. The Roman emperors proclaimed themselves to be “gods,” and it was by their military “forces” or “fortresses” that they enlarged and sustained their power and their empire. Herod was quick to honor the warring Roman rulers with tribute and building projects. He rebuilt fortresses in the land and temples in surrounding Gentile areas, including three temples dedicated to Caesar Augustus. He rebuilt the ancient Phoenician coastal fort called Strato’s Tower and renamed it Caesarea in honor of Caesar Augustus; he rebuilt Samaria, and renamed it Sebaste (*sebastos* was the Greek word for “reverend,” equivalent to the Latin *augustus*). Using the support and backing of the Roman emperor, Herod was able to overcome all his foes. In the process, he promoted the glory of the Romans in Judea to his own benefit. King Herod is in fact buried in an ancient fortress in Israel.

***But Jesus, the KING of kings, had no earthly possessions and set His heart on His eternal home.**

“I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you also will be. I am the Way, Truth, and Life. No one comes except through Me” (John 14:3,6).

IV. Herod lived in “the time of the end” when God’s agreement with Israel ended – Daniel 11:40-45.

“At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships” (Daniel 11:40).

Remember, this prophecy is not primarily concerned with fate of Daniel’s people, the Jews. These last verses of Daniel 11 describe the last major battle in Israel before the Messiah rises in His power. Here, the king of the South is Mark Antony and his ally Cleopatra (the last monarch to occupy the southern kingdom’s Egyptian throne). The king of the North is Octavius, who represented Rome and ruled the former Syrian empire of the Seleucids. Antony and Octavius made a pact with a third party (Marcus Aemilius Lepidus) to rule Rome after the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC. In the civil war that followed Caesar’s death, they defeated the assassins’ forces in 42 BC. The next year, Antony fell in love with Egyptian queen Cleopatra. After Antony suffered a military defeat against the Parthians in 36 BC, he and Octavius had a falling out. Worsening the situation was the fact that, in 32 BC, Antony divorced his Roman wife, Octavia (the sister of Octavius), and ceded many of the eastern Roman territories to Cleopatra and their children. In 31 BC, a new civil war broke out between the **Roman Senate-supported Octavius** (eventually known as Caesar Augustus) and Antony/Cleopatra. The Roman historian Plutarch wrote that the first move in the war was made by Antony. Thus, we see that the “*king of the South*” indeed first attacked the “*king of the North.*” Without going into all the details of the battle between north and south (11:41-43), it’s simply important to know that Herod helped Octavius defeat the forces of Antony and Cleopatra. Caesar Augustus and Herod were close.

DANIEL 11:44 – “But rumors from the East and from the North will terrify him (Herod), and he will go out with great wrath to eliminate and annihilate many.” This is the time of the end.

DANIEL 11:45 – “He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.”

DANIEL 12:1 – “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise.” MICHA – EL is the TITLE for the Messiah (“Who Is Like God?”)

***BUT Jesus, the King of kings, comes to inaugurate a NEW Covenant and a NEW Kingdom.**

Like many prophecies, this one is likely dual in some ways; events that have occurred in ancient times could be replicated another time. But to assign much of this Daniel 11 prophecy to a yet future time is to miss the fact that this prophecy shows God is in control and world events. History is HIS STORY.