

Antiochus Epiphanes was a forerunner of the man of sin mentioned in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2

• a persecutor, boasting arrogantly, an enemy of God, stern and crafty

• Persuades many to abandon the covenant faith – recorded in 1 Maccabees and Josephus' Antiquities

• Under pressure from Antiochus many Jews adopted Greek ways and abandoned their claim to faith in the God of Israel

• The Maccabean revolt against Antiochus - became a popular rebellion

• Persecutions will separate the sincere and the insincere

• Purification in readiness for God's judgement

Antiochus Epiphanes was a forerunner of the man of sin mentioned in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. Daniel has been shown that at the time when salvation comes to the world through Israel a 'little horn' would also come, a persecutor which has 'eyes like human eyes' and 'a mouth ... boasting arrogantly'¹, an enemy to God's people who will be full of arrogance and deceit. He has also seen that the temple of Jerusalem will be destroyed at the time when a Saviour comes. 'Upon a wing of abominations there shall come a destroyer'².

Yet Daniel has also been shown that there will be an **earlier** forerunner of this enemy of God. In the days of the Greek empire there will – he has been told – be 'another horn, a little one'¹ which would grow 'so as to reach even the stars of the heavens'². There would come 'a stern-faced king, and a crafty man'³. It is this forerunner who is being described in Daniel 11: Antiochus Epiphanes.

³²*With flattery he will corrupt those who have acted wickedly against the covenant, but the people who know their God will be strong and will take action.* Antiochus persuaded and pressurized many people to abandon the covenant faith of Israel, but (as 1 Maccabees 1:62 has it) 'many were strong'. The First Book of Maccabees is an ancient document which is not part of the inspired Word of God but it does have some important history and tells the story of these times. It is to be found in Roman Catholic Bibles. Other added books (Tobit, Bel and the Dragon, and so on) are unimportant and not part of Scripture. But 1 Maccabees is worth reading! So is Josephus, *Antiquities*, book 12.

³³*Those that are wise among the people shall give instruction to many to perceive, but they shall fall by the sword and by flame, through captivity and through being robbed of their possessions. This will continue for a while.* Under pressure from Antiochus many Jews adopted Greek ways and abandoned their claim to faith in the God of Israel. But while some were turning from God others were doing what they could to hold the nation to the faith of Israel. ³⁴*But when they fall, they shall receive a little help, and many shall join themselves unto them without sincerity.* The 'falling' refers to persecution. The 'little help' refers to the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus. A crisis came in a small village called Modein, twenty miles from Jerusalem, when a soldier was sent to demand that a pagan sacrifice be made in the village. An elderly man Mattathias (from a family called Hasmon named after his great-great-grandfather) killed a Jewish traitor when he was about to offer pagan sacrifice. He killed also the soldier sent to impose the sacrifice. He and his five sons (John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, Jonathan) fled to the hills and called upon men to rise up in rebellion against Antiochus. So began the 'Maccabean revolt' against Antiochus. It became a popular rebellion. Many people joined in with the resistance movement but not all of them had sincere reasons for doing so. 'Many shall join themselves unto them without sincerity', said the prediction.

³⁵*Some of the wise will fall into severe sufferings, so that they may be refined and purified, made spotless, ready for the time of the end. For the end will come at the appointed time.* The persecutions of Antiochus were terrible, but the angel tells Daniel that there is a purpose to it. The persecutions will separate the sincere and the insincere. Motives will be purified. Faith will be strengthened. God's people will be prepared for the judgement which will come at the end of history.

¹ 7:8

² 9:27

¹ 8:9

² 8:10

³ 8:23

• **Debate about to whom Daniel is referring in 11:36**

• *Two common but wrong views*

• *The right view - Antiochus Epiphanes and the Romans*

• *Verse 36 - Antiochus acted as though he was God himself*

• *Then the Maccabees rebelled*

• *The temple cleansed and rededicated*



• *Verse 37 - He claimed that he was himself a form of 'Zeus'*

When we get to Daniel 11:36 we find that scholars and preachers are much divided as to who is in mind. Of course it is prophecy, so Daniel does not know exactly who is in mind. Only the future would tell. But as we look back over history we may ask: who is in view (from our modern viewpoint) in Daniel 11:36–45? (i) A common view is that **the account jumps** to deal with the antichrist in the days near the end of the world, but I cannot see any indication of that in the text. (ii) Destructive scholars tend to say this still refers to Antiochus but that **Daniel gets his facts wrong**. I certainly don't accept that! Daniel is reporting an angelic message and angels get their facts right!

(iii) The right view seems to me to be that 11:36–39 continues to refer to Antiochus Epiphanes but that at 11:40 **the angel refers to people who turned out to be the Romans**. John Calvin held this view, and I think he was right. Robert Gurney's commentary says something similar.

The text seems to continue right on in speaking about Antiochus. It begins with the word 'and'. ³⁶*And the king will do as he pleases. He will exalt himself and magnify himself above every god. He will say things against the God of gods that no one has ever heard before. He will continue to be successful until the time when God's anger is completed. For what has been determined must take place.* Antiochus acted as though he was God himself and resisted any worship of Yahweh, the God of Israel. It went on for a while but then suddenly the Maccabees rebelled. In 165 BC Antiochus had to give way. The temple was cleansed and rededicated. By 163 BC Antiochus was dead. It had lasted only a few years. Daniel 11:36 perfectly fits Antiochus.

³⁷*He will have no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one god loved by women, nor will he have regard for any god, but he will exalt himself above them all.* Antiochus did not worship Apollo (the god honoured by the Seleucids) or Adonis (the god much loved by women). He claimed that he was himself a form of 'Zeus'; the head of Zeus appeared on Greek coins at this time. Daniel 11:37 perfectly fits Antiochus.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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