

# “Great Exploits” • Daniel 11:29-32

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Read The Text

- 29 “At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter.
- 30 For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do *damage*. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.
- 31 And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily *sacrifices*, and place *there* the abomination of desolation.
- 32 Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out *great exploits*.

### B. Amazing Prophecies

1. Daniel 11 contains 135 specific prophecies that have already been fulfilled!
2. In fact, so accurate are the things foretold here that for years skeptics scoffed and said that this had to have been written *after* these things occurred, and only made to *appear* that they were written beforehand.
3. But recent archaeology and ancient studies have confirmed that this was indeed written by Daniel hundreds of years *before* it took place.

### C. Wednesday On Sunday

1. While v. 32 is the focus of our study this morning, we need to set the scene, so we'll begin with a little taste of what we do in our mid-week study as we go verse by verse through an entire chapter or more.
2. Let me give a little background . . .
  - a. Daniel had a vision of the future of Israel, then an angel came to tell him the meaning
  - b. we find the interpretation of the vision in ch. 11
  - c. it foretells both the near *and* far off future of the nation
  - d. in vs. 2-35, the angel tells Daniel what will take place from that day right up through the time of the Romans
  - e. the prophecy centers on the various kings of the surrounding nations who will exert control over Israel throughout this time
  - f. to the north were the Syrians and to the south, the Egyptians
    - 1) for generations, these two power centers vied with each other for dominance
    - 2) and because Israel lay between them, each sought to control Israel as a buffer zone against the other
  - g. in vs. 21-35, we read about one particular king of the north; an exceedingly vile individual, who controlled the region and whose policies created great

- trouble for Israel
- h. his name was Antiochus IV
  - 1) he took the title “Epiphanes” which means “The Illustrious” of “Manifested One” because he claimed to be the manifestation of one of the Greek gods.
  - 2) Antiochus sought to restore the power and glory of the age of Alexander the Great
  - 3) so he tried to resurrect Alexander’s campaign to bring Greek culture to the world
- i. but the Jews, who had recently returned from captivity in Babylon, had learned their lesson about the evils of idolatry and were now fiercely loyal to their God
- j. they weren’t about to bow in submission to the Greek gods whom Antiochus demanded they worship
- k. in rage, Antiochus removed the high priest in Jerusalem and set up a puppet in his place
- l. a handful of opportunistic Jews whose hearts weren’t loyal to God went over to Antiochus’s side.
- m. the king put them in power in Israel, then returned to his home in Syria
- 3. That brings us to v. 29 . . .

## II. TEXT

### A. V. 29-30a

**29 “At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter.**

**30 For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do *damage*.**

1. We need to stop there in the middle of v. 30; The people who made the verse breaks ought to have ended the verse at this point.
2. Two years later after the events of vs. 25-28, in 168 BC, Antiochus moved against Egypt once more.
3. But as he began this new campaign, the Romans, who had been keeping a close eye on things in the East, sent a stern letter to Antiochus from the Roman Senate warning him *not* to invade Egypt, who was now Rome’s ally.
  - a. the Romans sent a fleet of ships to back up their threat.
  - b. when Antiochus asked for time to consider, the Roman emissary drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus and demanded that he give his answer before he stepped out of the circle.
  - c. Antiochus knew there was no way he could defeat the Romans and submitted to Rome’s demands.
4. This was a *humiliating* defeat for Antiochus, and as it says in v. 30, he was *grieved*, but he had no alternative except to return to his own land.
5. An aggrieved ruler often vents by showing rage, and such was Antiochus’ outlet now.
  - a. as he marched his armies home, he had to pass through Israel

- b. Antiochus was like a bully who's been backed down by someone his own size,
  - 1) so as he returns to his home, he beats up on some poor, innocent bystanders –
  - 2) in this case, it's the Jews who bear the brunt of his rage.
- c. Antiochus took out his frustration on them and their temple.

## **B. Vs. 30b-32**

**So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.**

- 31 And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place *there* the abomination of desolation.**
- 32 Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out *great exploits*.**
- 6. As I mentioned, Antiochus was determined to force the Greek culture on all his lands and he absolutely hated the stubborn Jews who refused his reforms of their culture and religion.
    - a. so he persecuted the religious Jews with glee.
    - b. of course, there were a few Jews who were all for the Greek way of life and religion.
    - c. as the angel foretold in v. 30, Antiochus favored these renegade Jews and put them in positions of power.
    - d. then, in an attempt to force Jewish compliance, he desecrated the temple and abolished the daily sacrifices.
    - e. he sent his general Apollonius with 22,000 soldiers into Jerusalem on what was supposed to be a mission of peace, but in a surprise attack on the Sabbath they killed 40,000 people and took as many captive to the slave markets of Syria
      - 1) key buildings in Jerusalem were burned
      - 2) and the walls were overthrown
  - 7. Then Antiochus instituted a policy that made illegal virtually every observance of the Mosaic Law!
    - a. the Jews were forbidden from keeping any of their annual feasts,
      - 1) they were prohibited from circumcising their children,
      - 2) Sabbath observance was outlawed
      - 3) and any copy of the Jewish Scriptures they could find were burned!
    - b. but to cap it off, at the height of his atrocities, on December 16, 167 B.C. Antiochus erected a statue of Zeus in front of the temple, then had a *pig* offered on the altar.
  - 8. Antiochus promised any Jews who would renounce the God of Israel and worship Zeus great reward.
    - a. as it says in v. 32, many were persuaded by his promises and “flattery” and worshiped the false god.
    - b. yet through all this, a remnant remained faithful to God
    - c. these dissenters fled from Jerusalem and lived in the outlying territories where the Syrian presence was less strong.

9. From this loyal group arose a movement that would eventually see the Syrians defeated and repelled from the land, the temple reclaimed and the worship of God restored.
10. This is what is foretold at the end of v. 32 . . .

**but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out *great exploits*.**

### **C. *The Maccabees***

1. It all began at the village of Modin northwest of Jerusalem
2. A priest named Mattathias and his 5 sons had fled from Jerusalem a few months before and found refuge there
3. An emissary from Antiochus arrived in Modin and set up an altar to Zeus
  - a. then he ordered Mattathias to offer a pig as a sacrifice
  - b. Mattathias, an old man, had had enough and refused
  - c. another, younger priest rushed forward to make the offering lest the Syrians be outraged and start killing the people of the village
  - d. but Mattathias grabbed a dagger, killed the younger priest for his apostasy, then turned on the Syrian emissary
  - e. his 5 sons quickly came to his side and the Syrians troops were put to the sword.
4. They then destroyed the pagan altar there in Modin and fled to the hills, knowing Antiochus would soon send a force to deal with them
5. What Mattathias and his sons didn't realize was that this stand was exactly the kind of thing faithful Jews were looking for
6. When word spread of what had happened in Modin, many Jewish rebels joined them in the hills
7. They became known as the *Maccabees*
  - a. one of Mattathias's sons, Judas became the leader of the revolt
  - b. he was nicknamed "Maccabeus" meaning the "Hammer" because the people considered him to be the *mallet* God would use to crush the Syrians and their Jewish sympathizers
8. The rebels succeeded in destroying dozens more pagan altars that had been erected in other villages around the countryside
9. Antiochus at first refused to take the insurrection seriously and only sent minor detachments to quell the disturbance.
10. The Maccabees succeeded in defeating each one of these until Antiochus realized he had badly underestimate the religious fervor that was fueling the revolt
11. Finally, he sent his main governor in the region against the rebels –this force too was defeated and the Maccabees entered Jerusalem
12. Judas took the temple mount, removed Zeus' altar and image, ground them into dust, and built a new altar to the God of Israel.
  - a. all evidence of pagan religion was removed and the temple was rededicated to the Lord
  - b. when the priests realized they didn't have enough sacred oil for the lampstand in the holy place of the temple, they set about to make some new oil

- c. but there wasn't enough to last till the new oil was made and they feared that the lamps would go out
  - d. miraculously, the oil lasted for 8 days until new oil could be pressed
  - e. this miracle is celebrated each year in the Jewish festival of Hanakkah, the Feast of Lights.
13. It's this daring revolt against overwhelming odds that's foretold at the end of v. 32
14. The Maccabean revolt eventually saw the expulsion of the Syrians from Israel
15. And the nation remained an independent state until the coming of the Romans about a hundred years later.

#### **D. V. 32**

1. Look again at what the angel said at the end of v. 32 . . .

**but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.**

- 2. What's the secret of strength? Where do the people of God *find* their strength?
- 3. Strength comes from *knowing* God!
- 4. The Hebrew word "know" is yawdah
  - a. it speaks of the kind of knowledge that comes from experience
  - b. this isn't mere book-knowledge; this is personal experience
  - c. it's the difference in knowing about someone and being their friend
  - d. I know *about* Winston Churchill because I've read books and stories about him;
  - e. but I know Lynn because I'm married to her and live with her day to day
- 5. It's the people who *know God*, not who just know *about* Him, who find strength
- 6. Mattathias knew God! He was a priest who didn't just serve the Lord because it was his job
  - a. Mattathias knew God, and when he saw his fellow Jews turning from the Lord to accommodate the reforms of Antiochus, he knew this displeased God
  - b. as he watched one after another of his peers seduced by the offer of wealth and prestige if they would only compromise with the world, he knew God was grieved
  - c. Mattathias knew God – and so he fled from Jerusalem
  - d. then when the Syrian troops and emissary showed up at the village of Modin and again he was faced with the challenge of accommodation, his knowledge of God demanded he refuse
  - e. when it was clear there was no place else to run, he took a stand – a hard one
  - f. there comes a time when the people of God have to take a stand and say no to the opposition and pressure of the world
    - 1) when the idols of wealth and greed and sensual lust have been erected in the very courts of the temple
    - 2) when the altar has become the scene of immorality and the name of God has been dragged through the mud
    - 3) when the Word of God has become unpopular and dismissed and any

- attempt to obey the Lord is criticized and forbidden
    - g. that's when the people who know God have to take a stand and say "No," to the world
  - 7. Mattathias did, and when he did, his sons quickly rallied to his side, then more and more of those who knew God joined him till their ranks swelled
  - 8. Though always outnumbered and outgunned by the Syrians, they came down out of the hills and carried out great exploits
  - 9. Their knowledge of God strengthened them and they accomplished far more than their numbers would seem to support

### ***E. True Still***

1. What was true for the Maccabees is true in every generation
  - a. history is filled with stories of those, who because they knew God, gained victories far beyond their own ability or strength
  - b. consider Abraham & Moses
  - c. consider Jonathan, the son of King Saul who alone with his armor bearer attacked the Philistine garrison and defeated them
  - d. what about Gideon or Joshua and the fortress city of Jericho?
  - e. think of little David, standing in front of the giant Goliath, swinging his sling!
  - f. the Apostle Paul, one man, in just a few years, traveled back and forth across the Northern Mediterranean and planted dozens of churches from Rome all the way to the Middle East
    - 1) next to Moses & Jesus Christ, no other person in history has had a bigger impact on the development of western culture and the history of the modern world than Paul
    - 2) and all because of one thing – He knew God!
2. Consider someone in more recent times – David Brainerd
  - a. Brainerd was only 29 years old when he died of tuberculosis
  - b. he had spent his life as a missionary among the native Americans of the Northeast
  - c. a close friend of Jonathan Edwards, Brainerd had refused the comfortable career of being a pastor of a colonial church
  - d. his heart burned with a fierce passion to take the gospel to the native Americans
  - e. while most white ministers shunned work among the Indians, David Brainerd knew that God loved them and desired them to be set free of the bondage to superstition that worked to keep them enslaved to spiritual darkness
  - f. in his early 20's, he left the comfort of his New England village and walked out into the forests
  - g. he was not a physically strong man and endured constant illness
  - h. his lack of results among the native Americans in the early years drove him into a depression so deep it bordered on insanity.
  - i. and to top it all off, he was so painfully aware of his own sinfulness that there were times he almost succumbed to despair that God could ever use

- him
- j. yet despite this, because he knew God, Brainerd kept to his mission of sharing the gospel with the Indians – faithfully recording every day’s events in his diary
  - k. finally, several of them were won to faith, then whole villages turned to the Lord
  - l. many of them came to Brainerd, saying that *they* wanted to take the gospel to other tribes as missionaries
  - m. it was on one of these missionary trips with them that Brainerd’s tuberculosis became so bad he had to return to New England
  - n. his friend Jonathan Edwards took him in and it was there, at the age of only 29, that David Brainerd died
  - o. the well known Edwards then took Brainerd’s diaries and read them.
  - p. he was so moved by what he found that he edited them into a book which became a bestseller – the first full-length missionary biography
  - q. it quickly gained international attention and so many people were moved upon reading it that hundreds of new missionaries went in to the field, specially among the native Americans
  - r. William Carey read it and was so stirred he went to India for 40 years and became known as the “father of modern missions”
  - s. dozens more well-known missionaries all responded to the call as a result of reading Brainerd’s diaries.
  - t. all because one man knew God – and that knowledge strengthened him to do something beyond himself
  - u. he knew God loved the Native Americans and desired them to be saved
  - v. he knew God had commanded his followers to take the gospel into all the world
  - w. in simple obedience he went, and though he may have thought his life and work wasn’t really that significant, he was like a grain of wheat that fell into the ground that produced a harvest of multiple thousands
3. Our day is in many ways parallel to the days of the Maccabees
- a. we may not face a tyrant as obvious and fearful as Antiochus Epiphanes
  - b. but the attack that’s being leveled against the Faith is every bit as strong as it was then
  - c. all around the world, in some 40 countries, Christians are being persecuted for their faith;
  - d. in China, Sudan, Indonesia, Viet Nam, the Middle East and many other places, our brothers and sisters are tortured and put to death for worshipping Christ.
  - e. several Christian organizations have asked that *today* we pray for the persecuted church around the world
  - f. but even here in the comfortable West where persecution isn’t formal, we face many of the pressures the faithful faced in the days of Antiochus
  - g. today it’s politically incorrect to take a stand for Christ
    - 1) it’s considered intolerant and unkind to call sin immoral
    - 2) it’s thought to be the height of pride to say that there’s only one way to heaven

- 3) there are people right here in our own country who've lost their jobs and been subjected to law suits because they've taken a stand on moral issues
- 4) in some companies, if you refuse to take sensitivity training sessions, you're banned from promotion
- 5) it seems anything goes today, except the Christian faith
- 6) students have been banned from bringing their bibles to school
- 7) prayer is prohibited at graduations and sporting events
- 8) and just as Antiochus banned the celebration of the Jewish holidays, Christmas is now called Winter Break, Easter Vacation is Spring Break and the dates for these are being moved around so that they don't even coincide with the holiday anymore
- h. let's face it, the Christian Faith and those who hold it are being marginalized and pushed to the fringe
- i. just as Antiochus did, the godless are being rewarded while the godly are being increasingly punished and persecuted
4. As in the days of the Maccabees, it will be the people who know God who will be strong and who will carry out great exploits
5. That doesn't mean that like the Maccabees we ought to start *killing* people -
6. But it does mean we ought to take a stand and like Mattathias say, "That's enough!"
  - a. I've gone along with things long enough!
  - b. no more will I run and hide
  - c. no more will I remain silent and compliant
  - d. no more accommodation and compromise
  - e. no more appeasement and *peace at any price*
  - f. truth matters more to me than peace, for any peace that is not built on truth is nothing more than a temporary fiction, the calm before a storm of evil
7. It's time for Christian parents to show up at school board meetings and say enough to the godless philosophies of evolution and humanism that dominate the textbooks
8. It's time for those who know God to stand up and say "Enough" to the filth coming out of Hollywood and that's presented almost every night on TV
  - a. most Christians would never invite a pornographer or drug dealer into their home
  - b. but they do much the same every time MTV plays across the surface of a television set in their house
9. It's time for those who know God to Stand!
10. This is a time that cries out desperately for some daring deeds and courageous exploits
  - a. we need some Davids, some Joshuas,
  - b. a Moses or Paul

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. No Antiochus, Just The World**



1. Antiochus erected an altar to Zeus and commanded the Jews to worship it; many did – only a few refused
2. Those who capitulated, Antiochus rewarded and promoted – they were the successful and wealthy
3. We don't face an Antiochus today - our enemy is less obvious and far more subtle – it's called the World
4. What's sad is that it seems the Church has been asleep, and while we've slept, the world has crept right in and set up an image in the sanctuary
  - a. now many worship the false god of *success*
  - b. instead of faithfully serving Jesus, it's numbers we're after
  - c. faithfulness has been traded in for success
5. Just as Judas Maccabeus cleansed and restored the Temple to the worship of God, it's time to do a little house-cleaning in the Church of Jesus Christ!

### **B. Passion**

1. A day like this demands some passion in our faith in Christ
2. Apathy is a sign of a dead faith
3. If you're walking down the street and you see that there's a fire in the second floor of a two story house,
  - a. and you look in the window to see a family blissfully unaware their house is on fire,
  - b. sitting round the table having dinner –
  - c. you wouldn't shrug your shoulders and walk on; nor would you nonchalantly saunter up to the door and politely ring the bell
  - d. no - you'd run to the window and shout at the top of your lungs to get those people out of there
  - e. you'd probably even neglect the custom of knocking and just barge in the front door,
  - f. grabbing the children and pushing the adults toward the exit!
  - g. the immediacy of the danger would compel you to passionate action
4. Friends, the second floor of this two-story world is a raging inferno
5. Our faith demands some passion!
6. Tony Campolo has said that instead of praying, "If I should die before I wake," we should pray, "Lord wake me up before I die!"

### **C. The Key**

1. The key to passion, the key to doing great things for God – the secret of strength, is to know God
2. The way to know God is through learning and then living His Word