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23. Herod, the Willful King (Daniel 11:36-45)

(continued from last month)

v. 40. This verse is often mistranslated. It says that the king of the South will battle "with" him, and the king of the North will storm "against" him. The distinction in prepositions indicates that the King was allied with the South against the North.

In fact, this is what happened, and what is here described is known as the Actian War of 31 BC. Plutarch provides the history, and it is summarized in Mauro's *Seventy Weeks*, pp. 152ff. At the urging of his lover, Cleopatra VII of Egypt, Anthony moved against Octavian Caesar at Athens. Herod supported him in this by sending supplies. The Senate declared war on Cleopatra, thus the North declared war on the South. The battle was fought with chariots, horsemen, and ships, but not with cavalry. Plutarch testifies to the accuracy of this specific prediction.

Though Cleopatra was ruler of Egypt, this verse speaks of the king of the South, evidently with Anthony in mind. Octavian would storm against Anthony (not Herod), and then, victorious at the sea battle of Actium, Octavian would overflow and take over the whole region.

v. 41. Octavian entered Palestine, where Herod switched sides and allied with him. Then Octavian sent an expedition into Edom, Moab, and Ammon under Aelius Gallus, who was joined by men from Herod, but the expedition was unsuccessful.

v. 42. Meanwhile, Octavian conquered other countries, including Egypt. Anthony and Cleopatra committed suicide.

v. 43. Octavian (and thus Rome) gained control of Egypt's great wealth, and under Cornelius Balbus, Rome went on to conquer Libya and Ethiopia.

Why is attention given to these events, out of the many in Herod's reign? I believe it is because these events (a) fully established Rome's domination over the near east once and for all; (b) ended the separate history of the South, thus bringing to an end the Alexandrian history that began in Daniel 11:3; and (c) established Octavian Caesar, soon to take the name Augustus, as ruler of the Roman empire, thus setting the stage for the events described when Daniel's sealed book is reopened in the book of Revelation. In terms of the structure of Daniel 11, point (b) is probably the most important, and is why this event is said to come in the "end" (v. 40).

v. 44. At this point attention returns to the Willful King. There is no direct indication of this in the text, and without the corroboration of secular history, as we have described it, the shift in person at this point would probably not be noticed. There is, however, indication of the shift in the text, once we are alerted to it.

In verse 40, no matter how we read it, the king of the North comes with chariots, horsemen, and ships against the Willful King. Then we read that "he" enters countries, overflows, and passes through. In context, this "he" must be the North. Continuing in verse 41, "he" enters the holy land and conquers many nations, though not Edom, Moab, and Ammon. Here again, this is still clearly the forces of the North. Verse 42 simply continues the same stream: "he" conquers Egypt, and in verse 43, "he" gains control of Egyptian wealth and conquers the lands to the south of Egypt. Now, all of this is one progression of thought, one long military campaign. Thus, it is all one "sentence" about the king of the North.

In verse 44, reports from the North alarm "him." Since the preceding verses have been describing the king of the North, it is most likely that he is not in view here. Of course, the conquering king of the North might be disturbed by rumors coming from the Northland, but this is a less likely interpretation. The directions North, South, East, and West, in Daniel 11, are personifications. Thus, rumors from the North would be rumors from the Northern power, and the one disturbed would be the Willful King.

Thus, there are ample indications that the passage now shifts back to the Willful King, to Herod. Shortly before Herod's death, rumors from the East clearly refers to the visit of the Magi, which troubled Herod to the extent that he slaughtered all the infants in Bethlehem. Meanwhile, his son Antipater, then at Rome, conspired to have letters sent to Herod stating that two of his older sons had slandered Herod to Caesar. Herod had them killed. Antipater then conspired to kill Herod, but Herod caught wind of it and had him killed. Throughout his last months and weeks, Herod was tormented by horrible diseases and was continually enraged, and it was at this time that he burned alive the men who tore down the golden eagle Herod had put on the Temple gate.

v. 45. This seems a summary verse. It states that Herod built himself a pavilion between the seas upon the Mountain of the Beauty of Holiness. In fact, Herod had two palaces in Jerusalem, one in the Temple and one in the upper city. Attention is called to this here because it is one more indication of Herod's trying to usurp the place of the Messianic king. Jesus is the King who is to sit enthroned in the Temple.

Herod died universally hated, having murdered members of his own family over and over, slaughtered faithful Jews, and disgusted even the Romans.

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In Chapter 14 above I discussed Herod as a head of the Roman beast, the head that faced Judea. Here I wish to comment on three other dimensions of Herod that fix his place in the covenant history of the Bible: Herod as Saul, as Esau, and as Amalek.

First, Herod is clearly the Saul who comes before the Greater David. His attempt to kill Jesus when He was born corresponds to Saul's attempts to kill David. Like Herod, Saul was estranged from his son, Jonathan, and even tried to kill him on one occasion. Moreover, the fact is that modern skeptical commentators often seek to vindicate Saul as a good king who just wasn't able to figure out what mean old Samuel wanted. This is because, measured by political criteria, Saul was not all that bad a ruler. This is parallel to the way Herod is regarded nowadays. By the end of his reign, however, Saul was pretty universally despised, and we have seen the same with Herod.

Thus, the typological parallel between Daniel 11 and

the period from Moses to David is pretty close: a period of relative faithfulness accompanied by much trouble, climaxed by the commission of the desolating sacrilege by the high priests, followed after a number of years by a king who turns out to be bad, who is finally succeeded by God's righteous king.

Second, Herod and his successors climax the Jacob-Esau theme in the Bible. The suggestion that Herod is the Second Little Horn and the Willful King seems initially implausible until we realize the pervasiveness of the Jacob-Esau struggle in the Bible. It is a continuation of the Cain-Abel struggle in Genesis 4. We find that the Edomites continue to plague Israel throughout her history. There are two particular aspects of this conflict that are important for a consideration of Herod.

In the first place, the pattern laid out in the Old Testament is that after Jerusalem is attacked by gentiles, the Edomites descend as vultures on the corpse. This is the point of the whole book of Obadiah, and also shows up, after another invasion, in Psalm 137. Notice that this is exactly the pattern in Daniel 11 as well, for in terms of literary structure we are presented with the assault of Antiochus Epiphanes, the gentile who destroys Jerusalem, and then immediately afterwards we read of Herod.

In the second place, the Edomites are one of the three archetypal enemies of the kingdom of God. Thus, Jesus was put on trial by the Sanhedrin, Herod, and the Romans. Paul was tried by the same three. In terms of Biblical theology, humanity is pictured as rebelling against God progressively in three dimensions: Adam rebelled against God the Father in the sanctuary; Cain murdered his brother, thus striking against God the Brother, in the land; and finally the Sethite sons of God quenched the Spirit of God by intermarrying with gentiles in the world (Genesis 3, 4, 6). Thus, the three aspects of our enmity against God are signified by the apostate Jews (the false church), the Edomites (the false brothers), and the Romans (the wicked world, with whom the sons of God "married" when they cried "We have no king but Caesar!").

Indeed, given that the prophecies of Daniel concern the future of the Jews and of the gentiles, we can expect also some notice of the Edomites.

Third, the Herods fill out the Amalek pattern in the Bible. After the Israelites escaped from Egypt, they had to fight the Amalekites. Amalek is from Esau (Genesis 36:12). This establishes the pattern: after exodus, Amalek. Thus, after Saul defeated the Philistines in 1 Samuel 14, he confronted Amalek in 1 Samuel 15, though he did not faithfully destroy Agag, king of Amalek. It was left to David to deal with the Amalekites (1 Samuel 27:8; 30:1ff.). Thus, after the exodus from Babylon, we find the attack of Amalek in the book of Esther. Similarly, Ezekiel prophesies that after Israel comes back to the land, she will be attacked by Gog—almost certainly a prophecy of the book of Esther (Ezekiel 38-39). There is a shadow of this

pattern in Genesis 14, where, after Abram's exodus from Egypt, the battle is described as taking place "in the hill country of the Amalekites," though the Amalekites did not yet exist (Gen. 14:7).

In terms of the Herods, we note again that in Daniel 11, after the people are delivered from Antiochus, they are then oppressed by Herod. Again, after the saints are scattered from Jerusalem, the new Egypt, fleeing the high priest, who is the new Pharaoh (Acts 8), we find Herod arresting James and Peter, and murdering the former (Acts 12).

From Alexander to Christ

			234	Onias II HP
			(Tobiads begin to acquire wealth)	
			230	
		Seleucus 3 Keroneus	226	
		Antiochus 3 the Great	222	
			221	Ptolemy 4 Philopator
			220	
			219	Simon 2 the Just HP
		Battle of Raphia	217	
				(Pro-Egyptian Tobiads make trouble during these years)
			210	
			203	Ptolemy 5 Epiphanes
	323	Ptolemy 1 Soter		
	320		200	
	319	Onias I HP	199	Onias III HP
			197	(Tobiads "stumble")
			196	
			190	
Seleucus 1 Nicator	312			
	310		187	
		Seleucus 4 Philopator		
			180	Ptolemy 6 Philometer
	302	Simon I HP	175	Jason HP, usurper (Zakokite)
	300		174	
	293	Eleazar I HP	171	Menelaus HP - end of Zadok
			170	
	290			
			164	
			162	Alcimus HP
	283	Ptolemy 2 Philadelphus	160	
Antiochus 1 Soter	280		153	Jonathan HP
			150	
	270		143	Simon III HP
			140	
Antiochus 2 Theos	261		135	John Hyrcanus HP
	260	Manasseh HP	130	
	250	Berenice to Antiochus 2		
	247	Ptolemy 3 Euergetes		
Seleucus 2 Callinicus	246		120	
Seleucus invades Egypt; beaten	242			
	240			

	110	
	104	Aristobulus I HP
	103	Alexander Jannaeus HP
	100	
	90	
	80	
Salome Alexandra ruler	76	Hyrcaeus II HP
	70	
Aristobulus II	67	Aristobulus II HP
Pompey & Antipater	63	Hyrcaeus II HP
	60	
	50	
	41	Antigonus HP
	40	
Herod the Great	37	
Battle of Actium	31	(End of Greek Period)
	30	
	20	
	10	
Death of Herod	4	
	1	

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