



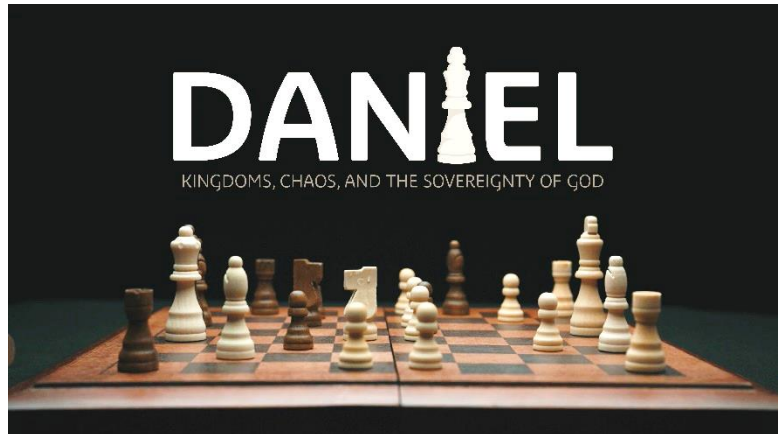
VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

The Fate of the Fake

DANIEL: Kingdoms, Chaos and the Sovereignty of God

Daniel 11:36–45

Cisco Cotto | April 21, 2024



There is a scenario that has played out in just about every home that has children in it. Mom and Dad lie down, kids are already in bed, Mom and Dad are just about to drift off to sleep—when all of a sudden, they hear from down the hall, “Mom! Dad! There’s a monster in my closet!” Then one of them has to get up. I mean, let’s be honest. It’s usually Mom at first. I heard a few amens to that. Mom gets up, goes into the bedroom. “Honey, honey, there’s no monster in your closet. It’s okay. Let me hug you, give you a little kiss. It’s all right. Dad and I are right there. You’re fine.” Mom gets back in bed.

A few minutes later, “Mom! Dad! There’s a monster in my closet! It’s scary. It has claws. It has fangs. It wants to take me out!” At that point Mom looks at Dad and goes, “Oh, no, it’s your turn now.” Dad gets up, trudges into the room. “Honey, there’s no monster in your closet. I promise you. Here, let me open the closet.” You open the closet; you go through the clothes. “See, there’s no monster.” There’s all the toys and shoes and stuff on the floor. “See, it’s just clothes and other stuff. There is no monster in the closet!” You close the closet door, give a hug and a kiss. “It’ll be all right, honey. You’re fine. You’re safe. Don’t worry about it. There is no monster in your closet.” Then you go back to bed, but for the rest of the night—whether it’s ten minutes, 20 minutes, or an hour—that child is lying there in bed, covers up to the mouth, shaking, staring at the closet door. No matter what Mom and Dad have said, he or she is convinced there’s a monster in that closet and very afraid.

Now, we know there is no monster in the closet, yet Scripture tells us about a character who seems like a monster in the closet, who seems so unreal, who seems that he must be a work of fiction. There’s no way this guy could be a reality in our world. So for years and years and years and years, in spite of how the Bible describes him—and it does in many ways in many places—this character has been thought of by many Christians and non-Christians as a figment of the imagination, as a story, as a monster in the closet. Yet Daniel, getting a vision from the Lord and relaying it to God’s people, wants us very much to know that there is a guy who’s going to come on the scene. He is going to be a horror, so God’s people better be aware. God’s people better be prepared. We had better be ready because it’s going to happen.

The way this guy is described in several passages of Scripture is just awful. He’s someone who will be completely self-absorbed to the point of demanding everyone’s loyalty, even their worship. He will think he’s a god. He’s a guy who will have control of a powerful military and will use that military to expand his kingdom and he doesn’t care who he defeats along the way.

He will be a master manipulator, who will take advantage of people, using threats and even perks in order to get these people to work for him and do what he wants them to do. With his military might, he will have so many victories that it will seem as though he’s unstoppable. There are some who may even start to believe, “Maybe this guy is the true God.” He’s so awful, I don’t think any horror movie has ever come up with a character like this—dominating on a global scale, defeating anyone who stands in his way.

There are Scriptures that tell us not only is he a military might, but he will also be in charge of the world economy, so that you won’t be able to buy or sell anything unless you pledge obedience to him, unless you pledge loyalty to him, unless you essentially

worship him. You will be shut out of the economy. If you're not put to death, you'll be on the outside looking in. This is something that is so awful, so scary, so terrifying it leads many people to believe that he can't possibly be real. There's no way this guy is ever really going to exist. They treat him like a monster in the closet. But the Bible says, "No, this is a real guy and you're going to see him on the earth someday."

Ever since this prophecy was first revealed in Scripture, people have been trying to figure out who the antichrist is going to be. They've been working through the Scriptures, trying to identify what he's like, what he's going to be, where he's going to be, the sort of powers he's going to have.

Now, I mentioned antichrist, because that is one of the ways he's described in Scripture, but I want to show you some of the other ways. I told you earlier that we see this throughout the Bible, in many places, this character who's coming on the scene.

- In Zechariah, he's described as a worthless shepherd.
- We've already seen in earlier chapters of Daniel, as we've been completing this study, he's known as the little horn, the one that mouths arrogant blasphemies. He's the little horn. He's the prince who is to come.
- He's the lawless one in 2 Thessalonians.
- The Apostle John uses that word I used, "antichrist," to describe this guy.
- John, who also wrote Revelation, also calls him the beast.

In each passage where he is described, he is someone to be feared. We'll use the term antichrist throughout the morning, even though he's described in several different ways. Antichrist is what he's most popularly been called in our culture, so we'll just use that term.

As people have tried to figure out who this antichrist is, instead of being rooted in Scripture and using that as their guide to be on the lookout, instead they've often gone to comical levels to try to figure this guy out. They've come up with characters throughout human history and said, "Maybe he's the antichrist. Maybe she's the antichrist."

Many people throughout many, many years have thought of the current pope of the Catholic church, "Oh, he's the antichrist. He's clearly the antichrist." One comes and one goes, one comes and one goes, and not antichrist, not antichrist, not antichrist.

Some people throughout the history of the United States have assumed whoever the current President is, he must be the antichrist. I find it's usually the people who didn't vote for him. "This guy must be the one. He must be the antichrist." One of my favorites in this category of Presidents is this guy right here. Some of you may remember Ronald Reagan. From the beginning of his term in office, many people were saying, "We think he's the antichrist. We're sure he's the one. He's gotta be the guy the Bible talks about." Why did they think this? Why were they so sure he was the one?"



In Revelation 13, we get a description of the antichrist called the beast. This is where we find out how he's going to be in charge of world markets and economies, being able to shut people out. Near the end of chapter 13, we read that anyone who wants to continue having a job or having the ability to buy and sell anything will have to pledge loyalty to this beast, this antichrist. One of the ways they're going to show their loyalty is through taking his mark. And it is said this mark involves his number which is 666. Some of you may have heard, "Beware of 666, the mark of the beast."

Now, how does that connect to former President Ronald Reagan? I literally heard people saying this so I'm not making it up. They said, "His full name is Ronald Wilson Reagan. Each name has six letters—666. He must be the one the Bible talks about." That's ludicrous, yet they were serious. They really thought they had found out who the antichrist was going to be.

To show that I do pay attention when you're talking, I've heard some people here at Village Bible Church throw out some statements such as, "Maybe it's this, maybe it's that." I've heard several of you mention one specific guy as a very likely candidate for the antichrist. It's this guy. [Laughter] Now that's just disrespectful.



For those of you who are visiting, that's our lead pastor, Tim Badal. For the record, I've never actually heard anyone suggest he could be the antichrist, but any time I can make fun of Tim, I take advantage of it!

Throughout history there have been people who have thought that popes and presidents, maybe even pastors, are going to be the antichrist. They are rooting it in what they are seeing around them, not in God's Word because He's given us a picture of what is to come. We've seen time and again throughout Scripture that what God predicts—the prophecies He gives forth through His prophets—comes true. We can confidently approach God's Word, seeing what it says and watching it play out throughout human history. One of the prophecies that is yet to come is the prophecy of the antichrist, the brutal one, the manipulator, the person who does not respect life at all, the person who wants to dominate the world.

Now, we see him yet again in Daniel 11:36. As Daniel is getting this vision from the Lord, he is sort of looking through a telescope with one eye, with the other eye seeing something that is much, much closer. The actions in history that are closer are ones that have already been fulfilled. Pastor Tim talked about this last week. There was this guy, Antiochus Epiphanes, a megalomaniac who essentially thought he should be the world leader. He had a strong army that pushed into different areas, expanding that army. He thought he would never be stopped. This guy was brutal toward God's people Israel. He was in Jerusalem, tearing down their religious worship, getting rid of their culture, thinking he could destroy these people. He was a monster.

When Daniel was giving this prophecy, Antiochus and all the other world leaders that were part of this prophecy were still in the future for Daniel, but now for us they are part of history. All of those events have already taken place, so we can look back and see how they played out. But this portion of Daniel 11 was not only future to Daniel, it is future to us as well. It has not happened yet.

So we, like those first people who read what Daniel got from the Lord, need to look at this, be alert and pay attention, trying to root our view of the end times and of the antichrist in Scripture, instead of just shooting from the hip.

So Daniel moves on. He pivots to a different ruler, someone who would make Antiochus look like nothing. It's like Antiochus was just a preview, just a hint, of what this final antichrist will be like. He will be like him, but so much worse.

The antichrist will worship himself.

The first thing we see about this antichrist character in Daniel 11 is that he will worship himself. There have been many world leaders throughout history who have been egomaniacs, who have thought they should be in charge of the world, who have tried to be in charge of the world. There are many of them who thought they could be gods, especially in polytheistic cultures where multiple gods were worshiped. They continued worshipping other earthly gods, even while wanting worship for themselves, demanding people be loyal to them and declare it.

However, we're going to see here that the antichrist is so self-absorbed, so arrogant, so out of control, that he doesn't worship any of those other earthly gods. He doesn't want anyone else to worship any of those earthly gods. He thinks he is the one true God and demands worship from the people. He doesn't even believe in the one true God we worship. In fact, he disparages Him. He speaks poorly of Him. He denigrates our God and is disrespectful to the extreme. This guy really believes he is the true god and is not going to stop until everyone around him agrees.

Look at this in verse 36: *"And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods."* That's the true God, the God we worship. He will speak unspeakable things against our God, things we would never imagine. *"He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all."*

He will be so obnoxiously deluded that he will really believe that he and he alone is divine and that every single person in the world should bow to him in worship. He doesn't think he's one among many gods; he doesn't think he's one among a variety of gods. No, he thinks he is the one true "God." So he's going to issue a command: "Get rid of your other gods. Get rid of the one true God. Worship me—or else. Or else you will be put to death." Or if you're not put to death, you will be pushed out of the community, unable to hold a job, unable to have a bank account, unable to do anything involving caring for your family. You'll be so far on the outside you basically end up dying of starvation. He's going to put people in a position where, "You either bow to me in praise and honor, or I will do you in."

When we see someone like this, we start to understand why people think, "Oh, he's just a monster in a closet. He can't possibly be real." Yet the Bible says the antichrist is real. He will worship himself and demand that people worship him. He will say awful things about our God, demanding that we deny our God and worship him. This guy is going to be amazing beyond anything we can imagine. He's going to worship himself.

The antichrist will use military might and perks to expand his reach.

The antichrist will have a powerful military, will be a master manipulator and will use those things in order to increase his empire and influence. He's going to have a military that can basically stroll into town and do whatever it wants because it is so powerful. He's going to pick off key people in the community and say, "Hey, if you don't want to die, instead you can serve me and bow down to me. I'll give you some land. I'll give you some money. I'll let you lead these people." He's going to use military might and use manipulation in order to expand his control.

He's basically going to worship his powerful military, because he sees it as an extension of himself. He sees the fact that he's able to win military victory so easily as a clear example of his power, of his worthiness to be praised. He's going to sink all kinds of money into this military in order to make it as robust as possible, in order to make it as powerful as he possibly can. He's basically going to worship his military power because it's an extension of him, and he believes he is worthy of worship.

Verse 38 mentions "the god of fortresses," an indication of his worship of his military. It says, *"He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these."* He's not going to worship any other god; instead he's going to worship himself and his military as an extension of himself. *"A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts."* He's going to spend boatloads of money building up that military power. Everything he has is going to go into it. *"He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god."* He's going to go forward with that strong military, then the manipulation begins and the perks start getting handed out. *"Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price."*

So we're getting a picture here of what this guy is going to be like. He's going to be completely self-absorbed. He's going to demand our worship. He says, "Worship me or die. Worship me or be put out of the community." He's going to sink every dime he gets into having a stronger, stronger, and stronger military. He's going to essentially worship his military power as he worships himself. He's going to see the expansion of his kingdom as proof that he truly is "God." Along the way, there are some people he's just straight up going to kill, but there are others whom he will in a selective way choose to save. "Hey, prove your loyalty to me, worship me, then I'll give you money. I'll give you status. I'll put you in charge of people. I'll give you property. I'll give you land."

Many people, when faced with death or exclusion from society, will indeed bow their knee in worship to the antichrist. At crunch time, when they want to say no, when they want to stand away, when they want to get out, they will instead worship him in order to save themselves.

Now, the U.S.A. has a strong military. Several other countries have a strong military. However this guy's military works itself out, it will be the strongest. He will have the best weapons. Whether drones, warships, cyber activities able to do warfare online, he will be able to essentially steamroll anyone in his path. This guy is going to be mighty. He's going to make even the strongest armies quake.

I don't think his perks are on the same level at all, obviously, but I think we've seen how this works, how perks are used to manipulate. In the workplace, quite often there will be a boss who is not well liked by employees. I'm sorry for those of you who are bosses. There are times when the boss is not liked. Sometimes it's wrong, but sometimes it's because they're not very nice.

They don't treat the people very well. Maybe they don't really know how to lead. So sometimes, in order to keep their jobs, in order to stay in power, what do these bosses do? They start handing out the perks. Some of you have seen this. It's unfair. It's not right. "Hey, you've been asking about overtime. I think I can work out some overtime for you. Hey, maybe I'll give you another dollar or two or three an hour. I'll help you out. Your work truck is run down; I think we should get you a new work truck. That's what we should do. Oh, your workspace is all dingy; we'll get you a nice office. That'll be great. We'll let you run this next project." So they hand out little perks, not because they care about the people they're leading. If they do, then this is a good thing; it's not manipulation but a good reward, an encouragement. But when the person is just trying to hold on to power, influence, and control, they start doling out those perks in an unfair way. "Be on my side and I'll give you all this stuff." That's manipulation, it's wrong and it hurts people.

We see this in our workplaces now, but this antichrist is going to do it on a much larger scale. He is going to put people in a position based on, "Be loyal to me and get honor—or die." Many people are not going to choose death; instead they're going to honor him.

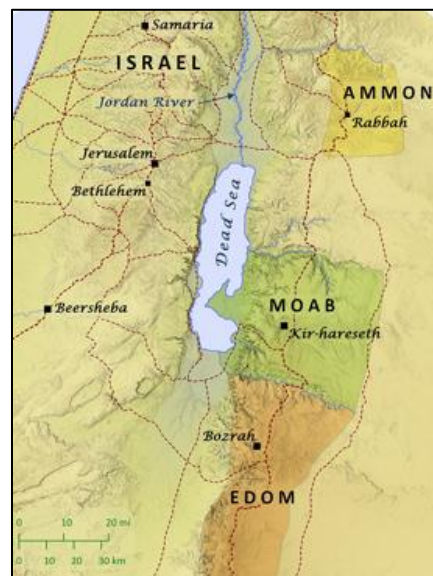
The antichrist will have many victories.

So the antichrist worships himself, worships his military, manipulates the people. Also, one of the things that is going to lead him and others to actually start wondering if he really is "God" is because of all the victories he wins. It would be one thing if he was a military ruler and every time he went out into battle there were setbacks. He would start to doubt; his people would start to doubt. Certainly the people who are fighting against him would doubt. But since he gets victory after victory after victory, that proves to him and others, "This guy probably is "God." I mean, look at the success he is having against these world powers."

We're going to read about a few nations in here, so I want to show you some maps before we get there to help root into this. Pastor Tim got us started on this last week by looking at the Seleucids, the Ptolemies, their battles and rulers. Here are some of the general areas that were involved in that.

Today we're going to look at these three countries: Edom, Moab, and Ammon. We're going to be told by Daniel that these three countries actually escape the wrath of the antichrist. We don't know how. We don't know if he just leaves them alone. We don't know if they beat him militarily. We don't know what it is, but somehow these countries that are east of the Dead Sea are going to be spared. In our modern day, Jordan is along the east side of the Dead Sea and is at peace with Israel and its neighbors. Now Edom, Moab and Ammon don't exist anymore. We don't really know how this is going to play out, but Daniel is going to tell us that there are some people who are going to escape the wrath of this antichrist and his military battles.

There are other people who are going to have a much tougher time. Let's look at this map. This is modern-day northeast Africa. At the top, we have Libya and Egypt. Down



below is Sudan and Ethiopia. Daniel is going to name Libya and Egypt specifically in his prophecy, but he's going to call them Cush which was an ancient kingdom known as the Cushite kingdom that was made up of big chunks of Sudan and Ethiopia.

So Daniel is pointing to these three areas of northeastern Africa and saying the antichrist is going to go after these people. They're going to wage war against these people, and it is going to be brutal for the other armies. There's going to be victory after victory by the antichrist. It's going to seem like he's just skating through these areas,

taking whatever he wants. These victories are going to lead him to think, "I really am "God" and the people around him are really going to wonder, "Is he really "God?"

Look at verse 40: *"At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him"* —that's those kings in northeast Africa— *"but the king of the north"* —the antichrist— *"shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships."* In other words today we could say, "With drones, battleships and fighter jets, even with cyber warfare." The antichrist is going to throw whatever the most powerful weapons are against him, then he is going to overcome. *"And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through."* This is why I say it's like he just skates right through. It's like he has no trouble with these people. He just waltzes right through and dominates.

Verse 41: *"He shall come into the glorious land"* —this is Daniel talking about the land of Israel. *"And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites."* Daniel roots the focus of this antichrist activity in the land of Israel, saying, "These people over here to the east, they're going to be fine." For whatever reason, they escape all of his horror.

However, the people in the south are not so lucky. *"He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train."* This is talking about the military domination of these countries—it's not even close. But then—and we don't know what this is—he gets some news from other places, he starts running away from these battles, then ends up hurting other people. Verse 44 says, *"But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction."*

So we have a guy who is worshiping himself and making everyone else worship him. We have a guy who worships his military, because he believes that proves he really is "God." We have a guy who's manipulating the people whom he is conquering to try to get them to do his bidding. And we have a man who's so powerful militarily that he's basically able to do whatever he wants to do. No one can stand in his way. So victory after victory after victory leads to people around him saying, "Maybe he really is 'God'."

Now, when we hear about this guy—and this is just what's in the book of Daniel, not all the other descriptions in the other books—I think it becomes easier for us to understand why so many people have treated the antichrist like the monster in the closet, like some sort of myth or fable, some work of fiction. We think this guy can't possibly be real. He can't just completely dominate in a global sense the way the Bible describes. It just can't happen. Maybe regionally it could happen, but it's not going to happen worldwide.

When we look back into history, I think we get a picture of just how bad this monster can be, even on a larger scale. Here are some figures from history you'll recognize:

- Josef Stalin, upper left.
- Chairman Mao, upper right.
- Pol Pot, lower left.
- Saddam Hussein, lower right.



All ruthless dictators who killed countless people and tried to expand their empires.

- Then Hitler in the middle, known as the worst of them all—so far—for his ruthless, murderous movement through Europe. Hitler may be the best example on a smaller scale of what the antichrist will be like—the murderer of more than six million Jews, trying to rule the world, thinking that in some way he was "God." He just kept on moving and kept on moving until he was eventually stopped.

I think was giving people a little preview of the antichrist through the ancient leader Antiochus Epiphanes. In the same way, I think these leaders over the last hundred years in our world allow us to see this is no monster in the closet, no fake story, no fairy tale, no Hollywood movie. Would one man be able to amass so much military, so much economic control, so much loyalty

among followers—whether legit or manipulated? Would one guy be able to move forward, marching through countries, essentially taking over the world? Why wouldn't a guy be able to do that?

When we start thinking, "Hey, if the Bible is true, if the Bible predicts the antichrist is coming on the scene—and we've seen so many of its prophecies come true—then we need to pay attention. How are we to respond? What are we supposed to do?"

There is a Christian tradition that says we will not see the antichrist, that we will be in heaven before the antichrist comes. We greatly respect that tradition. There's another tradition that says we very well could have the antichrist around any moment. We greatly respect that tradition as well. As we've been going through the book of Daniel, as pastors and shepherds, we feel it is our duty to teach you what Scripture says in preparation for what we may experience, so that God's people are prepared. We don't just want to ignore this stuff. This is why we have to see what Daniel says about the antichrist. We have to see what we might expect. We have to understand what is to come. As we realize that he is not the monster in the closet, but that he will be a real human being on the earth who will crush people, we are not to respond with fear, anxiety, discouragement, or hopelessness as we watch and wait. Instead, we are to remember, as Daniel is going to explain next, that the antichrist will be defeated.

The antichrist will be defeated, so don't be alarmed.

No matter how awful the antichrist he will be—and he will be awful—he will be defeated, so God's people have no reason to be alarmed. We can confidently and hopefully live our lives rooted in the truth that at the end of the day, Jesus Christ is the One Who is victorious. He's the One we can count on. He's the One worthy of our worship.

I love how Daniel just sort of flicks off the antichrist from human history just like that. It says in verse 45, again showing he's rooted in the land of Israel—*"He shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him."* Just like that, he is gone—another Stalin, another Pol Pot, another Hitler—here and awful one day, but then gone and off the world's stage. Jesus Christ is victorious and we see at the end of the day that His people will live with Him in glory forever and ever and ever.

So why does God include this in the book of Daniel? Why does God tell His people all of this? I think there are a few reasons.

God is in control

As we read the book of Daniel, seeing his actions, seeing God's actions and these prophecies, we must be reminded that we're not to be alarmed because God is in control. No human leader, no earthly empire, is stronger than God. God is not asleep at the switch. He's not failing to pay attention. He's not powerless. God is working out His will throughout human history and we can be confident in that. We can trust in that. We can have hope and peace because of that. God is in control.

Look quickly at verse 36 about this antichrist, *"He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done."* God is in control, not the antichrist, no matter how godlike he may look. We must be reminded that God is in control.

God's people are in the crosshairs of God's enemies.

We must also be reminded that we are always the focus of the people who hate God. We see throughout this book of Daniel, throughout this discussion of the antichrist, everything is centered in Israel, where God's people resided. The center of all activity always comes back to the land of Israel, especially now with the war in Gaza and Iran, . God's people have always been in the crosshairs of God's enemies. Each and every one of us are in the crosshairs of our spiritual enemy, Satan. We're in the crosshairs of the people in our world who do not love God. Now, we can get upset about that. We can complain about that. We can shake our fists about that. Or we can look at God's Word and say, "It's exactly what it says. Of course we're going to be the enemy of God's enemies.." That completely changes our attitude and leads us to pray for those who are persecuting us or disrespecting us, whatever that looks like. We want them to know our victorious King, just like we do.

God's people need to focus on Who we can count on.

Another reason I believe this information is given to us, why we have these prophecies that we may never see, is to get us focused on Who we can count on, Who we can trust, what to follow and what to stay away from.

During Hitler's time there was a Christian scholar whose name was Helmut Thielicke. He was a really smart man in Germany, working at secular institutions. He never went along with the Nazis, never went along with Hitler, even as many of the other professors did. He was asked after World War II, "Why did you never go along with the Nazis? Why did you never follow Hitler? Why did you not get caught up in all this?" He said, "I read Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, before the war started. I knew what this guy was like. I knew what he wanted to do. I knew of his hatred for the Jews. I knew he was bound and determined to rule the world. I didn't want to be any part of it. I didn't want to join forces with him."

Why do we have this Book? Why do we have God's Word filled with these prophecies and these encouragements? It's so God's people can know ahead of time what's going to happen. So we can be prepared. So we can live lives strong in the Lord, no matter what comes our way. So we won't bow to any false gods. It's so we don't run in fear, but rather say with confidence, "I have the story of all human history. I know the Author of the story. I don't have to worry about how all this is going to end. I don't have to worry about any antichrist because my hope is in the Lord. My hope is in the true King. My hope is in the true God, the One Who loves His people and cares for His people, the One Who wants to be with His people forever and ever and ever."

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All Scriptures quoted directly English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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