

DECEMBER 3

Daniel 11:2-35

As we enter into all the detail of the prophecies in the last two chapters of Daniel, there are a couple of things to take note of. First, what we're reading today will all take place before the birth of Christ, during a very dangerous time in the life of Israel. Tomorrow will deal with the Tribulation and the events just before the second coming of Christ. Second, we need to understand what the purpose of this detailed prophecy is. Rather than simply showing us that God knows everything and coordinates everything in advance, it is meant to be a help to the people going through these events and distresses. For example, in our reading today, historians can look back and verify the details of what is said here and give names to the people and identify the events. But for the Jews who went through this, it not only gave them an idea of what would happen, but it gave them incredible hope and courage as they saw the Scripture coming true and the events unfolding. It was almost like having tomorrow's newspaper. They understood that God was with them and that nothing was outside of His control. With some of this detail, they could even plan ahead. Much of what we read about the Tribulation in the book of Revelation seems foggy and hard to understand for us, but for those people who will go through the Tribulation, what God has written is going to make perfect sense. It will give them hope and courage.

V. 2 Xerxes was this fourth king and was the husband of Esther. He is mentioned here because of his wars with Greece. He was hugely defeated and got the Greeks incredibly mad.

Vs. 3-4 This is the rise and fall of Alexander the Great.

Vs. 5-20 The four kingdoms of Greece will constantly fight with one another, and Israel will be in the middle of a lot of that fighting. For the Jews that lived during that time, these words in Daniel assured them that God was in control of the chaos.

Vs. 21-35 These are the adventures of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (AE), the precursor of the coming antichrist. If you want some good, but not overly lengthy information on him, read the [Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT](#), pp. 1369-1370.

V. 21 Apparently AE wasn't an obvious ruler. There was deception and intrigue that led to his sudden rise to power. In the same way, it probably won't be apparent who the antichrist is until he is suddenly in power.

V. 22 The *prince of the covenant* was apparently a priest who AE had put to death.

V. 28 Somehow AE will already resolve to fight against Israel, probably because of their stubborn insistence on worshipping Yahweh.

Vs. 29-30 As AE was in Egypt, he was confronted by the growing Roman Empire and he was forced to retreat. In fact, AE was personally humiliated by the Romans who drew a circle in the sand around him, forcing him to make his decision then and there to agree to their demands.

V. 30 Those who forsake the *holy covenant* are traitorous Jews.

Vs. 31-35 And so AE vented his anger on Israel. These verses describe how he tried to stop the worship, desecrate the temple and exterminate Judaism. This anger and frustration, and the reasons thereof, probably foreshadow why and what the antichrist will do in the Tribulation. During the Tribulation, in spite of Satan's power and the supernatural authority he gives the antichrist, unbelieving nations will still rebel against him, blind to the real drama being played out.

V. 32 AE will win over those who really don't like to follow Yahweh.

V. 35 Even as the angel is explaining this to Daniel in such detail, it seems he makes a transition to begin talking about the time of the end. In the Maccabean Revolt that occurred because of the actions of AE, there were godly men who understood these words of prophecy and sacrificed their lives for God. Some of what happened during that period will mirror some of what will happen during the Tribulation, especially the cunning working of AE and the antichrist.

We can understand the importance of these prophecies to the people who went through those very hard times, if we look at all of the information God has given us to encourage us during this time. As disciples following Christ, working in the harvest we understand more of what is happening in life, both on this planet and in the spiritual dimension, than any other peoples in the history of redemption. Jesus Himself told His disciples that they were seeing and hearing what others had longed to know, but were never able to see or hear. We continue in what Jesus said to His apostles in that we have the complete Word of God. Not living with this book in hand as we walk through this spiritual tragedy on earth is an awful mistake. We should be understanding our times and all the challenges, working in the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples. If we don't live by this book daily, we become lost on earth and live a faith without His strength or purpose. We have been given a great treasure and resource, and we ignore it to our own harm.

1 John 3:7-24

As you read this section, notice how often John mentions loving one another. That thought of a common love in Christ flows through this entire section of the letter. The tension in what we will read is that there were some in these churches who were not believers. It seems that the vast majority were believers, yet they were very immature, living according to the old nature, and not the new nature in Christ. The importance of the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 is to show a believing couple who were motivated by the desire for status in the church. When Peter said to Ananias, "why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land," it showed that children of God can follow the flesh and be led by Satan. We know that, right? We don't have room here to find all the places in Paul's letters where this is shown or said, but keep this tension in mind as you read these verses in John. John isn't always saying people are not believers. He is saying that as believers they shouldn't be following the impulses of the devil, but those of the Spirit of Christ. John does say which impulses are from whom.

Vs. 7-10 Notice again that those addressed are *little children*, even the 70-year-old little children. I think John's purpose in this is to say, as Paul did, that we should walk worthy of Christ. It is clear from other letters that Christians are capable of all sorts of sin, from idolatry to immorality. In 2 Timothy 2:26, it mentions how Christians can be captured by Satan to do his will. In 1 Timothy 5:15 it talks about believers who have turned aside to follow Satan. Children of God should not act like children of Satan. If people are not unified in love, they are not being influenced by God, but by the devil. Our salvation in Christ and our mission for Him is supposed to bind us together. If being a believer and going to church means anything other than salvation and mission, it degenerates to a social club.

Vs. 11-15 If the last verses had to do with the influence of Satan, this block of verses seems to deal with the influence of the world. If believers are too focused on being accepted by the world, they will not *love one another*. Again, in a mature group of disciples, this wouldn't be a problem, but not all believers are mature and living from the principle of their new life. Paul told believers that they should put off the works of darkness and put on the Lord. That means that as believers, it is possible to live according to darkness, in death, and not in our new eternal life in Christ.

Vs. 16-18 You can see here that John was aiming high, at a cross-bearing kind of discipleship modeled after Jesus' sacrifice and love for us.

Vs. 19-24 Notice how often John mentions *commandment* in this section. It makes me think of David's passion in Psalm 119. Probably, in order to appreciate what John is writing here, we'd

need to read John's Gospel, chapters 14-17. Verse 22 is a promise given often in that section of John. The love of Christ in the mission of Christ is what makes possible the kind of brotherly love God talks about. If a person is living that love, following Christ, regardless of failures, God forgives and overwhelms their guilty conscience. The Spirit within us is given to us to keep abiding in Christ and moving forward in the harvest. The fact that we keep moving forward, following the Spirit in the love and mission of Christ, is visible evidence that the Spirit is within us.

Again, believers can hide from following Christ. But then, what evidence do they have of the Spirit in them, or that they are abiding in Christ? And then too, they miss out on all the blessings of the gospel. I grew up in a very Catholic area and the common motto was, "God helps those who help themselves." Actually, this is not true. If we don't abide in Christ and follow Him in the harvest, if we are protecting ourselves from persecution and hardship, why should He help us? We are helping ourselves, dependent on ourselves, and not on Him.

If you want an interesting example of this help, look at Luke 12:8-9. Now, as you read it, understand that by Christ acknowledging us before the angels of God, He is actually saying He will send them to help us when we are in that situation. Those people who "help" themselves by not acknowledging Christ, and are therefore avoiding the punishment or scorn of men, don't need His help; and therefore, He doesn't "acknowledge" them and send spiritual aid. Remember, Jesus addressed this passage in Luke to His disciples, not to unbelievers.

Psalm 122

Both the *house of the Lord* and *Jerusalem* are lifted up in this psalm. We've seen in Ezekiel how the city and the temple, though destroyed, will both be rebuilt and will become the destination for generations in the future. Daniel's prayer in chapter 9, and the massive prophecies he was given by Gabriel, show the restoration of Jerusalem and the anointing of the King. Who knows, in the Millennium as people fly into Jerusalem, maybe they will sing this psalm as they travel from the airport up to the city to see the Lord.

Vs. 1-2 This was a passion of David's heart, forged in long years of running from danger and having to remain distant from the tabernacle. David worshiped God in spirit and in truth in the wilderness, but longed for the time he could stand before the tent which housed the ark of the covenant. That is where he knew God was present.

Vs. 3-5 It was in Jerusalem, once the ark was there, where people came to seek the Lord for judgments and mercy.

Vs. 6-9 Because of the temple, peace and security should rest on Jerusalem. It would have been the presence of the Lord that would have brought that peace. It makes you think of what John was writing above. If the Lord is present, His presence will be evidenced by peace and love.

Proverbs 29:1

Those of us with stiff necks are grateful for God's "gentle breaking," before we did irreparable damage.