

## DECEMBER 4

We have less than a month to go. If you are caught up, that is amazing. If it has been "hit-and-miss" for you, you've still probably read more of the Word than you did last year, and you have some ideas going into the new year of what you'll have to do to stay on target. But let me ask, why are you doing this? On a superficial level, there is no difference between you and someone who hardly picked up their Bible. But if you are pursuing the Lord, what you're doing makes all the difference in the world. Remember Hebrews 11 and the words, *By faith*. All of those people pursued God by faith and God blessed them, but that blessing was often only in that they grew closer to God. The verses that drive me on are John 14:21-23,

*"Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."*

Since you are finishing up Daniel today, you might treat yourself to a peppermint something.

### Daniel 11:36-12:13

Daniel 11:36-45

Vs. 36-39 At this point the words regarding this ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes (AE), begin to directly mirror the future attitude and behavior of the antichrist (AC) in the latter part of Israel's history. Though it was still in the future for Daniel, what is mentioned here happened in 170 A.D. with Antiochus Epiphanes; and yet in the future, during the 70th week, the antichrist will do the same thing. Notice the expression of arrogance and self-exultation that happens here. Not only will the antichrist walk into the temple, as Antiochus Epiphanes did, and set up an abomination, but he too will exalt himself above God. Apparently Antiochus Epiphanes was helped by Jewish traitors who helped him do this, whom he later rewarded. It appears the antichrist will do something similar and through this treachery will also kill the two witnesses before he defaces the temple.

Some of the references to *the one beloved by women* and the *god of fortresses* may not make sense to us, but they will be clear to the people who have to go through this worldwide Tribulation.

Vs. 40-45 Not all nations will follow the AC, and since he can't be in more than one place at one time, they will rise up against Israel. Eventually there will be a worldwide showdown in the plain of Armageddon. Remember too, that the conditions of those future days will look very desperate and primitive. There is no reason to believe that oil refineries will be working and that there will be gasoline available for these military ventures. According to Revelation, the king of the east will cross the Euphrates with 200 million foot soldiers to join the party. It is possible that some of these will be on horseback.

V. 41 The area of these countries is present-day Jordan and the area around the Dead Sea. This is important. Jesus said that when the people living near Jerusalem saw the "abomination that makes desolate" in the temple, which the AC will put there, the people were to flee into the mountains. In Revelation, the description of this flight and the pursuit of Satan is scary, but God will save the people in the wilderness. The area of these countries is where the people will go to hide. It's about 15 miles from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea. We see how people in mountains can hide now from the mighty, high-tech U.S. military. Imagine how much better they will hide from the AC if God is helping them and if the world has been reduced to very primitive low-tech warfare.

V. 44 And then the AC will hear about these approaching armies from the north and east and decide he has other fish to fry. Still, he will kill many followers of Christ, in Israel and in all other nations. The slaughter of God's people will be a test of the hearts of men and women, and it will confirm the justness of the wrath of God upon mankind.

## Daniel 12

Vs. 1-4 This is a summary of the final 3.5 years of the Tribulation and the judgment that follows. Verse 2 is one of the clearest verses in the OT regarding the resurrection. This sounds like what Jesus said in John 5:28-29. And v. 3 sounds like Matthew 13:43, *Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

Vs. 5-7 It is significant that this number of days is given and that the angel gave it by raising his hands and swearing by God. If you were trying to hang on during that time and knew the day those last 3.5 years began, you'd be happy to know an exact number. That the angel swore by God makes this a very solemn declaration. We don't grasp this.

Vs. 8-12 Daniel's heart was so big toward God and his people; the more he heard, the more interested he became.

V. 9 *Shut up and sealed* means you will have to be there in that time to understand what is going on. We are not supposed to fully grasp it.

V. 10 During this Tribulation, those who love God will become more purified, and the wicked will become more wicked. It is a time of testing and revealing.

V. 11 The 1290 days extend from the defiling of the temple up to the cleansing of the temple and reestablishment of worship in the temple. Jesus will arrive in about 1260 days, but I'm sure there will be some business to take care of first, like the judgment of the nations. And I think rather than Him just cleaning up supernaturally, there will be people employed to clean and repair the temple and have it ceremonially rededicated. There will be a lot to do in 30 days.

V. 12 *Blessed* is the person who is there at this celebration. Jerusalem will be cleaned up and the King will officially, before the world, take His throne in Jerusalem and begin ruling the world.

V. 13 Just as it says in Ezekiel that the resurrected David will govern the people of Israel, I wonder if the resurrected Daniel will govern the people of Iraq from Babylon. If so, it will not have been the first time.

But for now, we work in the harvest as the clouds approach. When it all comes down, we'll have great seats to see how Jesus will justly judge the world, and we'll be at the celebration of His thousand-year kingdom.

## 1 John 4

In chapters 1 and 2 John has talked about walking in the light and truth of Christ. Even Christians can walk out of the light. In chapter 3 John began talking about abiding in Christ's love as the evidence that we know that love. Now John begins to talk about the guidance of the Spirit in knowing and living the love of our Lord.

When Jesus told the disciples about what the last days before His coming would look like, He warned them regarding *false prophets* and false messiahs. (Matt. 7:15, 24:11, 24:24) I'm sure John and the others were surprised how quickly error and false teachers began to come into the church. In the days of the Tribulation it will be far worse.

Note that there is a lot of "love" going on in this chapter. Laura found 27 forms of the word love within just 15 verses. I don't know if that's a record, but it is something to observe and think about.

Vs. 1-6 Up until 3:24 John had not mentioned the Holy Spirit. Notice that the confession of Jesus as God the Son who became flesh is a mark of the Spirit. Anyone could say Jesus came in the flesh without being truly saved, but keeping the commandments of God in the Spirit of God means understanding who Jesus truly is. A false understanding of Jesus springs from a false spirit and leads to a warped walk. As disciples, our obedience and walk are directly connected to our love and understanding of Jesus. Just like in Romans 8 and in John 14-17, it is the Spirit who guides us into a proper balance of understanding. All of this becomes visible by our love for the Word, our obedience to Christ in our walk and in the harvest, and by our love for one another.

Vs. 4-6 Anyone led by the Spirit continues in the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, and in our case, the Word.

Vs. 7-12 The evidence of the work of the Spirit in us is knowing *the love of God* and loving one another. Verse 8 is not stating evidence of salvation, but evidence of knowing God relationally. The true understanding of the love of God is that we love. Even though no one has ever seen God, by loving one another because of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge of God's love, we can show that we have a relationship with Him. Notice what Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:5, *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.* Even in 1 Timothy, the context for this verse is false teaching and teachers.

Vs. 13-18 The evidence that we abide in God is that His love is alive in us and is seen in our love for one another. If we are fully living in the love of Christ, there is no fear of what will happen when we stand in His presence, because there will be no judgment for us.

I know this all sounds like circular reasoning, but here is the simplicity in our walk with Christ that is very visible. You even see this simplicity of the Christian life in Paul's prayer at the end of Ephesians 3. The most important thing for us to be growing in is the love of Christ. This love is grounded in His Word, understood in His Spirit and poured out in His mission. Working together as His people, we express His love to one another inwardly and His love for a dying world outwardly, and we are strengthened in our work for Him. But it all flows out of knowing and showing His love. Love is the key word and the key for our lives in Christ. But, love is not without definition. Love is defined by God and Jesus and their effort to save a lost world. And where do we know this love? Through His Word and by His Spirit. *And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.* (Romans 5:5)

An example of what is being said here is that a husband is told to love his wife as Christ loved the church. It is fair to say that if a believing man doesn't do this, he really doesn't know the love of Christ. It doesn't make him unsaved, but it really shows his lack of knowing Christ and his lack of maturity in Christ. This is the point that John and the Spirit are making here, using love for one another as the example of relationship and maturity.

Vs. 19-21 According to John and the Spirit, this is an absolute. We really do kid ourselves and treat God's truth lightly when we claim to love God but cannot get that love to connect to loving others, including the lost and the people of God. I think a lot of churches don't work because they are not following Christ in the harvest. It is appropriate not to feel at home in a group like that. However, in a church that is working to reach out and make disciples, we need to love one another as Christ loved, and maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and love.

### **Psalm 123**

Vs. 1-2 As the worshipers walked up those roads leading to Jerusalem on Mount Zion, it was really the Lord they were approaching. It was really the Lord they were seeking. I like v. 2, that they will persist in prayer until the Lord shows them mercy. When the disciples finally asked the Lord to teach them to pray, He restated the Lord's Prayer to them and then added what they had never heard before: the parable of the friend knocking on his friend's door at midnight.

Perseverance is necessary and natural; after all we are praying to our Father who loves us. We are appealing to His kindness and love.

Vs. 3-4 It is a truth that we often seek God because outside circumstances show us we need Him. It is also true that God allows these circumstances to come to us to drive us to Him.

**Proverbs 29:2-4**

Sometimes, just for the fun of it, try taking a triad of verses like this and restating them. For example:

*When the righteous increase*, when children love wisdom and the king builds his land with justice, the people rejoice and fathers are glad. But *when the wicked rule*, when children live in passion and rebellion and when bribes are common, the people groan and the wealth of a land is squandered.