

GRACE CITY CHURCH

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Grace City Church

Series: Daniel 11 | Week 14

"The World Is Jacked Up"

(00:00:00):

If you have a Bible... and I hope you do... you can turn to Daniel chapter 11. Daniel chapter 11 is where we're going to be. If you're new, welcome. Really glad you're here. My name is Josh, lead pastor at Grace City Church, and we're walking through the book of Daniel. First six chapters are historical narrative, where we have a lot of the familiar Bible stories of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego getting thrown into the fire. We have the story of Daniel and the lion's den. The back half of Daniel is much less familiar to us. It's full of a more challenging genre of biblical literacy, which is prophetic narrative and apocalyptic literature, and so it's not oftentimes handled or dealt with or even read. In fact, I read Daniel 11 and I was like, have I ever read this chapter before? And I know I have because I've read the Bible a lot. That's what I'm supposed to do as a pastor. So, I know I... I was like, man... This wouldn't, on the surface, be your go-to text. It's like, hey, can you come be a guest preacher for us? Pick any text you'd like. Oh, I'm going to Daniel 11. It's not what the average pastor would say. And, yet, as I've been studying and reading and reflecting, I think it is surprisingly and shockingly a timely word for us.

(00:01:24):

So, I'm going to pray for us and then we're going to dive in. Father in heaven, thank You for the work in the world that you're doing and your word that points us to that work. Would you, by Your holy spirit, Father, I ask, show up here and open our minds and hearts to what you're doing? Would you give us eyes to see and ears to hear what the spirit of God is saying to the church today? May we have a deep sense of awe as we behold the timelessness and timeliness of the God who authored the book we're reading? And may it impact us in deeply personal and profound ways, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

(00:02:04):

Daniel chapter 11. The quick history. If you're new to the story, you can go back and listen to the first 13 sermons we preached through here. It was written 2500 years ago. Daniel is writing this portion of Daniel 11 probably approaching 80 years old. He grew up in Jerusalem. Ransacked by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Kidnapped and forced to march 700 miles. Trafficked into slavery for the king. Castrated. No family, no future, no lineage. Worked for a demonic king for 67 years. Is reading Jeremiah 29 and realizes the 70 year period of discipline is coming to an end and we're getting ready to go back to Jerusalem

however God decides to orchestrate that, which is exciting except for the fact that I probably won't see it happen. Because I am 80 years old. I can't make a 700 year journey. For me, the show is coming to an end. And the context was very discouraging. God's people are scattered. They're in captivity. They're being oppressed. There's no religious freedom. They can't worship God. The churches are closed. The temple is closed. They can't make sacrifices. They can't make offerings. They can't preach the word.

(00:03:04):

So, the church of God is closed, the worship of God isn't being lifted from the temple, and the witness of God in the world is in total disarray. Daniel is looking out on that and he's discouraged and God is encouraging him with prophetic revelation. Here was the thought that hit me. Sometimes we need practical help from the word of God. Last week, for many of you, as I talked with you, you were like, that was practically helpful. Because I've had horrible things happen to me, painful things happen to me, and I denied them. I ignored them. I stuffed them. And the reality is I've actually been living from them for 30 years. And so it was helpful to be given permission to acknowledge that I'm broken. To acknowledge that I'm screwed up. To say I can trust God and not have it all together and that's okay. That it's good and right to grieve things that are hard and to limit things that are painful and to work through that process of sorrow and grief and mourning through intentional lamenting.

(00:03:58):

It's not self-pity. It's not wallowing in it to just keep bathing myself in the pain, but intentionally looking at it, facing it, confronting it, confessing it potentially, dealing with it, so that I can take time to move through it to get to the other side. That's very practically helpful. Sometimes what God's people need is a practical word. Other times what God's people need is prophetic word. This text this morning is a prophetic word. Always, I believe, prophetic words are practically helpful as we think how to walk them out, but it won't appear on the front end as, well, that's really practical, but it is prophetic. And I'm praying that God gives us ears to hear this prophetic message that Daniel was given by God then and that he has for us now.

(00:04:45):

There's no other way to do this than just to read all 45 verses. I'm telling you. You've probably never had 45 verses read at you from a preacher in a sermon. It will be the longest portion of scripture you've ever had read and it's to the glory of God. Amen? We're going to do it. Because if I skim over it, then you won't get it all and I will have to explain it and then I'll spend time talking when we could've just been reading. So, we're just going to read through 45 verses. I'll do it as animated as I can to keep you engaged, but whether or not you follow, that's totally on you. That's between you and Jesus, so figure it out.

(00:05:22):

I want you to see as we read through this is that this is not fortune cookie prophecy. What I mean by that is fortune cookie prophecy is nebulous and generic. I could figure out. There's nothing magical about it. Today, you will run into somebody you don't like. I do that every

day. That happens every day. Sometime in the near future, you'll experience relational conflict. Well, welcome to planet earth. There's nothing like, wow, this is mind-boggling. I could write all of those. That's not what's happening here. This isn't this kind of nebulous, generic, safe bet, smart guys putting together and assessing where they think the future will go. This is explicit and express detail that God is giving Daniel... God outside of time and space continuum, Daniel in time and space continuum... receiving prophetic revelation from God about what's going to happen in future history.

(00:06:23):

Daniel is here. Nothing has happened yet that's going to be told to him. What I want you to note is the exquisite detail that he's given. So much so that secular historians, when zeroing in on how to undermine the doctrine of the scripture being divinely inspired revelation from God, actually zero in on several chapters in the Old Testament, this being one of them. So, while at first blush, you might read it and go, like, that's really kind of throwaway text, in reality, this chapter is one of a few chapters that secular historians attempting to debunk the reality of this not being just a nice book in antiquity but actually divine revelation from God zero in here not because the history given here is inaccurate and proves that it was all wrong, but rather the opposite. It is so accurate that they say it would be impossible for a human to know that in advance, therefore, it must be a fraud. Daniel didn't write this. Some other guy wrote it in his name and they wrote it 400 years after Daniel lived and died so they could look back and, with that detail in mind, write this chapter down.

(00:07:33):

We agree with the first half of their assessment. There's no way a human could write this chapter. And our answer is Daniel didn't write it, God wrote it through Daniel. This is Daniel receiving divine revelation from God to him about events to happen in the future that he has yet to live through. Chuck Swindoll... Anybody remember Chuck Swindoll? Kind of like my parents' generation... called this chapter one of the most... what's the word here... remarkable chapters in all of the Bible. So, even as we're reading it, if you're like, I don't quite get it and I can tell Josh doesn't get it either even as we're reading it together... One of the great expositors of our generation said this is one of the most remarkable chapters in all of the Bible. There's about 135 prophecies between verse one and verse 35 that have already come true in history. Just in these 35 verses. 135 prophecies. If you look at it, secular historians attempting to debunk the Bible as true have gone to great detail to show how exacting every event that's articulated here connects with a real historical figure. Kings, queens, kingdoms, nation states, battles, historical events.

(00:08:58):

I mean, I've seen maps of it. It is staggering. It's not as if this is kind of generic prediction. I think Tom Brady is going to win the Super Bowl. That's a pretty good bet. There's a high chance that that could happen in any given football season in the last 20 years. But this is like, no, no, no, no. He'll be playing for this team. He'll score this many points. At this quarter, he'll do this. At this quarter, he'll do this. On this down, he'll call this play. He'll throw the ball to this

person. And they'll win by this point spread. It's like that kind of detail going here. Historians attempting to debunk this chapter have shown the exquisite detail that this chapter highlights in history and they're like, this is so accurate it must not be real. It's a phony. It's a fraud. To which we say thank you for proving the bulletproof nature of the word of God. As we'll see, the case they make for this being written later in life can simply not be possible.

(00:09:56):

So, we ready? Daniel chapter 11, verse one. Here we go. "And in the first year of Darius the Mede..." anchoring it history... "I took my stand to support and protect him." That's either the preincarnate vision of Jesus there or the divine being... maybe the angel Gabriel. We don't know for sure. The point being kings and nation states get support from spiritual beings. Beings of darkness or beings of light. Verse two. "Now then I tell you the truth. Three more kings will arise in Persia and then a fourth who will be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. Then a mighty king will arise who will rule with great power and do as he pleases." We've seen already... Just a reminder to refresh your memory or for those of you who are new. Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon, Medo-Persian Empire conquers Babylon, and then Greece rises up to conquer Persia, and then eventually Greece becomes the Greco-Roman Empire, becomes the Roman Empire, and he's talking here about Alexander the Great. There's no argument. There's no disagreement. Universal acknowledgement that this passage is speaking about Alexander the Great.

(00:11:24):

Here's why it is proof positive that this is prophetic word written hundreds of years before Alexander the Great lands on the scene. Josephus, writing about 90 AD... secular, world-renown, third party, objective historian recognized the world over as the most accurate accounting of history in antiquity... records the story of Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great. He's writing from firsthand material here, first source material, about a story Alexander the Great records in the annals of his history, in his journal. I am sleeping and I have a vision and the vision is of a divine being in a purple robe coming to me and blessing me and telling me what God's called me to do. He wakes up from that dream and he goes on his way to start conquering Persia because his backstory is his parents were murdered. Political assassination. Both his mom and his dad. He's 20 years old. It fires him up. He becomes full of anger and rage and he decides to take his dad's aspirations and ambitions of conquering the known world and make it his own personal ambition and, in 12 years, he's done it.

(00:12:32):

It's this staggering, blistering pace. He's marching across the known world, conquering kingdom after kingdom, after town, after village, after superpower. And on his way to engage the Medo-Persian Empire at the Babylonian headquarters there where Nebuchadnezzar grew up, in the palace there, he goes by Israel. He conquers Israel. He's marching to the temple. Because it was typical at that time, when you conquer a kingdom, you get the spoils. Riches and gold and land and economic resources and timber and farmlands and animals and

jewels. You take all of that and you go put it back in your bank account. So, now it's like I have you and your stuff. I just got stronger. You got weaker. This was the way of the jungle then. And still now, ironically.

(00:13:18):

He's approaching the temple. The people of God have been conquered. They know how this goes. It's raping and pillaging. Not good news. The high priest decides to go out and approach and greet Alexander the Great. He has never read a headline. Alexander the Great has terrifying vision of priestly divine being wearing purple robe telling him what he should do. Oh, I'll pretend to be that guy. That headline never hit the news cycle. They've never talked. Met. The high priest dresses the people in white, himself in purple, approaches Alexander as he's approaching the temple, and Alexander looks up, sees the temple, sees the high priest in purple, and it is his vision that he had in a dream and he has an epiphany. Oh my goodness. He approaches. He says, "You're the man of my dream."

(00:14:07):

The high priest takes him in and opens the Bible and reads from the Old Testament Daniel 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, pointing to these verses and saying, "Oh, by the way, this is you. You are this guy. God had prophesied this would happen. This isn't random. You are squarely in the will of God." Alexander the Great says, "My goodness. Thank you so much." He makes a sacrifice offering to God. Leaves there encouraged. Is there anything I can do to help you? This has been so encouraging for me. The priest says, "Would you give us our religious freedoms?" To which Alexander the Great says, "Granted." And for 12 years, Israel experienced peace. The temple was open. Sacrifices made. Priests doing the work. The word of God preached. The witness of God going out. The worship of God rising from the temple of God. The reason that's important for us to note here is because it would be impossible for some hack and phony to write the book of Daniel using his name hundreds of years later after Alexander the Great had come so as to use the details of history to write this hack prophetic literature because, according to secular scholars citing original source material as an objective perspective, in history, Alexander the Great has his story read to him from the priest from the Bible. Bulletproof. Slam dunk. This is prophetic revelation.

(00:15:34):

Verse four. Not looking good for lunch, is it? I know what you're thinking. I should've brought more rations. Verse four. "After he has arisen, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven." Happens to Alexander the Great. He dies. No physical lineage. No kids. His four generals take over and they have echoes of his glory, but never the same strength. "It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others. The king of the South will become strong, but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power."

(00:16:23):

Verse six. "After some years, they will become allies. The daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she will not retain her power and he and his power will not last. In those days, she will be betrayed together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her. One from her family line will arise to take her place. He will attack the forces of the king of the North and enter his fortress. He will fight against them and be victorious. He will also seize their gods, their metal images, and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt. For some years, he will leave the king of the North alone."

(00:17:06):

Here's what's happening without going into all the kings and queens here. Mostly because I can't pronounce their names. What's happening here is there is a gal who marries a guy. He's a king, but what would happen in those times is, when you had a warring kingdom you wanted to tackle, you're like, well, we could spend all the money with the soldiers to kill them and they kill us and all this economic outlay and so much blood and mess and bury all those bodies. It's just stinky and smelly. What if we made some sort of alliance here. And so they would make the alliance sometimes by trading children. It would totally be a bummer to be a daughter of a king back in those days. Hey, sweetheart. Daddy loves you so much. Could you please go marry that dirtball over there so we can be friendly? I'll never see you again. I'm sure it'll be great. Bye! Tell the barbarian hordes hello for me! Wouldn't that be terrible to be a daughter in those days? Horrible.

(00:17:55):

So, what happens is this king raises up. He marries a gal. They have a kid. Then, he needs to make an alliance with a warring kingdom, so he says, you know what? I'm going to go and marry that king's daughter. Bye, sweetheart. See you, toots. Divorces her, moves, and marries that king's daughter. They have a kid and now she's jealous. This is literally like, As The Middle East Turns, As The... This is total drama. Thankfully, this doesn't happen today, but it was going on back then. Greed, malice, jealousy, materialism, political chaos, intrigue, societal upheaval, sexual immortality. Thankfully, we have evolved beyond that as a human being, but we're reading about these archaic people who didn't have their act together back then. So, just try to use your imagination, okay? She gets jealous. Hires a hit man to take out her ex husband. Oh, it's getting real now. It's like Jersey Shore now, right? Takes out her ex husband and his new fling and their kid, so all that's left to rise up is her and her kid. I mean, this is wild.

(00:19:03):

Verse nine. "Then the king of the North will invade the realm of the king of the South, but will retreat to his own country. His sons will prepare for war and assemble a great army, which will sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his fortress. Then the king of the South will march out in a rage and fight against the king of the North, who will raise a large army but it will be defeated. When the army is carried off, the king of the South will be filled with pride and will slaughter many thousands, yet he will not remain triumph. For the

king of the North will muster another army larger than the first and, after several years, he will advance with a huge army fully equipped.

(00:19:47):

"In those times, many will rise against the king of the South. Those who are violent among your own people will rebel in fulfillment of the vision but without success. The the king of the north will come and build up siege ramps and will capture a fortified city. The forces of the South will be powerless to resist. Even their best troops will not have the strength to stand." So detailed are the accounts that God's prophecy is not just, oh, this kingdom will conquer that kingdom. He says this kingdom will conquer that kingdom and here's how they'll do it. Siege ramps. Not just Tom Brady won the Super Bowl. He'll win it by running the flea flicker. Is that even a play anymore? I don't know. It's the only football play I know, so there you go.

(00:20:33):

Verse 16. "The invaded will do as he pleases. No one will be able to stand against him. He will establish himself in the beautiful land and will have the power to destroy it. He will determine to come with the might of his entire kingdom and will make an alliance with the king of the South. And he will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom." What a peach. You know what I mean? What a peach. Hey, sweetheart. Bye! "But his plans will not succeed or help him. Then he will turn his attention to the coastlands and will take many of them, but a commander will put an end to his insolence and will turn his insolence back on him. After this, he will turn back toward the fortress of his own country, but will stumble and fall to be seen no more."

(00:21:24):

I watched a movie last night with my son, another dad, and his boy. Watched the movie Gladiator. It's like a rite of passage movie for a 14-year-old boy and his dad. Amen? If you're sitting there judging me right now, this is not the church for you. We show young men Gladiator. Amen? What an amazing movie. You want to talk about nobility? Loyalty? Honor? I mean, it's this incredible movie. You have the one character who's brave and courageous and actually out in the battlefield and then you have the other character who's like... It's like that character ruined me on that actor for every movie after that. I can't watch him. He's just a sniveling, cowardice wimp. I just... I still would struggle with meeting him in real life. Maybe he's a nice guy. I don't know. But I'm like, you know what? You know that point where he's like, "Yeah, they're calling him Maximus the Merciful and, if I kill him, I won't be known as merciful." It's like, could someone please change the script to kill him sooner in the movie? He's driving me crazy.

(00:22:28):

But Gladiator. It's this great, epic moment in the very end. He was a soldier of Rome. Honor him. You're like, oh yeah! This is great. This is Daniel 11. As I watching it, I was like, this has always been happening. Kings and intrigue and political upheaval and immorality. Like he and his sister. That whole weird thing. Blech! When men stand up and rise, kingdoms thrive.

When men roll over and let evil men stand up, everyone suffers. It happens in the movie Gladiator and it happens in Daniel 11. It's all true. Age appropriate movie, people, of course. Use discernment with your own children. So many things running through my head to say right now. Our pastor watched Gladiator? Straight up. Hoorah. There is good, there is evil, and there is a way to deal with it. I don't know where we're at anymore. Are we still in the Bible? Daniel 11. I got so excited about Russel Crowe.

(00:23:37):

Verse 20!

(00:23:40):

Thank you. Thank you! Thank you. Daniel 20. Help the pastor out here. Help him, Lord. Help him. Daniel 20. Or 11, verse 20. "His successor will send out a tax collector to maintain the royal splendor. In a few years, however, he will be destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle." Crazy account of... Historically accurate. A tax collector was kind of the CFO of a guy's kingdom and died young, no explanation. Not out of anger. Nobody assassinated him. He didn't die in battle. Just inexplicable death. Sent the whole kingdom into chaos.

(00:24:13):

Verse 21. "He will be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty." This, of course, is now Antiochus Epiphanes. We've seen him before in the story. This is where he's entering back in the history again. Antiochus Epiphanes. The god man. That's the name he gave himself. I am the god man. This is the Old Testament prototype foreshadow of the Antichrist. He is like the antichrist of the Old Testament. This guy is evil. He's dishonorable. He's sick and twisted. Even more so than the folks we've seen in the previous 20 verses. "He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure and he will seize it through intrigue."

(00:24:50):

You need to think of Antiochus Epiphanes like a drug cartel. It would be like living under the reign and rule of the drug cartel. If you know anything about the drug cartel, they are ruthless and generous. They'll run cities and towns south of the border and how it works is... We're going to be here and we're going to run our business... as illegitimate as it is... we're going to run this business and you're going to help us by keeping your mouth shut and not saying anything. As long as you help hide us and protect us and alert us if anybody suspicious comes around, we will keep your schools up and running. We'll keep your fields full of harvest. We'll support you and you get to eat and you get to live and you get to be happy. If you betray us, we'll annihilate you. And they say it with a smile on their face. Everybody knows the gig. Everybody knows the equation. Everybody knows how it goes down. So, they're ruthless and they're generous. They buy loyalty through threat of brutality.

(00:25:46):

That's Antiochus Epiphanes. He would go in and he would use ruthless tactics. Like, he would go to a nation that he wants to conquer and he'd be like, "Oh my goodness. Look at the beauty of this country and nation and the buildings and architectural wonders. This is incredible. You guys are impressive. We could never beat you in battle. Let's establish a peace treaty and do economic trading together." And they're like, "Hey, this is wonderful. We'll bring you some cows. You give us some wood. And this will be great." Establish a peace treaty, get the economic trade flowing, ink a deal, leave. Head out into the trees and hide. The whole city's defenses go down. Oh, we solved that problem. And then boom! Hit them when they're asleep and conquer them and annihilate the entire city. News never traveled because no one survived and so he would do this over and over and over again. This was the man called Antiochus Epiphanes. The man who declared himself to be a god man. Literally the antichrist of the Old Testament.

(00:26:42):

"He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure and then he will seize it through intrigue." Verse 22. "Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him, both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed. After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully and with only a few people, he will rise to power." This is not a democracy. "When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did. He will distribute plunder, loot, and wealth among his followers. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses, but only for a time." Drug cartel.

(00:27:19):

Verse 25. "With a large army, he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him. Those who eat from the king's provisions will try to destroy him, his army will be swept away, and many will fall in battle. The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other." See, back in the old days, politicians would lie to each other so as to gain an advantage. This is why this book has no relevancy to your life whatsoever, but we read it anyway because we're supposed to. So, thanks for being so patient with this total waste of time exercise.

(00:28:04):

"The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail. Because an end will still come at the appointed time. The king of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country." [inaudible 00:28:25] what happens. Antiochus Epiphanes is out. He suffers what was a surprising defeat. He's ticked about it and, on his way home, he is swinging by Israel, looks over, and says, "There's a good dog to kick," and so he kicks it. In three days, 80000 Jewish people are slaughtered. Men, women, pregnant mothers, teens, children, slaughtered. Blood's in the streets. He slaughters Israel just to remind them who's in charge and then leaves them in ruins. That's the kind of guy we're dealing with here.

(00:28:55):

Verse 29. "At the appointed time, he will invade the South again, but this time, the outcome will be different from what it was before. Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant." Make no mistake. It was politically and economically advantageous then and it's still politically and economically advantageous now to deny God. Nothing's changed under the sun. Verse 31. "His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifices. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation."

(00:29:39):

Jesus speaks of it in Matthew 24. He walks into the temple. He takes all the priests out. Puts many of them to death. Puts a pig on the altar. Sacrifices the pig where only the spotless lamb was to go. Takes an unkosher animal into the holy of holies where only the spotless lamb was to be. In an act of rampant rebellion, arrogance, pride, and apostasy, slaughters a pig on the altar and then demands that the priests who get on board with his program turn the temple of God into a Zeus temple. We're going to worship the god of Zeus now, which is the god of power, military, and might. He's just desecrating the temple. Puts the word of God on the ground. Stands on top of it and says, "I am the god man. Worship me and my gods." The abomination. It causes desolation.

(00:30:26):

Verse 32. "With flattery, he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him." Verse 33. "Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered." Here, God is describing the Maccabean Revolt to happen 250 years in the future or more from where Daniel is writing. They're going to rise up. They're going to revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. "When they fall, they will receive a little help and many who are not sincere will join them. Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time."

(00:31:18):

Now, here's where the transition happens. Scholars are almost united on the fact that this is now future, not history. Some hold out and they say, no, we're still going to talk about Antiochus Epiphanes from verse 36 to 45, but most point to the fact that the death of this king that verse 36, 35, is talking about is not historically consistent with how Antiochus Epiphanes died, to which they'd say would make no sense for such rigid, exquisite, historical detail to in every sentence of every verse up until 35 and then it misses how Antiochus dies. And so even the strongest commentators agree that, okay, I think we've made a subtle shift here from talking about history past to history future for us. It's all prophetic future for Daniel. We're here at this perspective having seen the first 35 verses come to pass and now potentially

looking into what is going to come. Either way, we're seeing description of the Antichrist here.

(00:32:23):

Verse 36. "The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will show no regard for the gods of his ancestors or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses." Antiochus didn't put himself above all gods. He put himself above everybody except for Zeus. The king is now saying I'm above all gods. Instead of them, he will honor the god of fortress. That's the god of military might. His military might. "The god unknown to his ancestors, he will honor with gold and silver," which is himself, "with precious stones and costly gifts. He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him." He's being demonically empowered here to set himself up as the Antichrist.

(00:33:19):

What is the Antichrist? The one who desires to reject and replace Jesus as God's son. Jesus as savior. Jesus as king. That's the definition of the Antichrist. Verse 39. "He will attack the mightiest fortress with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price." Make no mistake. There will be always be political, economic gain in aligning yourself with the spirit of the Antichrist. Always. Don't think that, well, if I follow Jesus faithfully, it will go well for me in every part of my life. It may be that being faithful to Jesus in this season of time means that things go backward for you in some categories of life. Because you're choosing to not align yourself with the spirit of the Antichrist and the demonic powers of this age behind certain political and kingdom leaders.

(00:34:17):

Verse 40. Where are we at here? Oh, excuse me. Verse 40. "At the time of the end, the king of the South will engage him in battle and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the beautiful land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab, and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered into his hand. He will extend his power over many countries. Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt with the Libyans and Cushites in submission." What's the point? Peace in the Middle East is futile. You can throw as much money at it as you want. Probably ain't going to happen. Verse 44. "But reports from the east and the north will alarm him and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many." Verse 45. "He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end and no one will help him." Thus reads the words of the living God. Amen? Amen.

(00:35:31):

45 verses in a chapter many of you have never read. What is the point of these verses? I think there are several. Let's make some observations as takeaways for us and see where it takes us. Observation number one. Isn't that helpful? I find that to be so encouraging. Because I was tempted to think that we were setting records as a people for being jacked up the last week. Anybody else think that? It's just helpful to reminded, oh, right. The word's always been jacked up. Now, for the record, I did text my staff and say, "Can I use the word jacked up in public? Because this [home score 00:36:19]'s filter might not get all the innuendos that are there in the world that we're not aware of." And they said, "You can use it. That's great. Go for it," so, I used it. So, if that's not appropriate, talk to my staff and not me. Because this home score likes the word jacked up. They were jacked up. Someone said, "You can say messed up." Nah. Jacked up. They're jacked up. They're screwed up.

(00:36:35):

It's helpful because it's easy to think, look around, and go, I think we're screwed up. Please hear me out here. We are screwed up. This week, Washington Supreme Court decided in all of their wisdom to rule that it's unconstitutional to arrest someone for possession of illegal drugs. Crack, meth, heroin can now be shot on on [Wenatchee 00:37:07] Avenue... I'm shooting up heroin right now... and a Wenatchee Police Department officer cannot arrest them. It's unconstitutional to enforce the law. Turning Romans 13 up on its head. Furthermore, anyone and everyone in jail who is jail because probable cause for arrest or primary purpose they're there was, for a drug possession, out. Now, I didn't think this was true until I called [inaudible 00:37:39] law enforcement. 4:00 AM, Friday morning. They're back into the community. But the good news is it's not legal or constitutional to arrest them for drug possession anymore, meaning it's not legal for our cops to enforce the law and they're all being told this as they leave jail, so we can be assured they're not motivated to reform themselves and will never turn to their former way of life. Or maybe not. That happened this week. Quality Act. Passed the house this week. A few votes in the senate and we are into a new reality as Christians in this nation.

(00:38:17):

Wenatchee made the news this week nationally. Wasn't that exciting? Was I the only embarrassed to be an adult in this valley? Friends from all over the country texted me. Is this your hometown? No. I've never heard of Wenatchee. Give me 24 hours, we're going to tar and feather a few folks, and then check back in with us and see how it's going. This is insane! We're now locking children in germ cages. When progressive elites in New York are mocking you on late night TV for your COVID practices, you have gone over the line. It's insanity. And here's why it bothers me. It's hurting kids. I texted pictures to my pastor friend and these were his words. This is... four words.. child abuse. That's what it is. It doesn't matter if you're a Christian. It doesn't matter if you're a godly sane person in the school district. Teacher. It doesn't matter. Whatever. This is the law. You disobey? Boom, you're gone. Cancel culture. Censor. You're out. Not to beat on this drum, but I am talking daily with teachers in tears. What do I do? This is crazy. This is insane.

(00:39:40):

Legislation passed 10 years ago. Christine Gregoire. Game's over, folks. Legislation required for ideological cultural Marxism to be required curriculum in every school in place regarding gender, history rewrite... That's where we're at. Richland High School this week just had their fifth suicide in as many months, which is five more students who've died from suicide than from COVID at Richland High School. One high school in one city in our state. At what point will we be bothered enough to risk offending someone to bring change? Because here's the thing. If 1000 men stood up in our community and said, "No more. Businesses open. This is crazy. We're going back to school," it would change tomorrow morning. We're not helpless here. We're not helpless here. I used to think it was cheesy. All it takes for evil to triumph is for good men, what? To do nothing. That's so cute. We're in it right now. And so, in the middle of that, I find it strangely comforting to read Daniel 11. I can go, okay, the world's always been jacked up. I mean, it's felt like we've accelerated it significantly in the last 12 months, but it's always been there. It's helpful historical perspective for us to realize life under the fall, apart from the rule of Jesus, will always be broken. It will always be broken. It will just find new and weird ways to work itself out.

(00:41:37):

That was so encouraging. Let's move on quickly to big takeaway number two. Big takeaway number two. The decisions of our everyday lives ripple into future history. Because you're tempted to think your life doesn't matter. You're tempted to think no one's noticing the decisions you're making when no one else is watching. You're tempted to think you're helpless. You're tempted to think that what you do won't really matter in the scheme of things. You're tempted to think that the decisions that you make in your relationships don't go beyond those relationships. Daniel 11 stands here to scream at us, every decision you make in ordinary life matters and ripples into eternity. These people weren't anticipating changing the course of human history. They were just jealous that somebody else is sleeping with their girl and so they made decisions with their life that impacted millions and we're still talking about today. All of life is relational. Decisions we make in our relationships matter.

(00:42:36):

You're like, I'm not a king. I'm not a queen. I'm not a global superpower. So, how do my decisions... Okay, okay. Your decisions tomorrow may not affect the geopolitical outcome of the Middle East, but they'll affect, men, the reality your wife lives in the rest of her days. They'll affect, ladies, the reality that your husband will live in the rest of his days. They'll affect, parents, your children's life. Will they grow up with a relational dynamic of dysfunction in their home and then live from that place of dysfunction in every relationship they go into or will they grow up in a relationally healthy context and draw from that context for the rest of their life? It's time for the men to take ownership and responsibility for the spiritual temperature of their home, their church, and their town. Can't figure out what's going on in the Middle East. Not sophisticated enough to try to solve that. Don't get out the East Coast much. But I live in this valley. As long as it depends on me, there'll be some sanity here.

(00:43:55):

The decisions of our everyday lives ripple into future history. That's a sobering word, but also I think a very exciting word. Because Monday morning matters. The work you do, brother, matters. What infuses your life with such possibilities of adventure and meaning and purpose and opportunity. Thanks be to God we as grown men didn't live through 70 years of peace and never know the glory of going to battle for something that matters with everything on the line. Thanks be to God we're not missing that moment. We're in that kind of moment.

(00:44:36):

Big takeaway number three. Sometime, someday, somewhere, you will have to decide whether you are going to offend them or Him. That moment will come for you. You don't get to avoid that moment, put off that moment, skip around that moment. If it hasn't already come, it will come. And so my question to pastorally prepare you for that is are you ready? Two questions for us to consider as individuals, as men, as women, as Christians, as Jesus followers of the church. Question number one. Do you have a line? And question number two. Where is it? That's my question this year. All year long. Does anybody have a line? This is crazy. Colleague after colleague after colleague closing their church. Refusing to lead their people in singing and worship. Crazy. Because we don't want to offend them. Offend them?

(00:45:48):

Now, I'm not trying to be revolutionary. We do not condone anything related to disorder or violence at all. Duh. You have to qualify everything these days. But here's what I am saying. If your decision making grid for following Jesus is I want to be careful who I offend, that's not a bad grid if you finish the sentence like this. I want to be careful who I offend and the only one that matters is offending God who I will be judged by, therefore I will do whatever I can with my life not to offend Him. It's a great grid. It's a great grid. Why would I be worried about offending that pipsqueak over there who will not be there on judgment day? I want to love people. I want to work for the flourishing of our town. I want to be the very embodiment of the kingdom of Jesus and how I live, but my decision making grid is whatever it takes to not offend you. Ever. Jesus said repeatedly that we can't follow him if that's our grid. Paul said if I was now living for the approval of men, I couldn't be a follower of Jesus.

(00:47:01):

One of my dear friends says repeatedly, "I think if Jesus was here today..." and I was reminded of this this week. "If Jesus was here today, the greatest accusation that would be thrown against him by Christians is that guy is not very Christlike." Think about it. Every progressive religious elitist he had dinner with, he totally mocked and offended openly and publicly. Jesus was not nice. He was loving. He was gracious and merciful and kind and he came full of truth. Objective truth outside of your tendencies and preferences and feelings of the day. I am the embodiment of truth. If you disagree with me, you're wrong. That's what Jesus said

over and over again. That's so offensive. I mean, think how many snowflakes would've just melted in his presence. There's no safe zone around Jesus. It's all dangerous.

(00:48:04):

Where did I get this? In verse 33. In verse 32. "With flattery, he will corrupt those who violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him." This is speaking of the Maccabean Revolt. Here's how antiquity records the historical events that precipitated these verses or that came after these verses were prophesied came true. Mattathias. He's a rural country priest in a little no-name town somewhere in the Middle East. In Israel. At the temple. Antiochus Epiphanes' soldiers show up and they say, "You're going to change how you do business. You're going to need to sacrifice an offering to a demon god here in the temple. And in doing so, we're going to prove to people watching who's really in authority here. You can keep talking about God. We'll just prove by your actions that you're submitting to a higher authority than God, which is the current king of the land. Do it now."

(00:49:10):

To which this country bumpkin rural priest goes, "Pound sand." And they say, "You don't understand. If you don't offer this sacrifice to a demon god and demonstrate to the watching world that this church is now under the rule and reign of the king and not the king of kings, then you'll be put to death." To which he says, "I'm not doing it." And then history records that one of his fellow colleagues in the temple runs forward and says, "Hey, hey, hey, hey. We don't want something to get out of hand here. We understand. We want to follow the science and data. If you have this demon god you want us to worship, we can do that. We'll go ahead and make this sacrifice." You know what Mattathias does? Pulls out his sword and runs his former associate through. The house of God will not be defiled on my watch was his message. Poom! Revolutionary war.

(00:50:09):

You know the first five men to sign up for his revolution? John, Simon, Judah, Eleazar, Jonathan. Four boys. Warrior family. They rallied the troops. We're trying to live an unharrassed life, but we will not desecrate the temple. We will not violate the covenant of God. We will not mock the God who is in the heavens out of fear for a blip on the radar of a pipsqueak king. We will stand in fidelity, with loyalty, honor, and courage, strength and honor, to the king of kings. If it costs us our life, let them come. The worst they could do is kill us. Antiochus Epiphanes sent 60000 of his elitist soldiers to do their best. Mattathias, this country bumpkin rural pastor and his five boys, rally 6000 men and they defeat Antiochus. And for a season of time, there was peace and there was religious freedom and there was law and order in this little bubble in the Middle East called Israel.

(00:51:17):

Sometime, someday, somewhere, you will have to decide whether you will offend them or him. It's a radical example. It's a wild example. But the point stands true. I've talked with multiple people this week after Thursday. I am consciously aware of the fact that if I voice my

opinion, if I stand for my convictions, if I raise a flag against the insanity at my job, I will lose my job. Talked to one man who said, "I have already seen it coming and I have drawn the line in the sand. If they push me to that point, then I walk. Because worse than me..." This is the calculation that guy is doing that you need to do, too. "Because worse than me not being able to feed the mouths of my family is my sons growing up to watch a gutless cowardice of a father have no convictions worth standing for." That's worse. Don't think the worst thing that can happen is your kid starving. The worse to your kids that could happen is for you to say we'll worship God until it's inconvenient and then we'll compromise as much as they ask for because survival is our highest value.

(00:52:28):

So, do you have a line and where is it? One of the most discouraging things of this whole slide off into the abyss that has always been happening but feels rather accelerated in these days is wondering does anybody have any line anymore? Friends, for the record, Grace City Church was planted by a few men who had already drawn the line their heart. We're not drawing new lines in these days. Those lines were drawn before we held our first public meeting. What's happening these days is I believe these days are testing the church to see if, for the first time, they consider, do I even have a line? Do I even have a line?

(00:53:15):

Big takeaway number four. Crisis in the culture often leads to purification in the church. Verse 33. "Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered." Then they will fall... "When they fall... excuse me, "...they will receive a little help and many who are not sincere will join them. Some of the wise will stumble so that they may be refined, purified, and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will come at the appointed time." Crisis in the culture oftentimes leads to purification in the church and here's why.

(00:54:00):

When the church responds properly to crisis... and I mean moral crisis... in the culture, the proper spirit-borne response is not look at all the idiots out there! The response is, dear God, forgive me of my sin in here. That's why moral cultural crisis oftentimes leads to the purification of the church. Because Jesus said let repentance begin not in the House, not in the Senate, not in Congress, not in Olympia, not on the school board, not at the Department of Public Health, not in city council, not with the commissioners, not with the police chiefs or the sheriffs, not with the jail. Jesus said let repentance begin in the, what? House of God. Which means one of the primary responses we should be having to this moment is, Father, forgive me for how my selfishness and my sin and my idolatry has contributed to the broken state we find our community in today.

(00:55:06):

And then in humility, turning to Jesus as a source of hope, remembering that we not weapons against flesh and blood, but rather the battles against the principalities and powers of

darkness, Paul said... Father, forgive me. Purify me. Cleanse me. Break me. Humble me. Let the reformation of God start with me. Because I believe hardship is prerequisite for and always precedes harvest. Hardship always precedes harvest. Which is why, friends, I won't leave this service discouraged. I won't leave this service going, oh, man. Gone to the dogs. Oh, well, I'll move to Wyoming! I'm staying and I'm working for reformation in my town and it's going to start with me on my knees before my God saying, Father, start with me. How am I the problem? What do I need to repent of and change? Let the revival you want to see out there begin in here and I want to be first in line.

(00:56:13):

That's why cultural crisis oftentimes leads to the purification of the church when the church responds rightly. When the church responds wrongly, we can contribute to the chaos and contribute to the spiral downward by adding our self-righteous religiosity to the mix, which never helps anyone, by the way. Which means the posture of the church is humility. Brokenness. Repentance. I'd be concerned about your idiotic, insane sin, but I'm quite overwhelmed with my need for grace from God in this moment myself. And then, filled with the spirit, the church moves with wisdom and common sense and spirit-borne love, grace, humility, kindness, courage, and conviction and clarity into the darkness with a different kind of spirit than just like, this is dumb! We move in with a spirit of Christ.

(00:57:12):

Takeaway number four. The spirit of the Antichrist always exists where people worship themselves. Did you know that? I had a verse written down here for you. I can't find it anymore. Here we go. 1 John 2:18. "Children, it is the last hour and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have already come. Therefore we know that this is the last hour." There's no need to speculate. Is this the last hour? John tells us. Jesus tells us. Paul tells us. This is the last hour and the spirit of the Antichrist is out there raising up all sorts of mini antichrists. You need to spend much less time worrying about where is the Antichrist and ask yourself am I a mini antichrist? If you wake up in the morning and look in the mirror and behold your god, you have the spirit of the antichrist. You're like, well, that's kind of harsh. Just deliver the mail, friends. Don't write it.

(00:58:16):

The spirit of the Antichrist always exists where people worship themselves. Because the spirit of the Antichrist wants you to worship him because he worships him and we oftentimes want people to worship us. Our ideas, our personality, our success. Worship me. Do what I say. When I say this, say yes sir. When I say don't do that, you say no sir. You live to approve me, to worship me, to build me up, and we get our sense of identity from being a little mini god in our homes or in our valley. Don't think we have to keep our eye out for the Antichrist. Is that him? Is that her? Is that over there? Friends, the spirit of the Antichrist is upon us.

(00:59:06):

Takeaway number six. God is in the big storyline of the world and in the details of your everyday life. This is what I mean. You read Daniel 11 and you're like, my goodness. Gigantic, galactic, global geopolitical perspective. Simultaneously [inaudible 00:59:27] and they met at a table and did evil to one another. Big picture storyline. Microscopic detail. God is governing the events of the world towards his appointed end and he knows the number of hairs on your head and the sin you're currently hiding. And the self-righteousness you're not even aware of because you lack self-awareness because you think you're so amazing. And the sin you're hiding from your parents right now. And the hatred in your heart you have toward a coworker.

(00:59:58):

God sees it all. It's both comforting and humbling, isn't it? It's both assuring and lays us bare. It's hard to be self-righteously critical of the world when we're so aware of our need for God himself. I'm not saying we don't think. I'm not saying we don't engage. I'm not saying we don't make judgment calls. Right is right. Wrong is wrong. We live in a binary world. Light, dark. Men, women. Right, wrong. Good, evil. God, every other false god. Yes and amen. But we do it in a spirit of humility that demonstrates we know who we would be without Jesus. I don't want you to leave this morning thinking that God has turned the lights out and left. He is very much present and doing his best work right now.

(01:00:57):

One of the questions for you and one of the questions for Grace City Church is what's our part in it? Because, friends, we play a part. We're called to be the salt and light of the world. Maybe for you this week the salt and the light role comes in you just making a silent resolve. Not going to play along with the charade anymore. I'm not going to participate in the fraud anymore. Because to participate in it to cover my own skin condemns me either condoning it or adding to the perception that the fraud is actually legitimate. There is no covert war on absolute truth anymore. It is absolutely overt. 4H program here in town, led by folks in this church, shut down. You have to call kids by their preferred pronouns and if Johnny wants to be Susie, you better honor that or you're an oppressor. In the 4H program? Don't we have roosters and hens? This is crazy. It's also very exciting. As the enemy takes the dimmer switch and turns the light down on culture, we don't have to try to make the gospel brighter. It just is brighter. Truth doesn't grow less glorious under attack. Truth shines forth all as glorious when we see that all false arguments that come against him... ping! 22 caliber round off the whole other battleship. Because God's truth is both good and beautiful.

(01:03:02):

Last takeaway. Kings and kingdoms come and go. God's word remains the same. 135 prophecies fulfilled in exquisite detail in history in the first 35 verses. All with people who have names that were bigger than yours, more important than yours, had more money and power and influence and prestige than you, and you don't know one of their names a few hundred years later. We're not even 250 years into this great experiment that we call America. That I think is a great experiment, by the way. We haven't even had 50 presidents and I bet

you couldn't name the first five. Kings and kingdoms come and go, friends. The word of God stands.

(01:03:54):

Sometimes God's people need a practical word. Sometimes they need a prophetic word. This is a prophetic word. It's time to stand. I believe there's a harvest coming through this hardship. One that we couldn't begin to quantify. Hence lift off. Chaotic time. Racial riots. Social unrest. Political assassination. The world coming to an end. 1968. An entire world gripped by this epic task taken on by a few people to accomplish something so glorious that it unified a broken nation. Do you think Apollo 8 doesn't apply to our life right now? Lift off. What's the church going to do? On with this. All of the political, economic, and global upheaval in Daniel was to get the temple open and holy in preparation for receiving the first coming of Jesus Christ. And all of the political and economic and global upheaval of today is to get the church open and the people holy and prepared for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

(01:05:34):

So, Father, we're grateful that we can look into your word and read this chapter that secular scholars attack and that quite oftentimes we scratch our heads and don't understand and find in vivid, living color a reminder that you oversee all things. That you control the story arc of history and that you are in the details of a single man's life tomorrow. Father, even in these moments, would you blow us away with your capacity, with your greatness? None of us have a clue how complicated it must be to be God. And yet here we see it in this text. Kings come, kings go, God's king stays. Tyrants come, tyrants fall. People rise, people stumble. Jesus remains the same yesterday, today, and forever more. Offers get made to compromise the truth and those who compromise it lose their soul. Those who stand gain eternity.

(01:06:56):

Father, would you put steel in the spine of the Church... big C... that we would not be found fearing man. We would be found loving man and fearing God. And that we would love them with truth. And that we would love them with courage. I love you. I'm for you. I owe my allegiance, though, to God. Therefore, I can't compromise his standard lest I lie to you about his value, his lordship, and his truth. Therefore, in love, I'm going to hold the line. Even as I pray for you and ask how I can encourage you. Father, may you raise Grace City Church to be a different kind of cultural warriors. Ones that war with the truth and with grace embodied in men and women who love their community for Jesus' sake and work for its flourishing.