



gracefellowship

Daniel: Thriving in Exile
January 24, 2021
God Is In Control

Today we are wrapping up the book of Daniel! As we get into chapters 11 and 12 we will see some of the most amazing prophecy in the Bible. In fact, this is one of the most specifically fulfilled prophetic passages in all of Scripture. Because this is such a long text we will not look at every verse together, but I'll give you a summary of the things taking place and will encourage you to read it on your own.

What you read in Daniel 11 covers a 375 year period of time with remarkable accuracy- and here's why: God knows all things! And all things are under the sovereign control of God. In fact, the details God gives to Daniel about the next 375 are so specific and so accurate that skeptics of the Bible use this passage to claim it was written after the fact!

Let's read the first few verses together.

:: Daniel 11:2-4

2 "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.

3 Then a mighty king will arise, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases.

4 After he has arisen, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. 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.

Here's what you will see as you read Daniel 11:

- There will be 4 more Persian kings who will rise to power, culminating with Xerxes (you can find his story in the book of Esther).
- Verses 3-4 deal with Alexander the Great. Fun Fact: When Alexander conquered the world he came to Jerusalem, but left it in tact. Historically we are told that Alexander had a dream prior to arriving in Jerusalem and saw the Priest there. When he came into the city the Priest from his dream

- met him and showed him the writings of Daniel that detailed the rise of Alexander and the Greek empire and was told with accuracy how he would conquer the world. Alex was so impressed that he left the Jewish people alone.
- However, after the death of Alexander, his empire was left to 4 of his generals. The two most powerful are described in Daniel 11 as the King of the South and the King of the North.
 - South: Ptolemie 1st of Egypt
 - North: Seleucus
 - The Ptolemies and the Seleucids fought with one another for dominance for the next 130 years. You can find the details in Daniel 11:6-21. There are...
 - Marriage Treaties
 - Wars
 - Victory by the North
 - Comeback by the South
 - North gains control of the Promise Land
 - South acts in anger
 - It's a brutal cycle. And it all happened exactly as God said it would through Daniel.
 - And guess who is caught in the middle? Israel!

Daniel describes all this with pinpoint accuracy. How? Because God knows the ends from the beginning!

“God knows the future better than you know your past!” – David Guzik

God foresees and oversees all human events, allotting to each it's appointed season. And here's what is most exciting- God doesn't just have a plan for the nations and dynasties; God has a plan for you! God knows you intimately and He has a perfect plan for your life. Reading the book of Daniel helps us have peace with God's plans.

Here's the question of the morning: How can we trust God when we see so much evil around us? If you remember, the previous chapters of Daniel gave us insight into the fact that the people of God who had been exiled and in captivity in Babylon were going to be able to return to Israel. But God gave Daniel a vision showing him that just because many were going to return home, the years ahead would not be easy. In fact, the next 300-400 years would be awful! But God gives these visions to Daniel as a way to show us that we can trust Him, no matter what comes our way. I'll explain that more fully in a few minutes.

Daniel 11:21 and following tell the story of a man we have heard of before in this series: Antiochus Epiphanes. He called himself Theos Epiphanes- “God Manifest.” His critics called him Epimanes- “Madman.”

Here's what we read about Antiochus in verses 29-35:

:: Daniel 11:29-35

29 "At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before.

30 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.

31 "His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.

32 With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.

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.

34 When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them.

35 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.

Antiochus invaded Egypt, but lost as Rome gave Egypt support. He returned home bitter and full of rage. On his way home, he stopped in Israel and desecrated the Temple, abolished the daily sacrifice, and set up a statue of Zeus to worship. Historians tell us he killed 80,000 Jews during this attack.

When we come to Daniel 11:40 there are many who believe we turn a corner to begin looking at the future still to come, the very end of time, and the conversation shifts to a future ruler- the anti-christ- who will once again devastate the people of God. I'll be honest with you, I don't know if that's exactly what Daniel was trying to convey, so I'm not going to make a bold declaration about that. What I will try to do with the time we have left is look at the things that are very clear. So, let's read Daniel 12 together and close up our study of this book.

:: Daniel 12:1-13

1 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.

2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

4 But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

5 Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank.

6 One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?”

7 The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, “It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.”

8 I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, “My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?”

9 He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end.

10 Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.

11 “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

12 Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

13 “As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”

After all the devastation and pain Daniel had seen we are now told the darkest days are still ahead. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations.

Throughout Daniel 12 we read that the wicked will always persecute the people of God. That will always be true. We should stop acting surprised when Jewish people and Christians are persecuted. But the good news is, God always brings deliverance. We have seen this in the past and we see it again in the future, God limits the persecution of His people.

But Daniel contrasts the evil, wicked people of the world with those he calls “wise.” We are told, “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” (vs 3) So, according to Daniel, the role of the wise is not only to know Jesus for ourselves, but also to introduce others to Him. We are to be ambassadors of the Kingdom of God while we are sojourners in this world.

Verses 5-10 contain two questions and carries on the discussion about the wise and wicked people.

Question 1 is asked by what I believe to be an angel. Daniel says he sees two “men” standing by the banks of the river- one on one side, and another on the

other side. Daniel has described angels as men before, so I have no reason to think these aren't angelic messengers revealing God's plan to Daniel.

Question 1: How long until these astonishing things are fulfilled?

Answer: A time, times and half a time.

We have seen this before in Scripture. Some take it to mean 3 ½ years, but it most likely means “an appointed period of time.” In other words, God has put a limit to these horrific times.

When we face terrible times as Daniel has throughout his lifetime, and as God shows him to still expect in the future, he remained faithful and obedient to God. Our world can be a dark place. But we are called to maintain our faith and follow Jesus no matter what!

Question 2: What will the outcome of all this be?

This is Daniel asking. He actually says, “I didn't understand the angel's message.” I have to tell you I have found it comforting as I've been studying this book that Daniel often had things God showed him that he didn't understand! There are many things I don't understand and as I study and pray I just ask God to lead us to truth and for people not to be too mad at me if I mess it all up! I told Andy a few days ago that I am never teaching the second half of Daniel again! So, the question is, “what will the outcome of all this be?”

Answer: Go your way, Daniel...

God basically tells Daniel he doesn't have to understand it. In fact, he doesn't get to understand it! But I love what God tells him rather than giving him the answer.

Verse 10: Many will be purified, made spotless and refined...

Through the hardships of life there will always be people drawn to salvation in Jesus. God uses the evil and wicked things happening in our world to bring people to a realization of their need for Him. But look at what he says next:

“...the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.”

I don't think he means we will understand, meaning figure everything out and have the perfect answers, but that we will understand that in the middle of the evil we see around us, hope exists in Jesus. We come to Jesus to be at peace in a world dominated by sin.

Earlier I asked the question, “How can we trust God to be good when we see so much evil around us?”

When we see the practice of abortion being called health care...

When we see men pimp out women as sex slaves to make money...

When we see drug trafficking and human trafficking destroying the lives of millions of people...

When we see corruption in our government and in our churches and in our hospitals and schools and homes...

When we look out and see racism and sexism and pluralism and humanism as platforms to divide people...

When we see the wicked thrive and we see so much evil around us, how can we say that God is good and continue to follow Him?

We need to understand that wickedness and evil may have their day in the sun, but their day in court is coming! God works through the wickedness of our world to show people how broken we are without Him. And for those who find their hope in King Jesus, there is the promise of eternal life. But for the wicked, who seem to be thriving now, eternal destruction is promised. I want us to take a few minutes and read a long passage from Psalms together because David asked this exact question and answers it for us in Psalm 37.

1 Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong;

2 for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.

3 Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

4 Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:

6 He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.

7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

8 Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.

9 For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.

10 A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found.

11 But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.

12 The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them;

13 but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming.

14 The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright.

15 But their swords will pierce their own hearts, and their bows will be broken.

16 Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked;

17 for the power of the wicked will be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous.

18 The blameless spend their days under the LORD's care, and their inheritance will endure forever.

19 In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty.

20 But the wicked will perish: Though the LORD's enemies are like the flowers of the field, they will be consumed, they will go up in smoke.

21 The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously;

22 those the LORD blesses will inherit the land, but those he curses will be destroyed.

23 The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him;

24 though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.
25 I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.
26 They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be a blessing.
27 Turn from evil and do good; then you will dwell in the land forever.
28 For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. Wrongdoers will be completely destroyed ; the offspring of the wicked will perish.
29 The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.
30 The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak what is just.
31 The law of their God is in their hearts; their feet do not slip.
32 The wicked lie in wait for the righteous, intent on putting them to death;
33 but the LORD will not leave them in the power of the wicked or let them be condemned when brought to trial.
34 Hope in the LORD and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are destroyed, you will see it.
35 I have seen a wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a luxuriant native tree,
36 but he soon passed away and was no more; though I looked for him, he could not be found.
37 Consider the blameless, observe the upright; a future awaits those who seek peace.
38 But all sinners will be destroyed; there will be no future for the wicked.
39 The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble.
40 The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

Church, as the world around us gets more corrupt and more evil and more bent on calling wicked good, please know that our refuge is in Jesus. God alone delivers us. God will either deliver us through in life to stand our ground and maintain our faith in the face of persecution or He will deliver us in death to His right hand where we will be with Him forever.

The last thing God tells Daniel in this chapter is...

13 "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

Eternity is coming. We don't have to have everything figured out when it comes to end times theology. What we have to know for sure is if we have trusted in Jesus to be our Savior and to forgive us from our sins. Early in the chapter Daniel is told this:

1b "But at that time your people- everyone whose name is found written in the book- will be delivered.

2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

So, that leaves us with one question today as we finish up this book: whose side are you on?

There are the wicked and the wise. The wise have chosen Jesus to be their Savior and trust in Him to bring us through all life's hardships and difficulties so we can find our ultimate, eternal rest in Him.

The wicked have rejected the Lordship of Jesus and hold to their own power to save themselves and they daily fight against the glory of God.

Men and women, this world is not our home! We are exiles here, awaiting our eternal home with Jesus where He rules as King in perfection.

C.S. Lewis may have said it best in his book *Mere Christianity*, "***If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.***"

— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

We are exiles in this world, and like Daniel, we must learn to thrive here as we live for the glory of God in the face of whatever challenges come our way. One day we will be home for good!