

## Dan 11:1-4 & 11:31-35

### Daniel 11:1–4 (ESV)

1 “And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him. 2 “And now I will show you the truth. Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them. And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. 3 Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills. 4 And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these.

### Daniel 11:31–35 (ESV)

31 Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. 32 He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. 33 And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. 34 When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery, 35 and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.

### Dealing with worldwide conflict

Daniel 11 consists of a long **history** lesson. But in Daniel’s day it was a prophesy, a **pre-history** lesson. Daniel was seeing into the future. The text was too long to read in its entirety. We are not even going to read it all in the sermon. So please make sure to read it for yourself this week if you have not already done so.

Now remember, Daniel is still in Babylon, having gone through several regime changes. He had been praying and fasting about the **difficulties** the Jews **that returned to their homeland** in Jerusalem were having in **rebuilding the city wall** and temple. Read Ezra and Nehemiah for more details.

So I think it is safe to assume that Daniel is praying that God would **move** on their behalf. The whole thing has Daniel pretty upset. So God gives Daniel a vision. And in this vision God shows Daniel just **how wonderful** things will get as time progresses. Well, **no**. God shows Daniel just how **bad** things will get.

Why? Why would God do that?

When you look at your own life, which is better to think?

My life is **worse** than it **should** be?

Or

My life is **better** than it **could** be?

Both of those ideas are based upon our **expectations**. They are based upon what we expect from life.

Carla's brother Chuck just had his knee replaced. Had the doctor told him, oh it is a piece of cake. You should be jogging in a week. Chuck would have been distraught. He would have thought that his life after the surgery was **worse** than it **should be**. He may have thought that life should be easy and pain free, when the reality is that it is often very hard and full of pain.

But because Chuck **expected** it to be hard, he gets up every morning and deals with the pain and the difficulty. He **knew** it would be hard. He knew other people's stories, so now he can look at his process as being **better** than it **could** be.

It would be unfair for God to paint a picture of life on earth in an unrealistic manner. He would be making it **worse** on his people when they must face the hardships. Instead the scriptures paint a **realistic** picture. The world, as a whole, will trend toward evil. The trend is down. That is the expectation we should have.

Now, our life in Christ trends in a **different** direction. Our life in Christ trends **up**. We should expect **very positive things** to be going on in our souls and in our walk with Christ, and in our body of believer. We just need to remember, this will not be **because** of the world we live in. It will often be **in spite of** it.

When we look externally, we should have a view, most of the time, that our life is much better than it could be.

When Daniel was done with his vision, he probably looked at the difficulty his countrymen were having in a **different** light. He probably thought, in light of God's plan for the future of the world, things could be much worse. And he should not expect continual progress without a struggle and without setbacks. He was given a proper perspective, a different expectation.

Now, like I said, we are not going to do our usual verse by verse this morning. I hope to break it up in chunks and just refer to the verse numbers.

We start with verse 2. After Cyrus, who was in power during this vision, three more kings would arise and the fourth we are given specifics about. Most scholars think the fourth was Xerxes from 486 to 465 BC. This was likely the

husband of Esther. The Persian empire probably reached its pinnacle during his reign.

Then in verse 3 Alexander the great arrives and conquers Persia.

Verse 4 describes the breakup of Alexander's kingdom to his four generals. None of them were related to Alexander, just as verse 4 predicts.

Vs 5 and 6 give us specifics of the kings of the south (the Ptolemies) and the kings of the north (the Seleucids). These were 2 of the four Greek kingdoms. What makes these two **important** is their influence on Jerusalem and the holy land.

Territories of the two kingdoms bounced back and forth across Jerusalem. What was happening in these kingdoms determined what was happening in the lives of the Jews who returned to their homeland.

Verse 6 tells us about exactly what happened at one point in history. Ptolemy 2, who was the **king of the south** tried to make peace with Antiochus 2, the king of the north. Ptolemy 2 sent his daughter Berenice to marry Antiochus with the plan that Antiochus would divorce his first wife and disinherit her sons. Unfortunately for them, the first wife found out about the plan and it didn't totally meet with her approval. Antiochus's first wife had Antiochus and Berenice poisoned, along with their son. Then Berenice's father died and Berenice's brother became king of the south.

Verse 7 and 8 tells us about Bernice's brother invading the Seleucid kingdom (the northern kingdom) and conquering its capital.

Vs 9-34 describes the future of the back and forth tug of war between the two kingdoms. A scholar, John Goldingay, has done a lot of work with this passage and matches what Daniel says with 13 of the 16 rulers of these two kingdoms between 322 and 163 BC. If you want to see the details, feel free to look him up. I think our purposes this morning are best served to say that this stuff is historically verified. We will only look at the passage briefly.

Verses 5-20 cover the conflicts of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. This culminated in the assassination of Seleucus IV in 175 BC. The balance of power bounces back and forth. Both Kingdoms were trying to conquer the other, but neither were really able to fully accomplish their goals. They had endless warfare and no peace. All of their efforts really accomplish nothing but to keep war stirred up. And all of these endeavors had a dramatic effect on the lives of those in the Beautiful Land.

Nothing has really changed from then until now. The same thing is happening.

When we see the turmoil in our world we can say, "This is not **good**, but my life is

**OK.** God's got this. And God will give us what we need to face the trouble when the trouble arrives."

There appears to be a sweeping movement in **our time** to globalize government on our planet. Maybe the "powers that be" will accomplish this. Maybe they will act too hastily and be defeated. We do not know. We do not **need** to know. Whatever the case, we know they will never issue in an age of peace. They will never create the utopia that is being sought. It will be just like in Daniels day. Every move will be countered with a counter move. But Christ is **coming back** and everything will be permanently fixed. And none of these governments will prevail over the people of God. They may kill us, but they cannot remove our hope in the goodness and promises of God.

Then verses 21-33 talk about Antiochus IV or Antiochus Epiphanes. We have already looked at him in Daniel 8 I believe. Antiochus will get his kingship through intrigue. Those who tried to resist him were defeated. The **covenant prince** in verse 22 may have actually been a Jewish high priest, **Onias 3**. This high priest tried to stand **against** Antiochus but was replaced by another high priest who would **get with Antiochus's program** of Hellenizing Israel.

As the two local kingdoms were fighting over the territory, the **Romans** showed up in their ships. Evidently somehow Gaius Popillius Laenas from Rome met with Antiochus as he was again attacking Egypt. Antiochus understood the power of Rome and he was afraid of them. Gaius drew a circle in the dirt around Antiochus and told him he had to agree to withdraw from Egypt prior to leaving the circle. Antiochus did both. He agreed and he left.

In the meantime, while Antiochus was away for so long, a rumor started that Antiochus had been assassinated. The Jews hoped to take advantage of that and revolted. Antiochus hustled back to Jerusalem and that is when he banned circumcision and the sacrifices and sacrificed a pig on the alter. Some Jews joined him. Some resisted him and died in the process.

Now all of that was pretty bad. But the next section is worse. Again, it depends upon your view of end times how you take this next section. Many scholars take this as being all in the past. Others believe that while Antiochus did many of these things, all the details do not fit. Some think this is all in the future.

Vs 36 through 45

Antiochus did as he pleased to some degree, but not everything. He had to submit to Rome. We looked in an earlier sermon at how he saw himself as the embodiment of Zeus. The god of his fathers would have been Appollo. So he had abandoned that god, the god of his fathers. The one desired by women was

probably the god Adonis or Dionysius. Some use this passage to say that he the antichrist will be a homosexual.

The most distinct difference in this text to the actual historical record of Antiochus is that this passage has Antiochus dying after a successful assault on Egypt between the sea and Jerusalem. What we know of Antiochus is that he died in a minor campaign against Persia in 164 BC.

There is no clear clue in the text that one section is referring to only Antiochus of the past and the rest refers to a future character. But there was no clue in the text that Jesus stood up and quoted Isaiah about Christ coming to save people, and then he sat down. He did not read the rest of the text where Christ was coming to judge people. Christ separated a prophecy in the middle. We are always safe to at least **consider** taking an approach similar to Jesus's when we need to.

OK, we have seen what was coming in the future for Daniel's people. And we probably get a glimpse into the end of human history as we know it. What can we glean in this text for our day to day lives? How are we helped in this passage to know how to live now?

Let's look at verse 31-

**31 Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.**

Now remember, this is the Lord's temple. This is where worship is done to the Lord. It is the only place to make sacrifices for their sin. It is God's territory. And evil just walks in and does what it wants. It violates the sanctity of worship. It would look like the devil is winning. It would look like all is lost. If one had the wrong expectations, it could destroy a person's faith. It would be earth shattering. But what are we told next.

**32 He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant,**

Wow, here is a double whammy. This antichrist destroys the **way to worship God** and then acts **very kindly** to the worshippers. He seduces with flattery. **Flattery is a compliment made with an intent to manipulate.**

Not all compliments are flattery. But all flattery involves compliments. Flattery trusts that pride is a person's driving factor. Flattery is designed to hook into the human weakness of pride so we can be led wherever the flatterer wants to go. Maybe he was saying, you are such good people. You have such wonderful skills. And you are so devout in your worship to your God. It is a shame you picked an

inferior god. I would feel lucky to have you join my team. If you will just help me control this country and serve my god, I will make things very good for you.

So what is the remedy to this kind of seduction?

Dan 11:32b **but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.**

**Knowing God.** We need to **know** God. We need to **know** what God is like. We need to know how God has **acted in history**. We need to know **what the prophets say** about **how God will act in the future**. We need to know that when things get bad, that does not prove anything about God except that He told us the truth about **this** life. We need to know His character and His attributes. We need to know God. Because to truly know God is to know that **He is trustworthy**. To know God is to know that **He never fails**. To know God is to know the **He is God and God alone**. Seduction loses its power when we believe **what we have** is better than **what we are being offered**. It takes the steam out of the flattery. How then does the person who **knows God** respond to this adversity?

They stand firm Dan 11:32-33

**the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.**

The word for “**stand firm**” is often used in the context of battle. It refers to what we studied last week. Those who **know God** put on that spiritual battle and they stand. They resist the wiles of the devil. They put out those flaming darts with faith. It is interesting that “**take action**” is also sometimes used in regard to battle. What we see here is that, even though we may find ourselves in circumstances where **evil appears to be winning** in our world, those who **know God** are **winning the battle in their souls**. They aren't succumbing to the outside forces. They are fighting. They are not inactively accepting their external circumstances as if there is nothing that can be done. The outer turmoil leads them to be very active. They are fighting the good fight that maybe no one else can see. Those closest to them might come to the conclusion they do not know what is going on in the world. Because their focus is not on the battle that they **cannot** win but it is on the battle they **can do something about**.

What happens in your life when bad circumstances happen? When evil appears to be winning? When there are spiritual setbacks all around? Our reactions are a meter of what we really, in our heart of hearts, believe about God. If we know our God, truly, and we trust our God wholly, we will find ourselves fighting furiously with the evil forces in our souls and in the lives of others.

What do we see next?

**33 And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder.**

Kenneth Copeland preaches that we are gods. He says that **“you are anything that He is.”** (that is a quote)

He says **“I am a billionaire because of the assignment that the Lord gave me. I want you to begin to confess the billion flow.”**

Leroy Thompson says, **“God said: 'it is time to tell the money you don't belong to the wicked, you belong to us.' (..) Money come to me now!”**

The angel told Daniel something slightly different. The wise may have some difficulty when they are facing the **sword and flame, captivity and plunder**. Some scholars think that verse 33 is talking about Maccabaeus. He was the Hammer we talked about in a prior sermon. This text is talking about how there were those who were preaching that “the Jews needed to keep true to their God, no matter what.” They would call for repentance and whole hearted commitment. Then in 168 BC Matthathias, a priest in an Israelite city, killed an officer of Antiochus when the officer came to tell them about all the new religious restrictions. He and his 5 sons led a bunch of guerrilla fighters. They made for the hills and waged a war. At times they were joined by others whose motivations were to save their own skins. That did not serve as any help to the true fighters. The Maccabaeus did an amazing job in fighting Antiochus and his warriors. So these scholars say that when they stumble by sword and flame it means they were actually killed.

Whatever the case, we see that if we have a proper belief in God, we will teach.

**33 And the wise among the people shall make many understand**

This may not be formal teaching. But it will be **making others understand** what the right thing to do is and why. So as we see things unfolding, after having studied Daniel the goal is that we can help people around us respond properly. We can help them understand that the world is not racing out of God’s control. We can relax. It is all in God’s controlled and governed by His plan of bringing all of His daughters and sons into His eternal kingdom.

**34 When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery,**

Those who say this is about the Maccabaen soldiers say that some will join them for selfish reasons. They will come in talking about how great these soldiers are in order to be accepted, but their hearts are really not in the same place. That is the little help. I could buy that except for the next verse.

**35 and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.**

I am not so sure the wise are the warriors. This looks much like new testament language about the spiritual life. Even those who are strong believers can easily fall when placed in a situation they are not prepared for. Sometimes we may not have the **wisdom** to know what to do. Sometimes a trial just strikes a weakness and we give in. We all fail. But we see a similar instruction in James.

**[Jas 1:2-4 ESV] 2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**

**[Jas 4:7-10 ESV] 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.**

Even falling has a purpose in the lives of the elect. When the wise stumble, they are led to the state of repentance where they are **refined, purified, and made white**. This could be talking about death. Maybe those who are falling are actually dying. But being refined and purified is usually talking about the process in those who are living, not dead.

I think it is very likely that even the wise, even those who know God, sometimes fall. And even the process of **falling** turns out good for them. All is not lost when they give into the flattery that is trying to get them to conform to the world around them. It is so good to know that ultimately our salvation and sanctification both rely upon the Lord. He is the author and perfecter of our faith. **until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.**

This is how things will continue to go. We will be in a struggle and the world around us is not going to help us into spiritual growth. Sometimes we may be put into a pressure cooker by the world. It will seem like all is lost. But it is not. If we **know God we know that.**

But this will not go on forever. There is a time of the end. And that time has a date on the calendar on it. And fortunately for us, only **God** can look at that **calendar**. World powers will ebb and flow. God will allow the devil some apparent victories that serve God's purposes. The devil will also suffer some defeats at the hand of God. All we can do about **that** battle is pray. But the wise will **stand firm** and **take action**. We will teach those around us how to think about the current situation. We will hang on, knowing that there is a day this will stop. Until then we want to get as many people into the eternal kingdom of God

as we can. And even if we fall on the way, we can get back up and gain a benefit in the process.

As an application this morning, isn't it interesting that the ultimate answer comes in us **knowing God**. We aren't given the details about our individual futures. We do not know what kind of circumstances we are going to face. And we don't need to know all that. What we **need to know** is God.

Do you want to prepare for good times? **Know God.**

Do you want to prepare for tribulation? **Know God.**

He is our rock, and our defense, and our fortress. He is trustworthy and kind and loving. He is merciful and gracious and longsuffering. And He is just and holy and righteous. He offers everything we need to face our lives in the **good** times and the **bad**.

We would do well this week, when we look at where our world appears to be heading, that we meditate on the scriptures about **who our God really is. Know God.**