Daniel 11:1-35

The People Who Know Their God

[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.

[5] "Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he and shall rule, and his authority shall be a great authority. [6] After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement. But she shall not retain the strength of her arm, and he and his arm shall not endure, but she shall be given up, and her attendants, he who fathered her, and he who supported her in those times.

[7] "And from a branch from her roots one shall arise in his place. He shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall deal with them and shall prevail. [8] He shall also carry off to Egypt their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold, and for some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north. [9] Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return to his own land.

[10] "His sons shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall keep coming and overflow and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress. [11] Then the king of the south, moved with rage, shall come out and fight against the king of the north. And he shall raise a great multitude, but it shall be given into his hand. [12] And when the multitude is taken away, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail. [13] For the king of the north shall again raise a multitude, greater than the first. And after some years he shall come on with a great army and abundant supplies.

[14] "In those times many shall rise against the king of the south, and the violent among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they shall fail. [15] Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siegeworks and take a well-fortified city. And the forces of the south shall not stand, or even his best troops, for there shall be no strength to stand. [16] But he who comes against him shall do as he wills, and none shall stand before him. And he shall stand in the glorious land, with destruction in his hand. [17] He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them. He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom, but it shall not stand or be to his advantage. [18] Afterward he shall turn his face to the coastlands and shall capture many of them,

but a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him. [19] Then he shall turn his face back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found.

[20] "Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute for the glory of the kingdom. But within a few days he shall be broken, neither in anger nor in battle. [21] In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given. He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. [22] Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, even the prince of the covenant. [23] And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully, and he shall become strong with a small people. [24] Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province, and he shall do what neither his fathers nor his fathers' fathers have done, scattering among them plunder, spoil, and goods. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time. [25] And he shall stir up his power and his heart against the king of the south with a great army. And the king of the south shall wage war with an exceedingly great and mighty army, but he shall not stand, for plots shall be devised against him. [26] Even those who eat his food shall break him. His army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. [27] And as for the two kings, their hearts shall be bent on doing evil. They shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for the end is yet to be at the time appointed. [28] And he shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. And he shall work his will and return to his own land.

[29] "At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before. [30] For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. [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." – Daniel 11:1-35 ESV

Chapter 10 ends with a statement from Gabriel, the angel who delivered the vision to Daniel. In his closing remarks, Gabriel announced, "But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince" (Daniel 10:27 ESV). Many Old Testament translators believe verse 1 of chapter 11 should be included in the parenthetical statement made by Gabriel that began in verse 21 of chapter 10. The *New Living Translation* renders the opening line of chapter 11 in this way:

> *"I have been standing beside Michael to support and strengthen him since the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede.)"* – Daniel 11:1 NLT

They have made the remarks part of Gabriel's closing message to Daniel, ensuring that the content of chapter 11 remains closely linked to the vision recorded in chapter 10. This is not a new incident and does not describe yet another vision. Gabriel is simply revealing additional information from "the book of truth" (Daniel 10:12 ESV).

Gabriel begins, "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" (Daniel 11:2 ESV). The heavenly messenger is still providing Daniel with an answer to the prayer he prayed in chapter 9. Having read in the writings of Jeremiah that Judah's 70-year exile was about to end, Daniel was concerned about the fate of his people. What would happen to them when they returned to the land of promise? How would they fare?

Gabriel was sent to give Daniel a glimpse into the expansive plans that God had for His chosen people. In these chapters, Daniel is getting a panoramic view of prophetic history, beginning with the not-so-distant future and ending with events related to the end of the age. Verses 2-35 cover the flow of history from the days of King Cyrus to the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, a vile world leader who will abuse the people of God mercilessly and relentlessly. Then the narrative will fast-forward to a future time when another world ruler arises who mirrors the actions of Antiochus Epiphanes. This future king "shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods" (Daniel 11:36 ESV).

Daniel has no way of knowing that the first part of Gabriel's message concerns events preceding the first advent of Israel's long-awaited Messiah (verses 2-35). The second half of the message concerns events that will precede Messiah's second coming. But for those of us living after the first coming of Jesus the Christ (Messiah), this chapter provides us with hope because everything found in verses 2-35 has been fulfilled with painstaking clarity and detail.

In the first half of this chapter, Gabriel provides Daniel with news about the future – disturbing news that outlines the various wars and conflicts that will take place in the years ahead. He tells of the coming of Alexander the Great, the various kings of Egypt, and ultimately, the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian king who was so wicked that he foreshadows the coming of the Antichrist. The amazing thing about this message is its unbelievable accuracy. Some biblical scholars find the accuracy of these predictions too good to be true and write the entire chapter off as nothing more than a ruse. They conjecture that the author wrote this material long after the events it records, disguising his efforts as prophecy. But if they are right and chapter 11 is history disguised as prophecy, then the rest of chapter 11 should have already been fulfilled as well.

But as will become clear, there is no historical evidence that the events recorded in the second half of the chapter have already taken place. The prophecies found in verses 2-35 are not cleverly disguised historical events; they are divine predictions from the lips of the sovereign God of the universe. He knew, down to the smallest detail, what was going to take place long before it happened. He knew all about the coming wars between the Syrians and Egyptians. He

knew who would win and who would lose. And while these great leaders would operate as if they were in control of their own destinies, in the end, their futures were in the hands of God.

Throughout this chapter, we read such phrases as “the end will come at the appointed time,” “then at the appointed time,” and “the appointed time is still to come.” The rise and fall of nations is under the sovereign hand of Almighty God. He is in complete control. Daniel is reminded, “For what has been determined will surely take place” (Daniel 11:36 NLT).

Verses 2-35 set up and establish the rise to power of Antiochus Epiphanes, a conniving, flattering, and powerful king who seemed to have a special hatred for the people of Israel. His actions against them foreshadow the events of the end times when the Antichrist will target the people of God and persecute them as they have never been persecuted before. At one point, Antiochus Epiphanes, frustrated over a battle lost to the Egyptians, orders his general, Apollonius, and a contingent of 22,000 soldiers to attack Jerusalem on a Sabbath. They take many Jewish women and children captive, plundering the temple, and burning the city. His goal was to completely exterminate Judaism and to Hellenize Palestine. He would forbid the Jews to follow the Mosaic Law or practice the Jewish sacrifices, festivals, and circumcision. He would even install an image of the Greek god Zeus in the Temple and offer an unsanctioned and unclean sacrifice to his false god on the altar dedicated to Yahweh. This cruel and wicked man sacrificed a swine to Zeus and sprinkled its blood within the Holy of Holies, desecrating the Temple and defaming God’s name.

Yet, despite all these dire predictions, Daniel is told, “But the people who know their God will be strong and resist him” (Daniel 11:32 NLT). Even during the dire days of Antiochus Epiphanes, the people of God will remain. There will always be a remnant of God-fearing, God-believing, God-empowered saints to stand against the greatest of enemies. God was calling Daniel and the people of God to remain strong during the coming persecution because He would be with them. The immediate future was filled with turmoil, upheaval, political unrest, and persecution for the people of God, but they were to remember that He was in complete control.

We must remain strong as well. We should not be shocked at what we see taking place around us. There is a spiritual battle taking place that manifests itself in the material world. Wars and violence should not shock or scare us. They are to be expected and simply part of living in a fallen world at war with God. But we can rest in the knowledge that our God is great and is in full control of the situation. Like Daniel, we must learn to trust God even when we don’t understand the ways of God. We must continually seek to grow in our knowledge and understanding of His character.

Paul even prayed for the believers in his day that God would give them, “complete knowledge of his will” and “spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Colossians 1:9 NLT). He knew the importance of these things and how necessary they were to a believer’s survival in a wicked world. Those equipped with a knowledge of God’s will, spiritual wisdom, and understanding would not only survive but thrive.

> *Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while,* ***you will grow as you learn to know God better and better****.* – Colossians 1:10 NLT

May you and I grow in our knowledge and understanding of God so that we might be strong and resist the enemy in our day. As we grow in our knowledge of God, we will come to love and trust Him more – no matter what comes our way.

Daniel 11:36-45

He Shall Come To His End

36 "And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done. 37 He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. 38 He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. 39 He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.

40 "At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through. 41 He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. 42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train. 44 But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. 45 And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him. – Daniel 11:36-45 ESV

Verse 31 records a prophecy concerning Antiochus Epiphanies, a Greek king who ruled over the Seleucid Empire from 175-164 B.C. His official title was Antiochus IV, but he preferred to go by his self-proclaimed title "Epiphanes," which means "illustrious one" or "god manifest." Because of his brutal treatment of the Jewish people, they nicknamed him "Epimanes" which translates as "mad one." Having successfully conquered most of Egypt, he turned his sights on the kingdom of Judah and its capital city of Jerusalem. To demoralize the Jews and denigrate their God, he ordered the desecration of their holiest site, the Temple of Yahweh.

> *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.* – Daniel 11:31 ESV

Some scholars believe Antiochus was attempting to quell a long-standing conflict between Hellenistic and Traditionalist Jews. The former adopted the pagan practices and culture of the Greeks, while the latter adhered to the Mosaic Law and the worship of Yahweh. In a blatant display of bias, Antiochus set up an altar to the Greek god Zeus and sacrificed a pig on the altar. When the traditionalists expressed outrage, Antiochus had some of them slaughtered and others sold as slaves. He then issued a series of decrees that outlawed the practice of

circumcision, ordered sacrifices to pagan gods, and demanded that Jews add swine to their daily diet.

His actions resulted in the Maccabean revolt, an uprising led by Judas Maccabeus that scored a series of surprising and decisive victories over the more powerful Seleucid forces. Eventually, Antiochus and the Seleucids vacated Judah, and the Temple was restored in 165 B.C.

But verse 36 contains an abrupt change that may not be recognizable to the casual reader. Even Jews living when this book was first written would not have recognized the nature of the transition in the narrative. Everything Daniel penned was to take place in the not-so-distant future. They would have had no way of understanding the meaning behind Gabriel's message or the timing and the nations involved.

But by the time Jesus arrived on the scene, most of the prophecies would have been fulfilled. The battles between the Egyptians and the Seleucids would have been part of the historical record. The Persian Empire would have fallen to Alexander the Great and his Greek forces. The geopolitical landscape of the region would have undergone tremendous change and by the time Jesus began His earthly ministry, the Romans were the dominant world power.

Yet, Jesus spoke of Antiochus Epiphanes' abomination of desolation as if it lies in the future, not the past.

> *"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be."* – Matthew 24:15-21 ESV

Jesus was not reflecting on the devastating events in Israel's distant past; He was pointing toward an as-yet-to-be-fulfilled aspect of the prophecy contained in the Book of Daniel. Jesus was describing the final seven years of the 490 years outlined in the prophecy. Verse 36 mentions a king who "shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods" (Daniel 11:36 ESV). This is not a reference to Antiochus Epiphanes; it is a prophecy concerning a future king who will replicate the exploits of the former Seleucid king. This world leader will be Antiochus Epiphanes on steroids.

In the prophecy, Gabriel reveals that this future king will bring about a persecution of the people of Israel that will be unsurpassed in its ferocity and scope.

> *"…there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time."* – Daniel 12:1 ESV

This is exactly what Jesus picked up on when He stated, "there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be" (Matthew 24:21 ESV). Jesus was exposing the true meaning of the prophecy. There was a hidden and yet unfulfilled aspect of the vision that needed to be revealed and understood.

Jesus delivered this message during His Olivette Discourse, just days before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His arrest, trials, and crucifixion. He was letting His followers know there was far more to God's plan than they realized. The 12 disciples had long believed that Jesus was the Messiah and expected Him to establish His earthly kingdom at any moment. They were convinced that He had come to overthrow their oppressive Roman overlords, reestablish the Davidic dynasty, and restore the Israelite nation to prominence and power. But Jesus wanted them to know that God had other plans.

As He spoke to His disciples, Jesus warned them, "you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains" (Matthew 24:6-8 ESV). This news would have shocked them and left their heads reeling. It was not what they expected.

But Jesus wasn't done. As His befuddled followers listened, He painted an even bleaker picture of the future.

> *"…they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold."* – Daniel 24:0-12 ESV

This news must have stung them to the core. Jesus was not only suggesting that His disciples would face persecution and even death, but some of them would eventually betray Him. They had no way of knowing that Jesus' words were speaking of the immediate future as well as a time in the far-distant future.

With Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, the timeline associated with Daniel's 490-year prophecy was put on hold. It is as if the pause button was pushed and the prophetic narrative was ended, only to be restarted at some future date. When Jesus ascended back up into heaven, the time of the Gentiles began. The Jewish people had rejected their Messiah, and the message of the gospel was to be taken to the Gentiles. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, wrote about this era of emphasis on the Gentile nations. But he also revealed that this period would come to an end.

> *…a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.* – Romans 11:25 ESV

And Jesus spoke of this very same thing but in a different light.

> *"For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* – Luke 21:24 ESV

This is what Daniel 11:36-12:4 is all about. The pause button has been pushed. The period of the Gentiles is running its course. But the day will come when the pause button will be pushed again and the prophetic timeline will begin once again.

The closing verses of Daniel 11 describe the period known as the Great Tribulation. This will be the last seven years of the 490-year prophetic timeline. A king, reminiscent of Antiochus Epiphanes will come to power. The Book of Revelation reveals this king to be the Antichrist. He will be powerful, resourceful, and unrelenting in his persecution of God's people. The last seven years of God's prophetic timeline will focus on the people of Israel because the Church will have been raptured and removed from the Earth. This will bring an end to the "times of the Gentiles."

God will then focus all His attention on His chosen people, the Jews. But it will be a difficult time filled with pain, suffering, persecution, and death. The enemy will make one last attempt to destroy God's people just as Antiochus and so many others have tried to do over the centuries. The Antichrist will do his best to destroy God's people but "he shall come to his end, with none to help him" (Daniel 11:45 ESV). And Jesus provides the reason for his demise.

> *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."* – Matthew 24:29-31 ESV

Jesus will make His second appearance, bringing an end to the 490-year prophetic vision. He will come and He will conquer. He will return and, this time, He will rule and reign over His earthly Kingdom – just as God planned it to be.

Daniel 12:1-13

I Heard But I Did Not Understand

[1] "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. [2] And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. [3] And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. [4] But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

[5] Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. [6] And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" [7] And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. [8] I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?" [9] He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. [10] Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. [11] And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. [12] Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. [13] But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days." – Daniel 12:1-13 ESV

The prophecy ends leaving Daniel in a state of confusion. He has been given a glimpse of Israel's future but has no idea what it means, when it will happen, or how it will all turn out. He responds in fearful confusion*, "*I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, 'O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?'" (Daniel 12:8 ESV).

Daniel's consternation is understandable because of the frightening nature of the prophecy. Gabriel, the divine messenger, has described a series of disconcerting events including wars on Earth and in the heavenly realms. He spoke of a period of 490 years that would be "perilous times" (Daniel 925). Gabriel warned of a coming prince who would destroy Jerusalem and the recently reconstructed Temple. It would be a time accompanied by floods, desolation, and seemingly endless wars.

In chapter 10, Daniel was exposed to even more details about the future that left him dismayed and filled with dread.

> *"…no strength was left in me…"* – Daniel 10:8 ESV

> *"I retained no strength."* – Daniel 10:8 ESV
>
> *"I fell on my face."* – Daniel 10:9 ESV
>
> *"I stood up trembling."* – Daniel 10:11 ESV
>
> *"I turned my face toward the ground and was mute."* – Daniel 10:15 ESV

Daniel was terrified by all that he had seen and heard. None of it had come across as good news to the elderly servant of Yahweh. This whole series of disturbing visions had come as a result of Daniel's prayer to his "great and awesome God" (Daniel 9:4 NLT). But it was not what Daniel had expected to hear. Daniel had appealed to Yahweh's covenant-keeping nature, begging Him to fulfill His promises of unfailing love to those who love Him and obey His commands (Daniel 9:4). Daniel had confessed the sins of his people and freely admitted they did not deserve God's goodness, grace, and mercy. But Daniel had appealed to God's mercy, begging Him to intercede on behalf of the downtrodden and disenfranchised people of Israel.

> *"We make this plea, not because we deserve help, but because of your mercy. O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and act! For your own sake, do not delay, O my God, for your people and your city bear your name."* – Daniel 9:18-19 NLT

Yet, the message that Gabriel brought was anything but encouraging. None of it made sense because it painted a bleak and foreboding picture of the future that filled Daniel with dread, doubt, and discomfort.

To restore Daniel's confidence, the heavenly messenger delivered a word of comfort and encouragement.

> *"O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage."* – Daniel 10:19 ESV

Daniel was strengthened by these gracious words and expressed his desire to hear more about God's plans for the future. But what came next was more bad news. Gabriel launched into a lengthy description of wars between the Persians, Greeks, Egyptians, and Syrians (Seleucids). These kingdoms of the north and south would battle over the land of Palestine, with Israel sitting at the center of the conflicts. Once again, this news would have left Daniel perplexed and questioning the purpose behind it all.

When Gabriel described the future desecration of the Temple, Daniel must have been beside himself with anger and resentment.

> *"His army will take over the Temple fortress, pollute the sanctuary, put a stop to the daily sacrifices, and set up the sacrilegious object that causes desecration. He will flatter*

> *and win over those who have violated the covenant. But the people who know their God will be strong and will resist him."* – Daniel 11:31-32 NLT

How could these things be part of God's will for the people of Israel? Had God not heard his prayer? Was God oblivious to their plight and unwilling to keep His covenant promises? This entire sequence of events was beyond Daniel's comprehension, and what he heard next made matters even worse.

> *"Wise leaders will give instruction to many, but these teachers will die by fire and sword, or they will be jailed and robbed. During these persecutions, little help will arrive, and many who join them will not be sincere. And some of the wise will fall victim to persecution. In this way, they will be refined and cleansed and made pure until the time of the end, for the appointed time is still to come."* – Daniel 11:33-35 NLT

But what Daniel failed to understand was that God had a long-term plan for the people of Israel that included both suffering and salvation. He would eventually answer Daniel's prayer but not on Daniel's timeline. In fact, Daniel would not live long enough to see most of these prophecies fulfilled. Yet God was gracious enough to let him know that there would be a happy ending to this dark and disconcerting story.

This is where the final chapter comes in. It closes with a glimpse into the far-distant future. God gives Daniel a final view of His plan for Israel. While much of what He revealed to Daniel in chapter 11 had to do with Antiochus Epiphanes and events that have already taken place, chapter 12 contains details about events that have yet to happen – even in our day. They refer to the seven-year period known as the Great Tribulation – part of God's 70 sevens (chapter 9).

In this closing chapter, God reveals to Daniel the final phase of world history before Christ returns to the earth. He refers to it as a period of unparalleled persecution of the Jewish people, the chosen people of God.

> *"…there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time."* – Daniel 12:1 ESV

This "time of trouble" will be unprecedented and exceed anything the Israelites have experienced since becoming a nation. Nothing will compare with this dark chapter in Israel's future, including their captivity in Egypt or their fall to the Babylonians. Yet Daniel is told, "at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1 ESV).

There is hope. The future is dark, but a glimmer of light can be seen on the horizon. Gabriel begins to paint a hopeful vision of the future that reveals God's sovereign plan to fulfill every promise He made to the people of Israel.

> *"Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever."* – Daniel 12:3 NLT

He has not forgotten them and will not fail to keep His covenant commitments to them. But Daniel is warned that their suffering will continue for as long as God deems it necessary.

> *"It will go on for a time, times, and half a time. When the shattering of the holy people has finally come to an end, all these things will have happened."* – Daniel 12:7 NLT

The cryptic phrase "a time, times, and a half time" is a distinctively Hebrew way of describing time. It refers to a year, two years, and half a year, which adds up to three years. This alludes to the second half of the seven-year Tribulation that will come upon the Earth during the end times. This is the final "seven" of the seventy-sevens described in Daniel 9.

Daniel confesses his confusion, saying, "I heard, but I did not understand" (Daniel 12:8 ESV). He had no way of understanding what this vision meant. He had no concept of the end times or any capacity to decipher the complicated numerology used in the vision. All he can do is ask what the outcome will be. But rather than an answer, Daniel receives an order to go about his business.

> *"Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand."* – Daniel 12:9-10 ESV

This is the same basic answer that Jesus gave to His disciples just before He ascended back into heaven. After witnessing His death and miraculous resurrection, the disciples were anxious to know what He would do next. So, they asked, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?" (Acts 1:6 NLT).

They were still hoping that Jesus would establish His earthly Kingdom. Their dreams of serving in His royal administration had been reignited by Jesus' victory over death. If He could rise from the dead, He could certainly conquer the Romans.

But Jesus told them, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know" (Acts 1:7 NLT). They needed to go about their business, and the next verses reveals their job description.

> *"…you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* – Acts 1:8 NLT

They had work to do and so did Daniel. He didn't need to understand all the details regarding the end times. In fact, he wouldn't be around to see any of it happen. Neither would the

disciples of Jesus. They are all long gone but the prophecy contained in Daniel 12 remains unfulfilled.

The Great Tribulation has yet to take place. Because of the unprecedented scope of human wickedness and evil that marks our day, some believe we are living in the Tribulation. But Jesus described this future period as something far worse than anything humanity has ever experienced.

> *"For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again. In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God's chosen ones."* – Matthew 24:21-22 NLT

We may live in dark days, but they are nothing compared with what is to come. The Great Tribulation will be marked by intense persecution of the Jews because of the rise of the Antichrist – a powerful political figure who will make the exploits of Antiochus Epiphanes pale in comparison.

All of this would have shocked poor Danie. He had watched his people suffer through exile for almost 70 years and now he was being told that their persecution would last until the end of time. It would not get any better. During his lifetime, Daniel had been privileged to witness a remnant of the people of God return to the land of promise. But now he was being told of future days when they would be scattered yet again. There would be wars, persecutions, and countless attempts to exterminate the Jews over the centuries. Even today, we are witnessing verbal and physical assaults on God's chosen people as millions revile their very existence and the nations plot their extermination.

While they occupy part of the original promised land, they remain under constant attack. But God is not done. He is not finished with His people. Their suffering will continue, but a day is coming when He will restore them. There is one last Great Tribulation to be endured but then His Son will return. There is hope. There is a happy ending to this story because God has written it and He will fulfill it.

So Gabriel tells Daniel to "go your way until the end." He provides Daniel assurance that all will work out, including Daniel's own resurrection to new life in Christ's future kingdom. Daniel will die, but he will rise again, so that he can spend eternity with the God in whom he had placed his hope and trust all those years living in captivity in Babylon. Daniel could rest knowing that God was going to faithfully complete what He had promised to do. And we can rest in that same promise.

We may not understand all that these prophecies contain, but we don't have to. Like Daniel and the disciples of Jesus, we need to go about our business and live with hope in the promises of God. He will do what He has said He will do, and He will do it according to His divine timeline.