

Turn with me in your Bibles one last time to the book of Daniel

We've been here for about 3 or 4 months

- There are 12 chapters in Daniel but chapters 11 and 12 record one vision so I think it makes sense to speak about them together today

I hope you've enjoyed studying through a book of the Bible

- I know I have

I get a little sad when we finish one

- But the good thing is that we have the promise of many more great books to come in the future

I thought it would be faith-building for us this morning to quickly review what we've studied up to this point

- Let me hit some of the highlights for you before we study chapters 11 and 12

In chapter 1 we learned about Daniel and the Jews being taken captive in Babylon

- We learned about this faithful teenager named Daniel
- And we learned how to live a godly life when you are facing pressure to cave in to the world

In chapter 2 we learned about the first of Daniel's dreams and how God gave him the interpretation of it

- We learned that God alone is in control of world history, only He is sovereign

In chapter 3 we learned about the fiery furnace and how God walks with His people through the midst of trials

In chapter 4 we learned about King Nebuchadnezzar and his pride

- So we learned about the constant danger we face from our own pride and sin

In chapter 5 we learned about the writing on the wall

- We learned about the foolishness of mocking the Lord and not listening to Him

In chapter 6 we learned about Daniel and the lion's den

- We learned that there will be times when laws are passed that go against our faith but that God protects us and gives us guidance

Then in chapter 7 we saw that the book makes a change in direction

- It begins speaking more about the end times
- And so we learned about the coming of both the antichrist and of our Savior, Jesus

In chapter 8 we learned about bad days to come and how God cares for His people when they go through trials

In chapter 9 we learned about Daniel seeking the Lord and praying for renewal and revival

And in chapter 10 we began to learn about fighting spiritual battles

- We learned that God will give us strength and will fight our battles for us

Now today as we look at this last section of the book God tells Daniel about two more amazing things

- First He tells him about the rise and fall of every world leader from his day until the time of Christ
- Some 600 years of history
- Then second He tells him about a future time
- A time of great tribulation when the Antichrist comes

It makes sense that in a book that combines so much world history with end times prophecy that he finishes now by talking about life right before the return of Christ

- It finishes the book off properly

For our purposes today I'm not going to talk so much about his prophecy of coming world leaders because we've already studied them several times

- But just so you can see how amazing the detail of chapter 11 is let's look at it briefly for a few minutes

Look with me first in your Bibles beginning in chapter 11 and verse 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.**

Now remember that Daniel is writing this in the late 6th century BC

- About 600 years before the time of Christ

Starting with Daniel's day and going forward God literally tells him about the kings and world powers to come for the next 600 years

- First the Persians and then Alexander the Great, the Greek, are mentioned
- Then all the leaders after the division of Alexander's kingdom are mentioned
- All the way down to verse 35 we are given a detailed listing of coming world leaders

Now some scholars with a more liberal bent don't believe that a man can be given a road map of history before it happens

- They say this had to be written after the fact and was just made to appear like it was prophecy

But if that's the case, that makes God out to be a liar

- That makes His Word untrue

If there is one theme that has been repeated over and over again not only in Daniel but in the entire Bible it's that God is in control

- God is sovereign over world events
- God is almighty and all-powerful
- God has the ability to know the future because He controls the future

What we're talking about here is the One True God who created the world

- The One who sent His Son into the world born to a virgin
- We're talking about the Son who walked on water and healed the sick
- The One who died on a cross for the forgiveness of sins and rose again from the dead

Nothing is too big for God

- He's a God of miracles
- A God of power
- A God who's in control

Know that truth in your heart today

- Rest in it
- Take peace from it

That's why He introduces these 600 years of prophetic history the way He does in verse 2: **And now I will show you the truth...**

Verses 2-35 have come to pass exactly as Daniel prophesied they would

- God spoke it, Daniel recorded it, and 600 years of world history have come to pass as God said they would

But when we get to verse 36 things begin to change

- He's still telling us the truth, so it doesn't change in that sense
- But no longer does the text read as if it is talking about rulers back then, in the days before the time of Christ
- The focus seems to shift and go from talking about a time of tribulation back then to a time of Great Tribulation in the future
- It seems to shift from talking about a type of antichrist to **the** actual Antichrist

Here in these last two chapters of Daniel we are told what the last days on earth will be like in the days before the Second Coming of Jesus

- God tells us this so we will know there will be hard times to come...
- He's telling us so we will be ready!

That's where we will pick up the text today and read

- **Let's read verses 36-45**

Here's how we're going to address this passage and this subject in the time we have remaining

- **Who** is this person we are reading about?
- **When** are all these events going to take place?
- And **what** does it have to do with us, the Church?

So first, who is this person verse 36 calls the king?

I believe the person being spoken of here is the Antichrist

Let's read verse 36 so you can see that: **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.**

Daniel has already mentioned the Antichrist on several occasions in this book

- You may remember a man we read about earlier in this book named Antiochus Epiphanes
- We said he was a **type** of antichrist, a foreshadowing of the one to come
- But now the book is at its end and Daniel tells us about **the** Antichrist

If you remember back to chapter 7 Daniel called him the little horn

- He said he would come speaking blasphemous things about God
- So the Antichrist of chapter 7 certainly sounds like the person described here in verse 36 of chapter 11

Daniel also described this coming Antichrist for us earlier in chapter 9 as well

- Daniel 9:27 says: **And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.**

Now that verse certainly makes a connection to Antiochus Epiphanes who we spoke about earlier

- He was the world ruler who went into the Jewish temple and desecrated the altar by sacrificing a pig on it
- He set up pagan idols and demanded to be worshiped
- But as I've said before, Antiochus was just a type, a foreshadowing of this future Antichrist that we are speaking about today

I'm saying all this because Daniel seems to be a book rooted back in his day

- World rulers from Daniel's day up until the time of Christ are mentioned
- But it also jumps from that point in time to a time in our future, a time yet to come, a time when **the** Antichrist himself will come
- You need to keep that truth in mind when studying this book

That's why this book says so much to you and men today

- God was writing this not only to prepare people back in Daniel's day
- He's writing this to prepare people who live in the last days as well

So who is this person, this Antichrist?

Verse 36 gives us many details about what type of man he will be

It says he will do as he pleases

- So he will be a man of personal ambition

It also says he will exalt himself above every god

- So he may be an atheist or at best a religionist, but he will not be a believer in Christ
- In fact, it says he will say unheard of things against the God of gods

Revelation 13:5-6 tells us more about the vile character of the Antichrist: **The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.**

2 Thessalonians 2:4 also describes him saying: **He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.**

Matthew 24 also adds many interesting details to these ends times when the Antichrist will be coming

- It tells us not only about the wars that will be fought world wide but the natural disasters that will be happening before his arrival

You've heard this passage before

- Matthew 24:6-8: **You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of birth pains.**

So this Antichrist will be a person, probably some brilliant world leader

- There will be wars and rumors of wars on every continent
- There will be increasing natural disasters taking place
- Amid all this chaos the world will be looking for a leader promising to be able to solve all these problems

However instead of turning to the Prince of Peace to find abundant and eternal life

- The world at that time will turn to a deceiver and a destroyer

The Antichrist will be the very opposite of Jesus

- So that tells you very briefly who he is
- That answers the first of our three questions

So now second, when is all this going to take place? When does he come?

Well, that's the ten thousand dollar question

- Lot's of people have messed up by trying to say who he will be or what country he will be from
- They've tried to put an exact date on his arrival

I've always thought the wise approach was to just know these days are coming and be prepared

- To know that Jesus was returning and be ready for His appearing
- That's the main reason the Bible talks about the Return of Jesus
- So we would be waiting and watching

But the Bible **does** give us a general idea of when this Antichrist will come

- It does give us a general idea of when this time of Tribulation will be

Verse 40 says: **At the time of the end...**

I know that's not very specific

- But it tells us that we don't have to worry about him until the end comes, whenever that may be
- At least when we see that he's here on the earth we can know that the end will be coming soon afterwards

That's some measure of comfort to us

- As bad as this Antichrist will be we know that his reign of terror will not be long and that his demise will be just around the corner

The last verse of chapter 11 tells us about his end, here in verse 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.**

Revelation 16 also talks about his demise

- It tells us he will fall at the infamous battle of Armageddon, there at the valley of Megiddo

And then 2 Thessalonians 2:8 describes his end saying: **And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.**

That should comfort us knowing that God is in control

- Christ will return and the Antichrist will come to his end

Now turn with me to chapter 12 of Daniel and we'll see this happen here in the context of the book

- Look with me at verse 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.**

He's talking about a time of deliverance for God's people

- A time when Jesus will return and the Antichrist will be put to death

But when is this time when God's people will be rescued?

- *When will the Antichrist be put to death?*

The simple answer is at the end of the Tribulation

- At the end of this seven year period of time right before the return of Christ

If you've studied what the Bible says about the end times then you understand what I'm talking about today

- If not, what I'm saying may be a little confusing to you

The last thing I want to do is teach this in a hysterical, maniacal manner

- I'm not into scare tactics

I also don't want to get so technical that this message loses its practicality

- But let me give you a one-minute overview of a few terms so you can understand what we're talking about.

The time period we're living in now, from the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus until now, is called the Last Days or the End Times

- We call it that because there will be no more Scripture given to us
- God has given us all the information we need
- Jesus has come into the world to die for sins and rise again from the dead
- Now we are to take the Good News of Jesus into all the world until His return
- So the next big thing to occur in a prophetic sense will be these final End Time events surrounding the Return of Jesus

Are you with me so far?

Right before the return of Christ the Bible tells us that there will be a seven-year period of Great Distress on the earth called the Great Tribulation

- That's what these chapters are describing for us today
- Chapter 12, verses 11-12 describe this time period and help us know its length: **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. Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days.**

The time of Tribulation will be a 7-year period

- But the second half of that time will be called the Great Tribulation
- That's when things will get very difficult for the people of God
- That's what we see being mentioned here in chapter 12

Then at the end of that time the Antichrist will be put to death at the battle of Armageddon

- Jesus will return and do away with all His enemies

Those who have already died will return with Jesus

- Those who still remain will be caught up together with Him in the air
- And this is what we call the Second Coming of Jesus

I hope this makes things more clear for you and that I haven't made things more confusing

- And I want to remind you that even if we look at things a little bit different from one another
- This subject is a secondary issue, not a primary one

As long as we're in agreement on the fact that Jesus is returning

- And that we need to be waiting and watching for Him
- And that we need to be faithful to living for Him and telling people about new life in Jesus
- We're ok
- We can be a little different on some of the details

I want you to remember that as we turn now to the third and final question we want to answer

- **What** does all this have to do with us, the Church?

I want to give you two things this has to do with you as a believer in Christ

One, as we just spoke about

- It means you have an obligation to tell people about Jesus

Verse 2 describes how it will be at the end of the Tribulation period: **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.**

It's talking about this time when Jesus returns after the Tribulation for His people

- Some will have already died and some will still be alive
- Some will have eternal life and some will have eternal death

What that tells me is that you need to trust in Jesus

- You must repent of your sins
- You do not want to enter eternity separated from God
- You do not want to go to hell

But at the same time, I don't want you to only think of yourself

- If you've never trusted in Him then do think of yourself and be saved by trusting in Christ
- But if you have already been saved, then don't just think of yourself
- Think of others
- Share the Gospel with people
- Pray for the salvation of the lost
- Support the spread of the Gospel world wide

I like to reference Matthew 24:14 to show how the return of Jesus is connected to our faithfulness to fulfilling the Great Commission

- Matthew 24:14: **And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

What this means is that you have an obligation to tell people about Jesus

- God has people in every nation and every tribe and they are waiting to hear about Jesus so they can repent of their sins and trust Him
- You need to warn people not only of the danger to come but of God's gracious provision for life through His Son
- So you have an obligation to tell people about Jesus

Verse 10 describes it this way: **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.**

Do you understand?

- Has God made you wise?
- Has He refined you and made you pure and white?

Only the blood of Jesus shed at the cross can make you clean

If you don't know Him I want you to know Him

- And if you do know Him I want you to tell others
- So that's the first thing this has to do with you as a believer in Christ

Now second and finally

- (And not with a lot of time to develop this properly)
- What this subject today of the end times, the Tribulation, the Antichrist and the return of Jesus has to do with you, the Church
- **The Church needs to be prepared to go through the Tribulation**

What?

- That's not what I've always been taught

Well, I'm asking you to check your Bible a little more carefully

The idea that there would be a secret rapture before the Tribulation is a recent creation, dating to only about 150 years ago

- The first 1,850 years of the Church believed we would be here for the Tribulation

I'd be willing to guess that most of you today believe there will be a secret rapture of the Church **before** this Tribulation period

- That position has grown very popular through books like Left Behind and through many television shows
- The only problem is that I don't think it's biblical

Sticking to the context of Daniel, you have to ask why God had Daniel record all this for the people of God if the people of God wouldn't be here for it

- That makes no sense at all
- He recorded this and sealed it for the end so we would know and be ready

That's why verse 12 says: **Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days.**

Blessed is the one who goes through that Tribulation time and arrives at the end

But there's one other text I need to take you to as we close

- It's the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 which is so closely tied to these two chapters today in Daniel

In that passage Jesus is talking about the destruction of the temple

- And then there, just as here in Daniel, He goes ahead to the end times
- In Matthew 24:29-31 He says: **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.** ³⁰ **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.** ³¹ **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.**

When does Jesus say He will be returning in verse 29?

- Immediately **after** the tribulation...
- That's when the rapture and resurrection of the dead occur
- It is one event coinciding with the return of Jesus at the end of the Tribulation

Does that mean if your view of the end times is wrong you won't go?

- Not at all...
- If I'm wrong, I'll still be taken out with the rest of the believers
- But if others are wrong, when they see this great time of Tribulation coming and they've been thinking they would be gone
- They'll be awfully disappointed and discouraged

It seems to me that the greatest end times deception Satan could create would be to have 95% of the church thinking they would avoid the Tribulation

But God has never told His people He would spare them from all difficulty

- Instead He says in many places, like He says in John 16:33: **I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.**

God has given us the book of Daniel to prepare us, not to scare us

- He wants you and me living for Christ as we go into the last days
- So come to Him today and trust Him, no matter what the futures brings
- *Will you pray with me?*