

Daniel 11:20-45, 12
January 31, 2016

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

DEB: M-A-P-S (Bible's Reliability: Manuscript evidence; Archaeological Evidence; Prophetic Fulfillment Evidence; Scientific Evidence)

DEB: Outline of Daniel 11

- 11:2 – Prophecies Concerning Persia (Fulfilled)
- 11:3-4 - Prophecies Concerning Greece (Fulfilled)
- 11:5-20 - Prophecies Concerning Egypt (“South”) and Syria (“North”) (Fulfilled)
- 11:21-35 – Prophecies Concerning Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Fulfilled)
- 11:36-45 – Prophecies Concerning the End Times (Not Fulfilled until 7-yr Tribulation)

In case you didn't attend last week's class, we are attempting to finish reading the vision given to Daniel by the angel Gabriel. Then the last chapter details the predicted Antichrist, which is only 13 verses.

Transition: As we read through this text and learn about this “great time of distress,” it will be hard not to think about those who don't know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We don't know how far out the Tribulation period is, but no matter what, we have only been given this life to live, and I hope all of us are sharing the gospel as often as possible. All of us should share the gospel because there are too many people perishing. Spiritual warfare is alive and well. The stakes are high. Christ commissioned us to go make disciples.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Dan 11:21-35]

V.21:

- “He will be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue.

V.22:

- Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed.

V.23:

- After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully, and with only a few people he will rise to power.

V.24:

- When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did. He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses—but only for a time.

V.25:

- “With a large army he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him.

V.26:

- Those who eat from the king’s provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away, and many will fall in battle.

V.27:

- The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time.

V.28:

- The king of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country.

V.29:

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

V.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.

V.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.

V.32:

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

V.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.

V.34:

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

V.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.

Process Observations/Questions:

Review HO and provide historical details.

[Read Dan 11:36-45]

V.36:

- “The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.

V.37:

- He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all.

V.38:

- Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.

V.39:

- He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price.

V.40:

- “At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood.

V.41:

- He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand.

V.42:

- He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape.

V.43:

- He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission.

V.44:

- But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many.

V.45:

- He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

Process Observations/Questions:

Review HO and process the predicted Tribulation period

[Read Dan 12:1-13]

V.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.

V.2:

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

V.3:

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

V.4:

- But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”

V.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.

V.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?”

V.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.”

V.8:

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

V.9:

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

V.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.

V.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.

V.12:

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

V.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.”

LOOK:

One of the ways we serve Christ is by sharing His good news with others. Whether the Tribulation occurs in our lifetime or not, we want to take as many people with us to heaven! That means talking to our colleagues, our family members, friends, or whoever. If you're into sports, then look at it like a competition with the Enemy. If we play offense and start sharing the gospel more freely, we hope to wear down our opponent. But we need to run the ball more. For Christ's sake, let's do that!

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Miller, S. R. (1994). *The New American Commentary: Daniel* (Vol. 18, pp. 297–327). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

(4) Prophecies Concerning Antiochus IV Epiphanes (11:21–35)

²¹ “He will be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue. ²² Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed. ²³ After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully, and with only a few people he will rise to power. ²⁴ When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did. He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses—but only for a time.

²⁵ “With a large army he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him. ²⁶ Those who eat from the king’s provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away, and many will fall in battle. ²⁷ The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time. ²⁸ The king of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country.

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 knew 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.

Verses 21–35 serve as the climax of this section. The historical preview in vv. 2–20 was furnished in order to set the stage for the prediction of an eighth Seleucid-Greek ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 B.C.), the “little horn” of chap. 8 (cf. 8:9–12, 23–25). Much attention is given to this individual because his actions profoundly affected Israel.

ANTIOCHUS’S ACCESSION AND EARLY REIGN (11:21–24)

11:21 When Seleucus IV Philopator died in 175 B.C., his younger brother, another son of Antiochus III, seized the throne. He is labeled a “contemptible person” (*nibzeh*, cf. Ps 15:4; Jer 22:28) by the Scripture writer because from the Jewish vantage point he was a monster. Antiochus IV severely persecuted the Jews, massacring thousands, and represented one of the greatest threats to Yahweh worship in all of Israel’s history. This arrogant monarch referred to

himself as Epiphanes, the “Manifest One,” or “Illustrious One”; but others called him Epimanes, the “Madman.”

“The honor of royalty” was not due Antiochus, for the throne rightfully belonged to Demetrius I Soter, the son of Seleucus IV. However, Demetrius was being held hostage in Rome, and this allowed Antiochus to seize power.

“He will invade the kingdom” would be better rendered “he will come to the kingdom,” for Antiochus did not become king of Syria by means of a military invasion. “When its people feel secure” (*běšalwâ*) is literally “in quietness” or “in ease” (cf. 8:25). The idea may be that Antiochus would come in a time of false security or that he would come “unawares.” If the former meaning is correct, the reference probably is to the leaders of Syria, like Heliodorus, who felt “secure” in their new government. “Unawares” would also aptly describe the furtive manner in which Antiochus came to power. Both ideas of false security and stealth may be involved.

Antiochus was a master of political “intrigue” and won support for his government by influencing key figures in Syria. These persons were promised attractive rewards if they cooperated with him.

11:22–23 In 169 B.C. Ptolemy VI Philometor (181–146 B.C.) launched an attack to regain territories (Palestine and Phoenicia) lost to the Syrians, but his “overwhelming army” was defeated by Antiochus’s forces. Ptolemy was even captured (“destroyed”; lit., “broken,” defeated, not killed) and held as a hostage by the Seleucid king (cf. vv. 26–27).

Ptolemy is called “a prince of the covenant” because he agreed (made a covenant) to become an ally of Antiochus if the Syrians would help him regain his throne in Egypt, which had been taken by his younger brother, Ptolemy VII Euergetes II (Physcon). Antiochus was delighted to make such a pact, for he felt that it would give him a foothold in Egypt. So with Syrian help, Ptolemy regained his throne. Later Ptolemy broke this agreement and allied himself with his brother Ptolemy VII to dislodge Antiochus’s troops from Pelusium, a fortress on the border of Egypt.

11:24 When they felt “secure” (or “without warning”; cf. v. 21), Antiochus invaded “the richest provinces” (lit., “the fatnesses [or “fat ones”] of the province”) and plundered their treasures. These areas included Egypt, Judea, and other provinces where Syrian forces were successful. Young notes that some historical sources indicate that Antiochus gave gifts to the people. Yet the context of this verse seems to suggest the idea of dividing the spoils of war (“plunder, loot and wealth”) with his followers rather than with the people generally.

Grandiose plans to conquer “fortresses” (in Egypt, etc.) filled the proud king’s head, but his success would last “only for a [brief] time,” that is, “the time decreed by God.” Concerning the import of this phrase, Di Lella comments: “Regardless of his wealth and power, his military prowess and cunning, Antiochus would not exceed the limits allotted him by the Lord of history.”⁶⁷

A FURTHER DESCRIPTION OF THE FIRST EGYPTIAN WAR AND SUBSEQUENT JEWISH PERSECUTION (11:25–28)

11:25–26 This section refers back to Antiochus’s first campaign against Egypt in 169 B.C. His victory over Ptolemy VI (described in v. 22) is the subject of v. 25. The “plots devised” against Ptolemy seem to include Antiochus’s plans against him, the activities of disloyal subjects in Egypt, and the poor counsel of his advisers (see next verse). Cumulatively these things prevented Ptolemy from successfully “standing” against the Syrians. “Those who eat from the

king's provisions" (v. 26) were Ptolemy's trusted counselors, who unwisely urged the young king to recapture Syria and Palestine, thus incurring the wrath of Antiochus.

11:27 While Ptolemy VI was a prisoner (cf. v. 22), Ptolemy VII Euergetes (Physcon) was made king. This development led Ptolemy VI and Antiochus ("the two kings") to plan how they would regain the Egyptian throne. Both kings made promises that they had no intention of keeping. Of course, Antiochus was willing to support Ptolemy merely for personal gain, and in turn Ptolemy made insincere promises in order to receive aid from the powerful Syrians. "The figure of speaking lies at the same table is significant because, to the oriental, deception practiced at a table of hospitality was the very lowest in kind." Nevertheless, the plan of Antiochus and Ptolemy to control all Egypt was "to no avail," even though they did have some successes in Egypt, including the capture of the strategic center, Memphis. Ptolemy VI was installed as king there, but Ptolemy VII still ruled in Alexandria.⁷⁰ Later Ptolemy VI established a joint rule with his brother, Ptolemy VII.

In spite of all the plans made by human leaders, God is sovereign, and the "end" of this evil king and his enterprises would come "at the appointed time." Montgomery comments that the expression "an end will still come at the appointed time" suggests "the ultimate doom in the counsels of God."

11:28 Then Gabriel arrived at the real purpose of all this historical data—to set the stage for the persecution of the Jewish people ("the holy covenant"). Antiochus's successful first campaign against Egypt in 169 B.C. is the background for v. 28. After plundering Egypt, the king returned home by way of Palestine and found an insurrection in progress (cf. 1 Macc 1:16–28; 2 Macc 5:1–11). He put down the rebellion, massacring eighty thousand men, women, and children (2 Macc 5:12–14) and then looted the temple with the help of the evil high priest, Menelaus (cf. 2 Macc 5:15–21). The persecution of the Jews by this evil tyrant had now escalated to calamitous proportions.

THE SECOND EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN (11:29–30a)

11:29–30a In 168 B.C. (God's "appointed time") Antiochus invaded Egypt again, but this time he was not successful. Verse 30 records that the cause of Antiochus's failure was that he encountered opposition from the "ships of the western coastlands" (*ṣiyyîm kittîm*; cf. Num 24:24). *Kittîm* was an ancient name for Cyprus that came to be used for the lands of the Mediterranean in general.⁷³ Here it refers to the Roman fleet that had come to Alexandria at the request of the Ptolemies. Thus the fourth empire, which would eventually defeat the third (Greece), is introduced.

As the Syrians were moving to besiege Alexandria, the Roman commander Gaius Popilius Laenas met Antiochus four miles outside of the city and handed him a letter from the Roman Senate ordering him to leave Egypt or face war with Rome. Then the Roman commander drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus and told him that he must respond before stepping from the circle. Well aware of the might of Rome, having been a hostage there, and also remembering his father's (Antiochus III) defeat by the Roman legions at the Battle of Magnesia, the Syrian king stood in humiliated silence for a brief interval and then acquiesced to the demand. Antiochus withdrew from Egypt to Antioch in utter humiliation.

FURTHER PERSECUTIONS OF THE JEWS (11:30b–35)

11:30b In 167 B.C., Antiochus turned his humiliation into anger against the Jewish people ("the holy covenant") once more (cf. 1 Macc 1:29–40; 2 Macc 6:1–6). He sent Apollonius (2

Macc 5:23–26), the head of his mercenaries and the “chief collector of tribute” (1 Macc 1:29), to Jerusalem. Apollonius pretended to come in peace, but on the Sabbath Day he suddenly attacked, massacring many people and plundering the city (cf. 1 Macc 1:30–32; cf. 2 Macc 5:25–26). But he rewarded those apostate Jews like the high priest Menelaus, who supported his Hellenistic policies (cf. 1 Macc 1:1, 43; 2 Macc 4:7–17).

11:31 The temple is spoken of here as a “fortress” either because it was a place of spiritual strength or more likely because it was used as a military citadel. Later, in 167 B.C., the suppression of the Jewish religion began on a grand scale (1 Macc 1:41–50; 2 Macc 6:1–6). All Jewish religious practices such as circumcision, possessing the Scriptures, sacrifices, and feast days were forbidden on penalty of death (1 Macc 1:50, 63); and the imperial cult was introduced. Desecration of the Jewish religion reached its climax on 15 Chislev (December) 167 B.C. (1 Macc 1:54) when an altar or idol-statue devoted to Olympian Zeus (Jupiter) was erected in the temple (“the abomination that causes desolation”), and on 25 Chislev sacrifices, probably including swine (cf. 1 Macc 1:47; 2 Macc 6:4–5), were offered on the altar (cf. 1 Macc 1:54, 59). In this manner the temple was desecrated and rendered empty of Yahweh worshipers.

11:32 Antiochus made fine sounding promises (“flattery”) in order to entice people to support his policies (cf. 1 Macc 2:18; 2 Macc 7:24); thus he would further “corrupt” the apostate Jews (“those who have violated the covenant”; cf. 1 Macc 1:11–15) who listened to him.

Yet even in this dark period there were true believers (“the people who know their God”) among the Jews who remained faithful to their God. First Maccabees 1:62–63 speaks of them: “Many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die” (NRSV).

Foremost among those who resisted the oppressive measures of Antiochus were the Maccabees. A certain priest named Mattathias who lived in the town of Modein (ca. seventeen miles northwest of Jerusalem) refused to forsake his God (cf. 1 Macc 2:1–14). He had five sons, three of whom (Judas, Jonathan, and Simon) became known as the Maccabees, although the term Maccabeus (“hammer”) originally was given only to Judas (1 Macc 2:4). The Maccabees successfully overthrew the Syrian yoke through a series of brilliant military victories (apparently predicted in Zech 9:13–17) against Antiochus’s military commanders, Apollonius, Seron, Gorgias, and Lysias (cf. 1 Macc 3:10–4:35) between 166 [or 165] and 164 B.C.; as a result the temple was rededicated (Hanukkah) to Yahweh on 25 Chislev (December 14) 164 B.C. (1 Macc 4:52).

11:33 “Those who are wise” also may be rendered “those who cause to be wise,” that is, “teachers.” Either interpretation is possible, and there is support for the latter view in the words “will instruct many.” But some of these persons are martyred according to the latter part of the verse, and it was not only the teachers who suffered this fate but many of the faithful. Moreover, the same expression is employed in 12:3, where it seems to describe believers generally, and the purification of the “wise” described later in this verse is applied to all the faithful (“many”) in 12:10. Therefore these “wise” persons are Israelites who have spiritual discernment, that is, true believers.

These saints would remain true to Yahweh during Antiochus’s persecution and would “instruct” (lit., “give understanding to”) others in Israel (“many,” lit., “the many”) concerning the truth and the correct course of action, which included a military revolt against the Syrian government. Because of their stand many of the Jewish faithful would be killed.⁷⁹ Tens of thousands were slaughtered in these persecutions, and many others died during the fighting,

including another son of Mattathias, Eleazar (crushed by an elephant according to 1 Macc 6:43–46) in 162 B.C., and Judas Maccabeus, who perished at the battle of Mount Azotus in 160 B.C. (1 Macc 9:3, 15–18). Others were “captured” for slaves or had their property confiscated (“plundered”). Though intense, this persecution would last only for a short while. Some of these faithful heroes seem to be noted in Heb 11:34. Hebrews 11:35 probably speaks of the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons who were horribly tortured and then burned (cf. 2 Macc 7:1–41).

11:34 During this period of oppression (“when they fall”), those faithful to Yahweh “will receive a little help,” presumably (according to most commentators) an allusion to the small number of forces who at the first fought against Antiochus. The rest of the verse apparently refers to the fact that as the strength of the Maccabean revolt grew, many uncommitted Jews sided with the rebels out of expediency, particularly when the Maccabean forces, now joined by the Hasidim, began to put to death those who had collaborated with the Seleucids (cf. 1 Macc 2:42–48).

11:35 “Some of the wise will stumble” expresses the same thought as v. 33—true believers will suffer persecution and even martyrdom for their faith. The purpose of this fiery ordeal that fell upon Israel was to cleanse individuals and the nation as a whole of sinful practices and to strengthen their faith. It also separated the true believers from the unregenerate within the Jewish community.

In this context the “end” that has been “appointed” by the Lord denotes the termination of Antiochus’s persecutions. Those suffering in the second century B.C. would have been greatly comforted by the promise of an end to their suffering.

Antiochus IV died in 163 B.C. during an expedition in Persia, bringing to a conclusion both his wicked life and his atrocities against God’s people. Antiochus died a horrible death. Polybius relates that according to some the king died insane (see further discussion of Antiochus’s death at 8:25).

(5) Prophecies Concerning the End Times (11:36–12:3)

³⁶ “The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. ³⁷ He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. ³⁸ Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. ³⁹ He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price.

⁴⁰ “At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. ⁴¹ He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. ⁴² He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. ⁴³ He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. ⁴⁴ But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. ⁴⁵ He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

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. ²Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Scholars are in agreement that the vision up to this point has been concerned with events between the time of Cyrus (in which Daniel lived) and the death of Antiochus IV, but with v. 36 this agreement ends. Although there have been other identifications set forth for the “king” of vv. 36–45, there are two principal views today.

Those who adhere to the Maccabean thesis maintain that vv. 36–45 continue to speak of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. However, there are serious problems with this position, not the least of which is the fact that much of the historical data set forth in these verses (even in vv. 36–39) is impossible to harmonize with Antiochus’s life. For example, Antiochus did not exalt himself above every god (vv. 36–37), reject “the gods of his fathers,” or worship “a god unknown to his fathers” (v. 38); on the contrary, he worshiped the Greek pantheon, even building an altar and offering sacrifices to Zeus in the Jerusalem temple precincts. Daniel also predicted that this king “will come to his end” in Palestine (v. 45), but it is a matter of historical record that Antiochus IV died at Tabae in Persia.

Exegetical necessity requires that 11:36–45 be applied to someone other than Antiochus IV. The context indicates that the ruler now in view will live in the last days, immediately prior to the coming of the Lord. Verse 40 reveals that this king’s activities will take place “at the time of the end” (cf. 10:14), and the “time of distress” mentioned in 12:1 is best understood as the same “distress” (the tribulation) predicted by Jesus Christ in Matt 24:21 as occurring immediately before his second advent (Matt 24:29–31; cf. Rev 7:14). But the clearest indication that this “king” will live in the latter days is that the resurrection of the saints will take place immediately after God delivers his people from this evil individual’s power (cf. 12:2). Of course, the resurrection is an eschatological event. Finally, vv. 36–39 seem to introduce this king as if for the first time.

Daniel previously had described this person (chaps. 7 and 9) and expected the reader to recognize him without an introduction. He is none other than the “little horn” of Dan 7 and “the ruler who will come” of Dan 9:26. He is known in the New Testament as “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thess 2:3–12), the “antichrist” (1 John 2:18), and the “beast” (Rev 11–20). Interpreting this passage to foretell Antichrist has been a widely accepted view since ancient times (e.g., Chrysostom, Jerome, Theodoret), and Young rightly calls this “the traditional interpretation in the Christian Church.” Almost sixteen hundred years ago Jerome declared: “Those of our persuasion believe all these things are spoken prophetically of the Antichrist who is to arise in the end time.” Today the majority of both amillennial (e.g., Young) and premillennial (e.g., Archer) scholars interpret this king to be Antichrist.⁸⁷ In reality a description of Antichrist should not be considered surprising in a context with Antiochus IV, for both of these oppressors of God’s people have previously been given a prominent place in Daniel’s prophecies (cf. chaps. 7–9). Thus Gabriel had now ceased to speak of Antiochus and had begun to describe the one he closely resembled (or typified), the eschatological Antichrist.

Antichrist (11:36–45)

Now the most notorious tyrant who will ever live is introduced into the narrative. First Antichrist's evil character is related (11:36–39); then his wars are described (11:40–45).

11:36 Variations of the expression “do as he pleases” are used of God in 4:35, Persia in 8:4, Alexander the Great in 11:3, and Antiochus III in 11:16. A similar expression, “It prospered in everything it did,” was used of Antiochus IV in 8:12. Because of his personal charisma, intelligence, evil character, and political power, Antichrist will arrogantly believe that he can function sufficiently well without God. The passage seems to indicate that Antichrist will be an atheist (cf. 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:6), although he evidently will use religion to gain his position of power (cf. Rev 17). Baldwin declares: “So thoroughgoing is his egotism that he has no option but to be an atheist.”

“Unheard-of things” is a translation of the Hebrew *nīplā’ôt* (from *pālā’*, “be surpassing, extraordinary”; noun, *pele’*, “wonder”), which denotes “astonishing, shocking, or unbelievable things.” Antichrist will spew out shockingly blasphemous words against Christ (cf. 7:8, 11, 20, 25; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:5–6).

The phrase “the time of wrath” is a translation of one Hebrew word, *za’am*, a term that usually denotes the wrath of God (cf. Isa 10:25; 26:20; 30:27; Mal 1:4), and that is the meaning here. God's wrath will be poured out upon Antichrist and the whole sinful world in the last days during the tribulation period (cf. 12:1; Matt 24:21–22, 29–31; Rev 6–19). When that period is over, this tyrant's activities will cease. Though Antichrist will be judged, he himself is part of God's judgment upon the wicked (cf. 2 Thess 2:12), for those who reject the truth will believe his lies and follow him to their doom (cf. Rev 16:13–16). When the evil leader has accomplished his purpose, judgment will fall upon him (cf. 7:11, 26; 2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:20). Even Antichrist's activities and the tribulation are permitted by the sovereign God to accomplish his purposes.

11:37 This verse states that Antichrist will reject whatever religion is practiced by his ancestors. If this individual arises from the peoples of ancient Rome (which chaps. 7 and 9 indicate), his family religion probably would be some form of Christianity.

The phrase “the one desired by women” (*hemdat nāšīm*) has been variously interpreted. A literal translation of the phrase would be “the desire of women” and also could be rendered as “that desired by women,” or even “the desire for women.” Mauro felt that “the one desired by women” alluded to Christ because Jewish women desired to be the mother of the Messiah,⁹² and the context of the verse seems to support this interpretation. On either side of the phrase are statements concerning Antichrist's contempt for God and religion. It would not be surprising to find a reference to the rejection of the Messiah in this setting.

This verse concludes by again emphasizing the atheistic nature of Antichrist, “Nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all” (cf. 2 Thess 2:4). This deluded tyrant will even demand that the earth's inhabitants worship him rather than their deities (cf. Rev 13:12, 14–15).

11:38 Antichrist will not worship the gods (or “god”) of his ancestors; “instead of them [i.e., these deities; lit., “instead of him”], he will honor a god of fortresses,” that is, military power and might. Keil remarks: “The ‘god of fortresses’ is the personification of war, and the thought is this: he will regard no other god, but only war; the taking of fortresses he will make his god; and he will worship this god above all as the means of his gaining the world-power.”⁹⁵ Leupold rightly observes that “if men will not have the true god, there must be something to which they will attach the allegiance of their heart.” His ancestors did not worship this god of military power (“a god unknown to his fathers”), but Antichrist will. He “will honor” this god of military power

by spending lavishly (“with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts”) to increase the size and strength of his army. Young asserts: “For religion he will substitute war, and war he will support with all that he has.”⁹⁷ That Antichrist will engage in war is seen in vv. 40–45; 7:8, 24; and elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Rev 13:4; 16:13–16).

11:39 The future dictator “will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god.” This “foreign god” is the “god unknown to his fathers” of the previous verse, and Antichrist’s god is “foreign” in the sense that this deity was not worshiped by his ancestors. By means of his overwhelming military power (his god), Antichrist will destroy all of those who dare challenge him. The peoples of the world will be so impressed by his might that they will say: “Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?” (Rev 13:4).

Persons who vow allegiance to Antichrist as their king will be rewarded. He “will greatly honor” them, grant them leadership positions (“make them rulers over many people”), and allot them territories to rule (“distribute the land”). The “price” for such rewards includes unquestioning allegiance to Antichrist and his government but may also involve financial payoffs and political favors.

11:40 The wars of Antichrist are described in vv. 40–45, and the time of this conflict is declared to be “the time of the end” (v. 40). Leupold remarks: “There is nothing in the context that would restrict the force of the word ‘end,’ and so the end of all things must be meant.” Moreover, this battle concludes with the destruction of Antichrist in Palestine (v. 45) followed by the resurrection of the saints (12:2). These events have not yet transpired, and therefore the “end” in view here must be the final days of the present age. “Chariots and calvary and a great fleet of ships” would be representative of their modern counterparts in this eschatological battle. Earlier in this chapter “the king of the South” represented the Egyptian leader; and “the king of the North,” the Syrian king. In this context, however, these kings must symbolize nations or confederations of nations that exist in the last days. Obviously neither present-day Egypt nor Syria qualify as world leaders of the stature of their ancient counterparts (the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires). North and South must be relative to Israel. It seems clear from the description of the “king of the North” that he is none other than Antichrist, but the exact identification of the “king of the South” is a matter of conjecture. If the king of the North is Antichrist, the southern nation or confederacy must have sufficient military force to challenge his power. Since the South earlier in the chapter referred to Egypt, the reference may be to a confederacy of powers led by Egypt or including Egypt.

Some maintain that “the king of the North” and Antichrist should be distinguished. According to this scenario, both the king of the South and the king of the North (presumably allies) will attack Antichrist on two fronts.¹⁰¹

There are several arguments favoring this view. (1) In vv. 36–39 Antichrist is simply called “the king,” not the “king of the North.” (2) Antichrist is from Rome, which is not directly north of Palestine. But Babylon was northeast of Judah; nevertheless it was spoken of as “the land of the north” (e.g., Jer 6:22; 10:22) because the invasion came from that direction. (3) Ezekiel 38–39 predicts an invasion of Israel from the north, and this invader is interpreted by some as Russia. (4) The northern threat in Ezekiel has some of the same allies (e.g., Libya) as the king of the North in this passage. In Dan 11:43, however, the Libyans and Nubians are most likely conquered foes of the king of the North, not his allies (see later discussion).

Grammatically, Wood could be justified in understanding both phrases, “will engage *him*” and “against *him*,” as referring to Antichrist. Nevertheless, Archer seems correct in stating: “It seems much simpler and more convincing, however, to take the ‘king of the North’ in this verse

to be none other than the latter-day little horn, the Antichrist.” Moreover, earlier in this chapter (vv. 6–28) various rulers from the Seleucid line were designated as “the king of the North.” Antiochus IV Epiphanes was a Seleucid-Greek monarch (a “king of the North”) and probably should be understood as a type of the future Antichrist described in the latter portion of the chapter. It would be appropriate, therefore, to designate both the type and the antitype by the same phrase, “the king of the North.”

Thus a southern force (“the king of the South”) will attack Antichrist (“the king of the North”), whereby Antichrist will retaliate and decisively crush his opposition (“against *him*,” then, refers to the king of the South). He “will invade” the “countries” of those who have attacked him and will “sweep through them like a flood.”

A pertinent question concerns the relationship between the battle depicted here and that of Ezek 38–39. Walvoord maintains that the battle in Ezekiel is different altogether from that in this passage and occurs earlier, evidently at the middle of the seventieth seven. Yet two separate conflicts within such a short period of time (approximately three years) on the massive scale described in Ezek 38–39 and Dan 11:40–45 seems a virtual impossibility. According to Whitcomb, the battles of Daniel and Ezekiel are identical and will transpire at the midpoint of the tribulation period. Whitcomb affirms that when Gog (the leader of the northern foe in Ezek 38–39) is defeated, Antichrist will have “full control of the world,” and his persecutions will begin. Wood adds that at that time Antichrist will “be the supreme master of that part of the world and be in a position to force his will wherever he may desire.”¹¹⁰ Such an enormous conflict preceding the great Battle of Armageddon (at the end of the tribulation) by only three years seems out of the question. The battle described from different perspectives in Ezek 38–39 and that of Dan 11:40–45 is best construed as occurring immediately prior to the coming of the Lord and may be referred to as the Battle of Armageddon.

11:41 Antichrist “will also invade” Israel, “the Beautiful Land” (cf. 8:9 and 11:16). “Edom, Moab¹¹² and the leaders of Ammon” refers to ancient countries southeast of Palestine that today are part of modern Jordan. For some reason Jordan will escape the battle, perhaps because this nation will be an ally of Antichrist or because of its neutral position in the conflict. A simple explanation may be that this area happens not to be in the path of Antichrist’s armies.

11:42 Egypt may perhaps be equated with “the king of the South” mentioned in v. 40, but this title may refer to another modern nation or group of nations (possibly an Arab bloc led by Egypt) to the south of Palestine. Verse 44 suggests that the king of the South will be joined in his assault by other nations.

11:43 Hebrew *lûb* [“Libyans,” *lubîm*] designates the area in North Africa west of Egypt that includes modern-day Libya, and Hebrew *kûš* (“Nubians,” *kušîm*) was the name of an area roughly equivalent to modern Ethiopia and Sudan. The literal phrase “in his steps” has been taken to signify “in submission” by the NIV translators (also Montgomery) rather than to mean that these nations are allies of (marching with) the king of the North (so Whitcomb, Wood). The NIV’s interpretation seems to be correct since Antichrist’s conquests are in the forefront in vv. 40–44. Libya, Ethiopia, and Sudan will therefore be subdued by Antichrist. If the king of the South (Egypt) represents an Arab bloc of nations, “all the riches of Egypt” may include the oil resources of the Middle East.¹¹⁴

11:44 The “reports” that alarm Antichrist evidently are that new attacks have been launched against his interests from nations in the east (possibly the armies described in Rev 9:13–19; 16:12) and the north (possibly the invasion from the north prophesied in Ezek 38–39). Without support from powerful allies, such as Ezekiel’s northern leader, the king of the South (Arab

nations) would not likely venture an attack against Antichrist. The king of the North will go out “in a great rage to destroy and annihilate [*ḥāram*, “devote to complete destruction”; a strong expression] many.” Furious that anyone would dare oppose his power and authority, the evil dictator will arrogantly marshal his forces against the enemy with the intent of totally obliterating them.

11:45 Antichrist will meet these attacking forces in Palestine and make his headquarters (“pitch his royal tents”) “between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain.” “Seas” denotes the two bodies of water on either side of Israel, the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Dead Sea on the east. The “beautiful holy mountain” is Mount Zion, where the temple stood, rendering the mountain “beautiful” and “holy.”¹¹⁶ Antichrist will use the Jerusalem temple for his headquarters (cf. 2 Thess 2:4; possibly Matt 24:15), though the brunt of the battle will be elsewhere. Daniel was here reporting that the final war will be fought in Israel, a fact set forth elsewhere in Scripture (cf. Ezek 39:2–29; Joel 3:2–16; Zech 12:2–9; 14:1–21). The Book of Revelation indicates more specifically that the valley of Megiddo will be the setting of this final conflict—the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 16:16).

Finally, the career of the most evil man in history will be terminated. Earlier in the book Daniel revealed that “the little horn” will be judged when the Lord comes to set up his kingdom (7:11, 26–27); Paul said this “man of lawlessness” will be destroyed “by the splendor of his [Christ’s] coming” (2 Thess 2:8); and John teaches that the “beast” will be captured and thrown into the lake of fire at Christ’s return (Rev 19:20). This chapter closes with the pronouncement that there will be no escape (no “help” from any source) for Antichrist when the judgment of God falls upon him and his evil empire.

Daniel 11 has enormous theological value. First, the reality of the God of the Bible is demonstrated. Campbell relates: “In the first 35 verses there are at least 135 prophecies which have been literally fulfilled and can be corroborated by a study of the history of the period.” Since no human being can know the future (apart from divine inspiration), there must be a God in heaven who revealed these matters. Second, the divine omniscience and omnipotence of the Lord is set forth. God foretells future events and therefore must have supreme knowledge and power over history. Third, for those who live after the predicted events have occurred, there is the confidence that since the previous prophecies have been fulfilled, the subsequent promises of deliverance and triumph will just as assuredly come true. Fourth, the fulfillment of these amazing predictions evidences that the Holy Scriptures are truly a product of supernatural revelation. Therefore this section of the Book of Daniel is not an unimportant record of historical events but a rich testimony to the believers’ glorious God and the trustworthiness of his Word.

Baldwin finds significance in the rise and fall of the many rulers set forth in chap. 11: “Yet, despite the fact that rulers become strong, suddenly they stand no longer; their kingdoms are broken, they retreat, they fall. This pattern recurs in the remainder of the chapter and emphasizes the fleeting glory achieved by conquest.” Keil adds that the passage demonstrates that the ungodly kingdoms of this world will not endure, trials purify the church, and the people of God will ultimately be delivered.¹¹⁹

The Final Triumph and Reward of God’s People (12:1–3)

In spite of the chapter division found in both the English and Hebrew Bibles, Daniel’s final vision continues from 11:45 through 12:3 without interruption. Archer points out that the closing verses of Dan 11 describe Antichrist’s military and political career, whereas his internal policy of “brutal oppression and persecution” toward God’s people is set forth in 12:1. Verse 1 also relates

the final deliverance of the saints, followed in vv. 2–3 with an account of their glorious condition in the messianic kingdom.

12:1 “At that time” alludes to the period just described in 11:36–45—Antichrist’s reign of terror at “the time of the end” (11:40). R. A. Anderson remarks that the verse’s “strongly eschatological character is hinted at in the use of the opening words ‘at that time,’ and their occurrence twice more in the same verse.” Slotki adds that chap. 12 “is generally taken by Jewish authorities to refer to the remote future which will herald the advent of the Messianic era.” Antichrist’s activities during this time are partially delineated in 11:36–45 but are further recounted elsewhere in Daniel (e.g., 7:8, 11, 20ff.; 9:27) and in other Scriptures (e.g., 2 Thess 2:3ff.; Rev 13:1ff.).

God has assigned a powerful angel to watch over and protect Daniel’s “people.” Since “prince” speaks elsewhere of angels (cf. 10:13, 20), the designation “the great prince” may suggest that Michael is the greatest of these angels. In Jude 9 he is called “the archangel.”

Goldingay thinks that Michael’s activities involve a victorious court battle with another guardian angel, but Rev 12:7–9 appears to be the divine interpretation of this conflict. In that passage Michael and his angelic forces engage Satan (the dragon) and his angels in war. This warfare between Michael and Satan takes place during the three and a half years of the great tribulation period (cf. 12:7; 12:11–12; Rev 12:6, 14). As a matter of fact, the same phrase, “a time, times and half a time,” is employed in both Rev 12:14 and Dan 12:7 to designate the length of the period in which this conflict is waged.

Gabriel explained the reason this special aid from Michael will be necessary. Israel will experience “a time of distress” (*’et šārâ*) unlike anything the world has ever known. Baldwin observes: “The positive assurance of help [from Michael] has first place before the announcement of unparalleled trouble.” “From the beginning of nations” is literally “from the being of a nation,” which may be construed to mean from the time that any nation was formed or from the inception of one particular nation. If one nation is intended, the reference would be to Israel, and the meaning would be that Israel had never experienced anything like this in its history. The NIV’s interpretation is best, for the language most naturally is taken to signify from the beginning of any nation, and this passage and other Scripture make clear that the wars and calamities of the last days stretch beyond the borders of Israel. Daniel was therefore predicting that at the end of the age there will be “a time of distress” unlike anything experienced in the history of the world. Michael will be needed to help deliver Israel during this trying period. Israel will also require the assistance of such a mighty angel because Antichrist will be energized by a powerful evil angel, Satan himself (cf. 2 Thess 2:9; Rev 13:2).

In speaking of the days immediately prior to his coming, Christ refers to this horrible period: “For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again” (Matt 24:21). Theodotion and the LXX translate the Hebrew *šārâ* (“distress”) in Dan 12:1 with the Greek word *thlipsis* (or *thlipseōs*), the same term Christ chose when describing this dreadful time. The wording in the Matthew passage is similar to Theodotion’s rendering of Dan 12:1, and it seems evident that Christ had the Daniel passage in mind. Jesus continued by saying, “Immediately after the distress of those days” the peoples of the earth “will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory” (Matt 24:29–30). Obviously the Lord took Daniel’s prophecy as a description of the last days. The Book of Revelation (chaps. 4–19) further describes this period (also Zech 12:1–9; 13:8–14:2).

This “time of distress” is commonly labeled “the great tribulation” and will be the most horrible period in history for Israel¹²⁸ and the whole world. According to Zech 13:8, only one-third of the people of Israel will survive. Not only will this period involve persecution for those who oppose Antichrist, but as Dan 11:40–45 has informed the reader, this will be a time of great wars climaxed by Armageddon.

Yet there is good news here as well. The Jewish remnant (and all other persons) who trust in the Lord (“everyone whose name is found written in the book”) will ultimately “be delivered” from the oppression of Antichrist. Although many saints will suffer—some will even die (cf. Rev 7:14; 20:4)—during the tribulation, the Lord will appear and rescue the faithful. Even martyred saints will be “delivered” eternally from the “second death” (Rev 21:8). The context is clear that this deliverance will take place at the end of the tribulation; Scripture elsewhere relates that believers in Israel will be rescued at this time (e.g., Joel 2:32). The tribulation will be dreadful, but one purpose of it will be to bring the Jewish people to an attitude where they will receive Jesus as their Messiah. This it will accomplish (cf. Zech 12:10; Rom 11:25–27). Of course, multitudes of people throughout the earth also will see their need for Christ and turn to him for salvation during this period (cf. Rev 7:9–17).

The “book” is a common figure of speech in the Scriptures and alludes to the “book of life” in which the names of all saints are written (cf. Exod 32:33; Ps 69:28; Mal 3:16; Luke 10:20; Rev 3:5; 20:12). Evidently this figure comes from the practice of keeping a record of all the citizens of a town. Those whose names were listed enjoyed the blessings of community membership, whereas the names of those who were excommunicated from fellowship were blotted out. All (Jews or Gentiles) who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord have their names written in the book of life. Goldingay designates this as “the citizen list of the true Jerusalem.” John the apostle related the sad fate of those at the final judgment whose names are not found recorded in this book, “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15).

12:2 In this verse is one of the most astounding and blessed truths in Scripture—the resurrection. After the “time of distress” described in the previous verses, “multitudes” (*rabbîm*) will be raised from the grave.

The resurrected ones are called those “who sleep in the dust of the earth.” “Sleep” is a figure of speech used frequently in the Bible to designate physical death (cf. John 11:11–14; Acts 7:60; 1 Thess 4:13; 1 Cor 15:51), and this “sleep” refers to physical death *only*. When the spirit of the believer leaves the body, there is no intermediate state; rather, the spirit goes directly into the presence of the Lord (cf. 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:21–23). Likewise, when the spirit of an unbeliever departs, it goes immediately to a place of conscious torment (cf. Luke 16:22ff.). Daniel 12:2 lends no support to the theories of some groups that persons who die are annihilated or experience “soul sleep.” Baldwin seems correct in stating: “The reason for using ‘sleep’ here as a metaphor for ‘die’ is that sleep is a temporary state from which we normally awake, and so the reader is prepared for the thought of resurrection.”

Although the spirit of the believer does not sleep, the body is placed in a grave (“the dust of the earth”; cf. Gen 3:19) and becomes inactive (sleeps) until the Lord raises it, glorifies it, and reunites it with the spirit (cf. 1 Cor 15:51–55). Deceased unbelievers also will be resurrected and spend eternity in bodily form according to this verse (cf. Matt 10:28). The resurrection of the body is compared here to a person waking (“will awake”; LXX, *anastēsontai*, “will rise up”) from sleep.

Two groups of resurrected persons with drastically different futures are represented in this verse (cf. John 5:28–29). Believers will rise to enjoy “everlasting life” in their new bodies and will reign with Christ (cf. Rev 20:4–6). The phrase *ḥayyē ’ōlām* (“everlasting life”) appears here for the first time in the Old Testament. Its Greek counterpart (*zōēn aiōnion*, cf. the LXX, Theodotion) occurs in the New Testament (e.g., John 3:16) and “in apocalyptic and Christian literature (1 Enoch 15:4; Psalms of Sol. 3:1), in the Targums and other Jewish writings.” Daniel relates that there will be “multitudes” of resurrected believers, although this does not necessarily mean that they will be the majority of the human race. As a matter of fact, Jesus seemed to indicate that such would not be the case (cf. Matt 7:13–14). Still, one may expect to find millions upon millions of fellow believers in heaven (cf. Rev 7:9). The great host mentioned Dan 7:10 would include saints as well as angels.

On the other hand, unbelievers will face “shame” and “contempt.” “Shame” is a translation of the Hebrew term *ḥārāpôt*, which Keil rightly designates a plural “of intensive fullness”—great shame. The wicked will be ashamed and disgraced as they stand before the Lord and realize the gravity of their sin, particularly the sin of rejecting God’s loving Messiah. Hebrew *dērā’ôn* (“contempt”) refers to “an object of aversion” or “abhorrence.” In Isa 66:24, the only other instance of this word in the Old Testament, it also concerns the eternal state: “And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome [*dērā’ôn*] to all mankind.” Isaiah’s use of the term appears to explain the significance of the expression in Dan 12:2. So shocking will be the fate of the lost that onlookers must turn their faces away in horror (or disgust). This “contempt” will be “everlasting,” that is, it will endure for eternity. Jeffery appears correct in stating, “These words say nothing of the actual punishment of the wicked but suggest it.”¹³⁵

God, of course, delights in judging no one (cf. Ezek 18:23, 31–32; 2 Pet 3:9). Christ came to earth and died on the cross so that all might be forgiven and receive everlasting life. But people have a choice. Each individual decides his or her destiny by accepting Christ or rejecting him.

The fate of both groups is “everlasting.” Daniel therefore was setting forth the doctrines of “eternal life” and “eternal punishment.” According to this text, all persons (believers and unbelievers) will enter the eternal state in bodily form. Heaton also recognizes “that already, as in the fourth Gospel, eternal life [for the believer] is qualitatively as well as quantitatively different.”

Daniel 12:2 is generally considered to contain “the most explicit reference in the OT to the resurrection of the individual,” but other Old Testament passages teach this as well (cf. Job 19:26; Ps 17:15; Isa 26:19).

At first glance one might receive the false impression that the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked will occur simultaneously. Young argues that the passage implies a general resurrection, but this is impossible in light of other Scripture, particularly the parallel passage of Rev 20:4–6, which distinguishes the first resurrection of the saints who are raised immediately after the tribulation period (the same group described here) and the second resurrection of the wicked occurring a thousand years later. As is the case with other Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Zech 9:9–10), future events separated by many years are telescoped together with later revelation clarifying the time difference.

Baldwin justifiably contends that sometimes Hebrew *rabbîm* (“multitudes”) may have the force of “all,” even though the word may also mean “multitudes” (NIV) or “many” (KJV). In the first case the expression would speak of the fact that “all” will be resurrected. All persons will indeed be raised, even though there will a period of time separating the resurrection of saints and

unbelievers. The NIV's "multitudes" would emphasize the great number who will rise from the grave. The verse also has been interpreted to mean that at this time "many," but not all, will be resurrected. Walvoord remarks that this would harmonize with pretribulationism, which espouses that many believers will be resurrected before the tribulation while others will be raised at the end of the tribulation, the time in view here. The NIV's interpretation probably is best.

12:3 In the messianic age believers ("those who are [spiritually] wise" and "those who lead many [lit., "the many"] to righteousness") "will shine like the brightness of the heavens [*rāqī'a*, "expanse," i.e., the sky]" and "like the stars for ever and ever." Both parts of this verse contain parallel ideas.

"Those who are wise" (or "those who make others wise," cf. 11:33) includes the resurrected saints of 12:2. Being in parallel with "those who lead many to righteousness," these are believers generally who are spiritually wise themselves and make others wise through their life and witness. This wisdom includes the recognition of the truth of God and willingness to act upon it. Such persons will become the spiritual children of God and rise to take part in the coming kingdom.

Through words and deeds God's children lead others to understand the call of the sovereign Lord upon their lives, a call that involves a life of holiness since God is holy. This is not a special class of saints, but as Baldwin observes, "Those who lead others to righteousness, then, are those who demonstrate their faith and encourage others to faith, and this the humblest believer can do."

The saints are described as shining like "the brightness of the heavens," synonymous with "the stars" (cf. 8:10, where stars are also used as a figure for the saints) mentioned in the second half of the verse. Christ, evidently with this passage in mind, declared that at the end of the age "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt 13:43). Just as stars display their beauty and glory in the sky, a bright (glorious) future and a great reward (which includes God's blessings and great honor) awaits those who were wise enough to comprehend and obey spiritual truth and who led others to repent of their sins and live a righteous life. This blessed and glorious state will continue "for ever and ever" (*lě'ólām wā'ed*). In this present world many times believers are persecuted, misunderstood, misrepresented, suffer economically because of their spiritual priorities, and are overlooked by the world. Yet someday things will be different. The decision to follow Christ and put his kingdom first will be rewarded. Some persons ask, "Is serving Christ worth it?" (cf. Mal 3:13–15). God's answer is a resounding, "Yes!" (cf. Mal 3:16–4:3).

In summary, a number of truths concerning the resurrection are set forth in this passage. First, it is a bodily resurrection. The body is brought out of the grave and infused with new life. Second, this new body is immortal. Third, even unbelievers will spend eternity in bodily form. Fourth, the resurrected saints receive great honor and great reward, whereas the opposite is true for unbelievers.

3. Final Instructions to Daniel (12:4–13)

With 12:3 the vision proper ends. The remainder of the book contains the admonition to preserve the prophecy, information concerning the duration of history's final phase, and various personal remarks and promises to Daniel.

(1) Instructions to Preserve the Message (12:4)

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

12:4 “Close up [*sētōm*] and seal [*hātām*] the words of the scroll” (cf. 12:9) is made up of two synonymous clauses, “close up the words” and “seal the scroll.” As in 8:26 this admonition concerned the preservation of the document, not its being kept “secret” (NRSV).

In the ancient Near East the custom was to “seal” an important document by impressing upon it the identifying marks of the parties involved and the recording scribe. A sealed text was not to be tampered with or changed. Then the original document was duplicated and placed (“closed up”) in a safe place where it could be preserved. An excellent illustration of this process is recorded in the Book of Jeremiah: “So I [Jeremiah] bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver. I signed and sealed (*hātām*) the deed, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales. I took the deed of purchase—the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions, as well as the unsealed copy—and I gave this deed to Baruch son of Neriah [the scribe]” (Jer 32:9–12). The sealing of Jeremiah’s property deed was not done to “hide” the contents or to keep them “secret” but to preserve the document. As a matter of fact, Jeremiah performed this transaction in the presence of his cousin “and of the witnesses who had signed the deed and of all the Jews sitting in the courtyard of the guard” (Jer 32:12). There also was an “unsealed copy” of the deed that presumably was open for inspection.

Gabriel therefore was instructing Daniel to preserve “the words of the scroll,” not merely this final vision but the whole book¹⁴⁷ for those who will live at “the time of the end” when the message will be needed. This future generation will undergo the horrors of the tribulation (“time of distress”) and will need the precious promises contained in the Book of Daniel—that God will be victorious over the kingdoms of this world and that the suffering will last for only a brief time—to sustain them.

An increase in travel toward the end of the age is not the idea of the phrase “will go here and there.” In a number of Old Testament passages (e.g., 2 Chr 16:9; Jer 5:1; Amos 8:12; Zech 4:10), Hebrew *yěšōṭēṭû* denotes “to go here and there” in search of a person or thing, and that is the meaning here. An “intense” searching seems indicated by the verb form. The purpose of this search will be “to increase knowledge.”

Yet Gabriel was not predicting a mere surge in scientific “knowledge,” and so forth, in the last days. The article appears with “knowledge” (lit., “the knowledge”), showing that a particular kind of “knowledge” was intended, that is, when and how Daniel’s message is to be fulfilled. As the time of fulfillment draws nearer, the “wise” will seek to comprehend these prophecies more precisely, and God will grant understanding (“knowledge”) to them.

(2) Duration of the “Time of Distress” (12:5–7)

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.”

12:5 Now the prophecy is rapidly moving to a close, and Collins rightly points out that 12:5–13 “serves as a conclusion to the whole book as well as to chs. 10–12.” Two angels, standing on opposite banks of the Tigris River (cf. 10:4), suddenly appeared to Daniel. Porteous suggests that these two angels serve as witnesses (cf. Deut 19:15) to the oath that the man in linen will subsequently take, but Leupold remarks that the demand of the law for two or more witnesses “deals only with criminal charges, not with substantiating all and every sort of statement.”¹⁵¹ Keil also observes that “in ch. 8:13f. two angels appear along with him whose voice came from the Ulai (ch. 8:16), without any oath being there given.” Moreover, considering that the person who takes the oath is Christ himself (discussion at 10:5–6), such an attestation would be unnecessary.

12:6 The speaker, who is introduced in Hebrew only by “and he said” could be one of the two angels standing by the river (so NIV, NASB) or more likely the interpreting angel (Gabriel), since he has been the spokesman throughout the vision.

At this point in the narrative “the man clothed in linen” (Christ) is reintroduced. He is described as standing in midair “above the waters of the river.” Daniel was witness to a striking scene. Two angels were on either bank of the river, the interpreting angel evidently was still standing before him, and the Lord was exalted above them all.

Gabriel now addresses a question to “the man clothed in linen.” The fact that knowledge is requested from the man in white suggests his superiority over the angels, and Whitcomb thinks his position “above the waters of the river” indicates “his supernatural authority and power.” The question is not, How long will it be before these things take place? but How long will they continue when they begin to occur? Such an understanding is confirmed by the reply given in the next verse. In 8:13 the exact Hebrew phrase translated “how long?” is also employed to describe the duration of a predicted crisis.

“Astonishing things” (*pēlā’ôt* “wonders”) will occur during this period. These include the evil career of the Antichrist, the great war, and the “time of distress”—all the events that consummate the vision. In 11:36 the related term *nīplā’ôt*, a verbal form from the same root as *pēlā’ôt*, “astonishing things,” is employed of the “unheard-of” blasphemies spoken by the Antichrist.

The angel’s question indicates that he was curious about these future events. It is interesting to observe there are things that even angels do not know but desire to learn (cf. 1 Pet 1:12). Certainly interest in future things is natural on the part of human beings.

12:7 Daniel heard “the man clothed in linen” (Christ) as he responded to the angel’s question. Raising the hand in an oath was the customary practice (cf. Gen 14:22; Deut 32:40; Rev 10:5–6), but raising both hands and swearing to keep the oath in the name of the eternal God (cf. Rev 10:5–6) gives the greatest possible assurance that the words spoken are true.

The phrase “a time, times and half a time” reveals the duration of the period (discussed earlier at 7:25; also 4:16, 25, 32). Lacocque states: “As in 7:25, the tribulation will last three and a half years, the time corresponding to the second half of the week mentioned in 9:27, or 1,260 days (if each month has 30 days).” Thus the sovereign Lord of the universe is promising directly and emphatically that the Antichrist’s horrors (the “time of distress” of 12:1) perpetrated upon God’s people and the whole world will last but a brief time—three and a half years. Saints of the tribulation period may count on the verity of this pledge.

During these three and one-half years, “the power of the holy people” will be “finally [probably better, “completely”] broken [or “shattered”].” The “holy people” in this context is a specific reference to Israel; therefore their “power” being “broken” signifies that the nation will

be utterly defeated by their enemies. That the Jewish state will be attacked by many nations and crushed by them is taught elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Zech 12–14). A breakdown in Israel’s resistance to God (and his Messiah) may also be implied here. When in desperate straits, the Jewish people will cry out to God for help, repent of their sins, and receive Jesus as their Messiah (cf. Zech 12:10–14). At that time the Lord will return to rule the earth, and the tribulation will end (“all these things will be completed”). Zechariah describes Israel’s deliverance (cf. 14:3–11).

(3) *Daniel’s Question and the Reply (12:8–13)*

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 closed 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.”

12:8 There was much that Daniel still “did not understand” about the vision. He “asked” for further information either from Gabriel or more likely from “the man clothed in linen” (Christ) who had just spoken. Whitcomb thinks that the question specifically concerns Israel’s fate, but probably “all this” (lit., “these things”)¹⁵⁷ includes the whole range of end-time events the angel had revealed to Daniel in this vision—the Antichrist’s activities, the tribulation, as well as Israel’s persecution and deliverance. The question concerning “the outcome of all this” may mean, What would happen at the end of these things? or, possibly, How would these things be brought to an end?

12:9 Gabriel (or Christ) tactfully replied, “Go your way, Daniel” (lit., “Go, Daniel”). This is not a rebuke (additional information is provided in vv. 11–12) but simply indicates that the prophet should go on about his life and not be concerned about his lack of knowledge because the vision related to the far distant future. Yet Daniel was assured that these prophecies would be preserved (“closed up and sealed”; cf. v. 4) for those who will need them, that is, the persons who live at “the time of the end.” Then “knowledge” concerning the vision will be given to the saints (cf. v. 4). As the end approaches, the messages of Daniel (and other prophecies of the last days) will become increasingly clearer to believers.

12:10 Young takes v. 10 as a general description of the trials that affect God’s people throughout history, and it is true that afflictions have always tended to make believers more holy (cf. 11:35, where the same terms are used of Antiochus’s persecution; cf. also Mal 3:2–3). The context of this passage, however, is eschatological. Consequently the time when “many will be purified, made spotless and refined” is the tribulation period of the last days. That many people undergoing the horrors of the tribulation incredibly will still refuse to repent and be saved is repeated several times in the Book of Revelation (9:20–21; 16:9, 11). Even the chaos and calamities of the last days will not bring some persons to recognize their need for God.

Wicked persons will continue in their sin till the end, never discerning the signs of the times or the spiritual truths God has revealed. There seems to be little room here for the prospect held out by some that the world will turn to the Christian gospel and thereby bring in the kingdom of God upon the earth (postmillennialism). According to Daniel's prophecies, wickedness will not decrease in the last days but will escalate to a grand scale under the Antichrist.

12:11 Verse 11 provides further details concerning history's final events. The "time of distress"—the great tribulation—will begin when the Antichrist abolishes worship (cf. 9:27) and sets up "the abomination that causes desolation" in the Jerusalem temple. Jesus spoke of this "abomination" (Matt 24:15) and indicated that it would be placed in the "holy place" (temple) immediately before his return. Antiochus IV also erected an "abomination that causes desolation" (cf. 11:31), which was an altar or statue of Zeus. The exact nature of the Antichrist's "abomination" is unclear, but its presence in the temple will cause believers to cease worshipping there and thus render the temple desolate, that is, empty of worshipers.

In 12:6–7 Daniel had already revealed that the great tribulation will last for three and one-half years (approximately 1,260 days in round numbers, figuring thirty days per month). Here the figure 1,290 days is introduced. What then is the purpose of the extra thirty days? The text simply states that 1,290 days will transpire from the time the Antichrist begins his persecution until some unspecified event thirty days after the tribulation ends. Baldwin takes the numbers symbolically to emphasize that the saints should persevere "to the end." Archer believes that the three and one-half years is an approximate number, and the 1,290 days is the more exact figure for the length of Antichrist's persecution in the great tribulation.¹⁶³ Certainty is not possible, but Wood is most likely correct in proposing that the extra days will be the time in which the nations are judged by the Lord immediately following his return (cf. Matt 25:31–46).

12:12 Another puzzling number is introduced in v. 12. "Blessed [*'ašrê*, "very happy"; cf. Ps 1:1] is the one who waits for [or "longs for"] and reaches the end of the 1,335 days." Now an additional forty-five days has been appended to the 1,290 days, and those who endure to this time will experience great joy ("blessed"). Again the question is, What will happen at the end of this 1,335-day period? **The tribulation is over;** as a matter of fact, 1,335 days would be seventy-five days after the tribulation ends. Once more dogmatism is not proper, but it has been reasonably suggested that this date is the official inauguration of the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. Wood thinks that the extra forty-five days are needed to set up the millennial government.¹⁶⁶ Archer explains that these saints are called "blessed" because "they are about to become citizens of the most wonderful society governed by the most wonderful ruler in all human history—the millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

12:13 God had revealed many wonderful truths to Daniel over the years, but v. 13 implies that no more revelations would be granted him. The prophet was now a very old man, and he was instructed to cease being anxious about these matters and be satisfied with what he had been told for as long as he lived ("go your way till the end"). Daniel would die (probably soon after this vision) and "rest" from the labors of this life (and his body would rest in the grave; cf. Isa 57:2), but "at the end of the days" he "will rise" (lit., "will stand," be resurrected) and "receive" his "allotted inheritance." The promise of the resurrection set forth in 12:2 is now specifically applied to Daniel.

"At the end of the days" refers to the end of this present age. The prophet was not to be concerned, for he would be resurrected and receive an "allotted inheritance"—a great reward and a part in the kingdom of God (predicted in Daniel's own prophecies) that will someday come upon the earth and then continue into the eternal state. Keil has aptly commented: "Well shall it

be for us if in the end of our days we too are able to depart hence with such consolation of hope!" This "consolation of hope" belongs to all who have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. May every person who reads these words be part of that great host of the redeemed who "will shine like the brightness of the heavens" and "like the stars for ever and ever!"

© 2016 Lee Ann Penick