

Put Not Your Trust in Princes

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[0 : 00] And so we're going to come now to our Bible reading, so please do grab a Bible and turn to the Old Testament prophet of Daniel. Daniel chapter 11.

If you've been here at the Tron over the past month or so, you'll know that Paul has been preaching to us for these final chapters of Daniel's prophecy. And we've reached Daniel 11, which is a very long reading, but it's the Word of God.

So we're going to stay alert, okay? And we're going to stay focused, and we're going to read it with great joy and hungry hearts. So let's hear the Word of the Lord. Daniel chapter 11, and we begin reading verse 1.

Hear the Word of the Lord. As for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.

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.

[1 : 06] And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of grace. Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills.

And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven. But not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled.

For his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these. Then the king of the south shall be strong. But one of his princes shall be stronger than he and shall rule.

And his authority shall be a great authority. After some years they shall make an alliance. And the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement.

But she shall not retain the strength of her arm. And he and his arm shall not endure. But she shall be given up.

[2 : 15] And her attendants, he who fathered her and he who supported her in those times. And from a branch from her roots, one shall arise in his place.

He shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north. And he shall deal with them and shall prevail. He shall also carry off to Egypt their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold.

And for some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north. Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south, but shall return to his own land.

His son shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall keep coming and overflow and pass through.

And again shall carry the war as far as his fortress. Then the king of the south, moved with rage, shall come out and fight against the king of the north.

[3 : 21] And he shall rise against a great multitude, but it shall be given into his hand. And when the multitude is taken away, his heart shall be exalted.

And he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail. For the king of the north shall again rise a multitude greater than the first.

And after some years he shall come on with a great army and abundant supplies. In those times many shall rise against the king of the south.

And the violent among your people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision. But they shall fail. Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siege works and take a well fortified city.

And the forces of the south shall not stand, or even his best troops. For there shall be no strength to stand. But he who comes against him shall do as he wills.

[4 : 29] And none shall stand before him. And he shall stand in the glorious land with destruction in his hand. He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom.

And he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them. He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom.

But it shall not stand or be to his advantage. Afterward he shall turn his face to the coastlands and shall capture many of them.

But a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him. Then he shall turn his face back toward the fortress of his own land.

But he shall stumble and fall and shall not be found. Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute for the glory of the kingdom.

[5 : 30] But within a few days he shall be broken. Neither in anger nor in battle. In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given.

He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken. Even the prince of the covenant.

And from the time that an alliance is made with him. He shall act deceitfully. And he shall become strong with a small people. Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province.

And he shall do what neither his fathers nor his father's fathers have done. Scattering among them plunder, spoil and goods. He shall devise plans against strongholds.

But only for a time. And he shall stir up his power and his heart against the king of the south with a great army. And the king of the south shall wage war with an exceedingly great and mighty army.

[6 : 41] But he shall not stand. For plot shall be devised against him. Even those who eat his food shall break him. His army shall be swept away.

And many shall fall down slain. And as for the two kings. Their hearts shall be bent on doing evil. They shall speak lies at the same table.

But to no avail. For the end is yet to be at the time appointed. And he shall return to his land with great wealth.

But his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. And he shall work his will and return to his own land. At the appointed time.

He shall return and come into the south. But it shall not be this time as it was before. For ships of Kittim shall come against him.

[7 : 40] And he shall be afraid and withdraw. And shall turn back and be enraged. And take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant.

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

He shall seduce with flattery. Those who violate the covenant. But the people who know their God shall stand firm.

And take action. And the wise among the people shall make many understand. Though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame.

By captivity and plunder. When they stumble. They shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery.

[8 : 39] And some of the wise shall stumble. So that they may be refined. Purified and made white. Until the time of the end. For it still awaits the appointed time.

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. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers.

Or to one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god. For he shall magnify himself above all. He shall honor the god of fortress instead of these.

A god whom his fathers did not know. He shall honor with gold and silver. With precious stones and costly gifts. He shall deal with the strongest fortress.

[9 : 44] With the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him. He shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many. And shall divide the land for a price.

At the end of time. The king of the south shall attack him. But the king of the north shall rush upon him.

Like a whirlwind with chariots and horsemen. And with many ships. And he shall come into countries. And shall overflow and pass through.

He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall. But these shall be delivered out of his hand. Edom and Moab. And the main part of the Ammonites.

He shall stretch out his hand against the countries. And the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver.

[10 : 40] And all the precious things of Egypt. And the Libyans and the Kushites. Shall follow in his train. But news from the east and the north shall alarm him.

And he shall go out with great fury to destroy. And devote many to destruction. 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. Well amen.

And may God bless to us this. His word. Well please do turn your Bibles to Daniel 11. And that's a meaty chapter.

Quite a few of the commentaries on almost every sermon I've heard on Daniel 11. Begins with a quote from a commentator from long ago. Who said that Daniel 11 is unpreachable. That's what I wanted to read on Monday morning as I got down to work.

[11 : 41] But we'll give it a go shall we. So do have that open. Now this chapter is not to be taken in isolation. We saw last week with Daniel chapter 10.

That these final three chapters in the book are really taken as one long vision. So Daniel 10, 11 and 12 are part of one final vision that is given to Daniel.

So in a sense you've got to take it as one. And remember what we saw last week and also take into account next week. And as we began to see last time these chapters are just massive in terms of their scale.

The vision that is given to Daniel looks ahead from his standpoint to the coming centuries. To the centuries immediately following him. All the way up building up to the moment of God's decisive action in history with the coming of Jesus Christ.

His death and resurrection. But also beyond that to the very end of time and Christ's return. It is huge in its scale. And so these chapters are not just of interest to Daniel and those that followed him in the following generations.

[12 : 55] But they are of interest to us. Because we live in the last days which this great vision encapsulates.

There are things we read in these chapters that are yet to be for us. They are still in the future for us. And we saw last week that Daniel 10 revealed to us the very sobering message of conflict and warfare until the very end of time.

It showed us the hidden reality of spiritual warfare. There is a heavenly conflict raging. And that conflict, the conflict we cannot see, explains the conflict we do see here in this world against God and his people.

And so with Daniel 10 showing us the reality of this hidden spiritual conflict, chapter 11 sets out what this conflict is going to look like in human history.

We've seen behind the scenes in chapter 10. But what are God's people to expect in this world until the end? How is the hidden spiritual warfare in Daniel 10, how is that going to play out on the pages of human history in our lives?

[14 : 15] What's that going to look like? And Daniel 11 begins to show us that. Now, it's a very long and detailed chapter. And we need to be careful not to get bogged down into the detail.

So my aim tonight is we're going to sort of hover like a helicopter over this chapter and make sure we don't miss the wood for the trees. There are lots of very interesting trees in this chapter.

And you could get lost. The trees are interesting and fascinating. And if you do want to go home and read up on all the historical fulfillments of what we see in this chapter, can I point you in the direction of two commentaries, which have been my friend the last few weeks?

One is by Sinclair Ferguson, former minister of the Tron Church. And the other is by Dale Ralph Davis. And they go into the details of the historical fulfillments in this chapter.

Now, we don't have time tonight to go into all of that interesting detail. But I'd encourage you to have a read of those books if you want to dig into it. So for the sake of time and to ensure we don't miss the big message, we're not going to get bogged down in all the historical details here.

[15 : 25] We'll be here for quite a while if we were to do that. So I want us to see tonight three key things, three key lessons from this chapter for us as we think about living as God's people in real history in a world marked by conflict against God's people.

And that is our aim tonight. So lesson number one, looking at verses 1 to 20. Here's the first thing we need to see, the first lesson. And it's this, put not your trust in princes.

Put not your trust in princes. Now, these first 20 verses of Daniel 11 cover a huge sweep of history. Just notice that in verse 2, have a look at verse 2. And we are dealing with kings that arise in Persia. And then look on to the end of verse 2.

We're looking at the kingdom of Greece. So remember, Daniel is now living under the rule of the Mede and Persian Empire by this point. So he's lived through the Babylonian Empire.

[16 : 31] And now for Daniel, he's living in the Persian Empire. That would persist for hundreds of years, but would be taken over and defeated by the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great.

That is what we are envisaging in these chapters, looking ahead to the coming centuries. And verse 3, look at verse 3. It talks about a mighty king arising who shall rule with great dominion.

And that is a reference to Alexander the Great. At a very young age, he conquered most of the known worlds. And from verse 5 through to verse 20, we go into the details of the power struggle that followed Alexander's death.

He died at only 32. And after Alexander's death, the Greek kingdom split into four. There were four kingdoms that broke out following him. And the rest of this section from 5 to 20 is dealing with two of those kingdoms in particular and the power struggle between what is called the kingdom of the north and the kings of the south.

The king of the south is what was known as the Ptolemy dynasty based in Egypt. And the king of the north, the Seleucid dynasty, was based in what we call modern-day Syria.

[17 : 46] And so in these first 20 verses, we cover 355 years of history. So that's a long period of history covered in just 20 verses. And what we're being shown here in these first 20 verses are the ebbs and flows in human history.

We see the rise and falls of nations. We see victories and defeats. We see marriage alliances. We see nations coming to prominence and others retreating.

It's the ebb and flow of history. The power struggles that persist in every age. And the lesson I think we're to draw from all this, we'll not go into all the details. You could do that.

But the big message, the big thing we're to see here is that despite the apparent power of earthly kingdoms and powers, they are not worthy of your trust.

Now remember who this vision is given to. It's to Daniel. He's one of God's people. And these latter chapters are written in the Hebrew language.

[18 : 58] So in the book of Daniel, chapter 1 is written in Hebrew. Chapters 2 to 7 are in Aramaic. That is the world language of the day. And so the message of chapters 2 to 7 is really for the world.

See this about God and what he's capable of. He is sovereign over all. But then from chapter 8 to the end, it's back to Hebrew. Particularly focused message for the people of God.

And so this account of what's going to unfold in history is a message for God's people. Here is what you need to know. And the message of these first 20 verses to God's people is do not get sucked in.

Do not put your trust in the power of this world's princes. Psalm 146 begins in the same way.

It makes the same point. Psalm 146 begins this way. Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth.

[20 : 04] On that very day, his plans perish. See, these first 20 verses are showing us that none of this world's powers will ultimately persist.

Over and over again, the powers of this world fade. And they fade to nothing. There's a very important word in these first 20 verses.

It's a small word, but it's significant. And it's the word but. And I want us to notice the word but. In this first 20 verses. Look at verse 5. It says, then the king of the south shall be strong.

But one of his princes shall be stronger than he. And he shall rule. Verse 6. After some years, they shall make an alliance. And the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north and make an agreement.

But she shall not retain the strength of her arm. And he and his arm shall not endure. And he and his arm shall not endure. But she shall be given up. And her attendants, he who fathered her and

he who supported her in those times.

[21 : 15] Verse 11. Then the king of the south, moved with rage, shall come out and fight against the king of the north. He shall rise a great multitude. But it shall be given into his hands.

Verse 12. He shall cast down thousands. But he shall not prevail. Verse 14.

The violent among you, your own people, shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision. But they shall fail. Verse 17. He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom.

But it shall not stand or be to his advantage. Verse 18. Afterwards, he shall turn his face to the coastlands and shall capture many of them. But a commander shall put an end to his insolence.

Verse 19. Then he shall turn his face back towards the fortresses of his own land. But he shall stumble and fall and shall not be found.

[22 : 16] Verse 20. Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute for the glory of the kingdom. But within a few days he shall be broken.

Neither in anger nor in battle. Do you see the point? Do you get the message of these first 20 verses? Powers rise but they fall away.

They fade to nothing. None of this world's powers, none of this world's kings or kingdoms, presidents or nations will ultimately persist.

Daroff Davis puts it this way. What we have here is an overflowing dossier of lies and schemes and conspiracies or victories and defeats and tragedies of the never-ending hurly-burly confusion of wars and political turmoil.

But it's no different today, is it? Just look at the last few years of human history. I was reading an article yesterday by Douglas Murray.

[23 : 23] He said this, The history of the last few years have shown us, if nothing else has, that this is what human life is like. Lurching from one disaster to another.

The catastrophes are endless and come in quick succession. This is what life is like. There's nothing new under the sun. We're being shown here the nature of human power in all its ugliness and scheming.

And this is the world that God's people have to live in then, but also today. But the thing is, all these worldly powers, all of them, will in the end fade away.

And so the message is, for God's people then and today, do not put your trust in them. Do not put your trust in princes. For all their seeming power and might, the empires of this world in the end, in the end they produce nothing that really lasts.

Theirs is, in the end, a futile endeavor. Europe, the US, Russia, China. The powers that transcend borders.

[24 : 46] The tech giants of Silicon Valley. All those will in the end fade away. All will fail. And that should, I think, in part encourage us, but also serve as a warning, lest we should be sucked in by the powers of this world.

Now that's all very well, we might say. This is a very broad sweep through centuries of history. It might be good for us to know that is the general pattern.

But what about Monday morning? What about the realities of my life this week, this year? The powers that we live under now may still be persisting when I die.

It's all very well to know that one day they'll fail. But what about tomorrow? What about the weeks ahead? Well, this is where verses 21 to 35 bring a sharpness for us.

What's it really like to live in the midst of this world and this warfare? What's it really like when the powers of this world turn and pressure the people of God?

[25 : 59] So firstly, do not trust the princes of this world. Second, here's the second lesson, verses 21 to 35. Prepare yourselves for the test of persecution.

Prepare yourselves for the test of persecution. Now remember that this chapter is not a record of history.

Remember, this is a prophecy of history. These things had not yet occurred. They were looking ahead. For Daniel and the generations that followed, all these events were yet to be.

This was a vision given in order to equip God's people for the difficult times that would come. And the focus from verse 21 is much narrower than what we've just looked at in verses 1 to 20.

In focus here are the years 175 to 163 BC. So just a very short period of history. 12 years are covered in 15 verses.

[27 : 06] That's less than a year per verse. If you compare that to the first 20 verses, which cover 350 years, that's about 18 years per verse. So we're really slowing down as we come into this section, verses 21 to 35.

And it focuses, look at verse 21. It says, in his place. So we've been charting. We've not gone on to the detail, but verses 1 to 20 chart the coming and going of different kings and who replaces whom. But verse 21, in his place shall arise a contemptible person. A contemptible person. And we've met this individual before in Daniel.

Back in chapter 8, we get a vision covering the same period of time. And this person was a man called Antiochus Epiphanes.

And in world history terms, he's not a big player. He reigned for 12 years. You can't find out a lot about him in the history books.

[28 : 09] But in terms of the people of God, he's a very significant player. Striking, isn't it? Alexander the Great is given a passing mention in verse 3.

Alexander the Great, one of the great figures in human history. He gets a side mention. Antiochus Epiphanes gets a whole section, 15 verses. And the special focus in this section is what this man does to God's people.

We're given a very brief overview of his reign from verses 22 to 24. And then it goes into a bit more detail about the main objects of his hostility. Namely, the king of the south.

In other words, Egypt. So Antiochus Epiphanes had a couple of goes at Egypt. The first one went okay. And the second one, as we'll see, didn't really work out very well. But he was trying to move his kingdom into the area of what we now call Egypt.

So you get that in verses 25 to 27. But then the focus in verse 28 is really on the impact this particular ruler had on God's people. Look at verse 28 there.

[29 : 23] It says, In other words, he comes back and he is set against God's people.

Those of the holy covenant. And notice the details of what he does from verse 29. Let's just recap what happens here. At the appointed time, he shall return and come into the south.

That is, he's going back to Egypt. But it shall not be this time as it was before. For ships of Ketim shall come against him. And he shall be afraid and withdraw and shall turn back.

So what happens, it seems, that he ran into the Roman fleet. There was a Roman fleet of ships and they interrupted him and they sent him packing. And he became enraged and took action against the holy covenant.

He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress. That's Jerusalem and the temple.

[30 : 35] And shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. He sacrificed pagan idols on the temple.

Temple altar. He brought a pagan and decimated it. He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant. But the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.

And the wise among the people shall make many understand. Though for some, they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity. And plunder. And plunder. So what we're getting here is some of the details of Antiochus Epiphanes, what you might call his religious detox program that he introduced in about 167 BC.

It was a brutal paganization program which took aim at God's people. We saw the details a few weeks ago in chapter 8. He systematically tried to unpick the religion of God's people.

He attacked the very heart of what it was to be one of God's people then. He stripped them of four S's. He stripped them of sacrament, sacrifice, Sabbath and scripture.

[31 : 54] He systematically targeted each one of those things. He stripped them of their sacrament. He put in place the death penalty for those who would circumcise their sons.

Sacrifice. The only sacrifice permissible under him were those offered to Zeus. Sabbath. Those who observed the Sabbath would face a death sentence.

In terms of the scriptures, the punishment for possession of the Torah, that is the scriptures, the punishment for possessing that was death.

If you are one of God's people living under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, you would know about it. D. Ralph Davis put it this way.

In the reign of terror under Antiochus Epiphanes, it seemed the only choice was to be a live pagan or a dead Israelite. Those were your choices.

[33 : 02] That's real pressure, isn't it? That is why Daniel was given this vision. Because things are going to get very, very difficult for God's people under Antiochus Epiphanes.

They had to be prepared. His tactics were terror, targeting what is the very center of what it is to be one of God's people.

We've looked at the terror, but it was also flattery. Notice verse 32. He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant.

And how effective that tactic has been all through the ages. Not just under Antiochus here, but all through time.

The promise of a seat at the table. The promise of power and access. The promise of applause from the world. Just ditch the hard edges of your faith.

[34 : 07] Just tone down the rhetoric. And you'll be warmly welcomed into the upper echelons of society. Just don't mention human sexuality and your views on that. Don't really talk about the exclusivity of Jesus Christ.

Just park those issues and you'll be welcomed in. You'll have a seat at the table. Almost every major denomination in the Western world you can think of has been seduced by flattery.

And has therefore violated the covenant. These verses here are here to prepare God's people for living under Antiochus Epiphanes.

But not just them. Every generation since. Because the pressures God's people had then are not unique to that period. Just read through the history books.

And see the sorts of things that God's people have to endure. Look around the world today and see what God's people are enduring today all around the world. The tactics of the enemy and the tactics of earthly kings have been revealed to us here.

[35 : 12] We're being shown how they're going to go about it. But we're being shown so that we would stand firm and not compromise when those pressures come. And that's the contrast we see in the last verses of this section.

Look from verse 32. Here's the great contrast. He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant. But the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.

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

When they stumble, they shall receive little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery. And some of the wise shall stumble so that they may be refined, purified and made white. Until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time. There are going to be two groups within the visible people of God.

[36 : 20] Those who are wise and stand firm. But those who are seduced with flattery. There are those who will bear the cost and remain faithful to the Lord.

And there are those who will compromise. They'll be seduced by the flattery. Some, it seems, would find a way to make peace with this evil king.

He would tell them how special they were. How appreciated they were. And they would fall for it.

They would give up. Following the Lord, they would violate the covenant.

And the reference here to those who stumble is not a reference to those who give up the faith. But rather those who do face persecution. Those who stumble are those who are faithful believers.

Who endure. The stumbling is referring to the persecution they're going to face. Look, it says that the wise shall stumble so that they may be refined. Purified. So stumbling here is not a reference to compromise.

[37 : 24] It's a reference to facing difficult things and persevering. God's people are being warned here of what is to come. It was going to be terrible.

You will endure every aspect of your faith being squeezed and put under threat. You will be tempted with flattery from the king. But God's people are being warned here so that they would remain firm and not compromise.

And likewise for us, this is what we'll face. Perhaps. So be prepared. Don't be surprised. Rather expect to be put under pressure in terms of sacrament, sacrifice, the scriptures and the Sabbath.

There is legislation working through Parliament at the moment which seeks to undermine the Christian faith in many ways. There are many pieces of legislation actually working their way through.

There has been and will continue to be an agenda that seeks to pull apart orthodox Christian beliefs and practices. So don't be surprised if that continues. Be prepared. And remain faithful.

[38 : 42] Do not compromise. Be prepared for flattery that will promise a smoother way, an easier walk that will tell us how special we are. Beware the applause of the world.

But also note this is not forever. Notice verse 24. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time.

Look on to verse 35. Until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time. You see, the terrible suffering and hardship God's people would endure under Antiochus would be limited.

There would be an end. It wouldn't go on forever. And despite all the appearances, despite the difficult years, Antiochus was not the ultimate master of his fate.

And his time would come to an end. And that is the resounding note of the final section from verse 36 to the end. There was a real note of hope in the midst of all the difficulty.

[39 : 47] And I think this last section is here to teach us not to be afraid. Do not fear. Because the propagator of tribulation will pass.

He won't stay around forever. There is an end. Now, this last section is tricky. And it's a bit difficult to know exactly who's being referred to here.

The focus does still seem to be on Antiochus, epiphanies. The language is, however, suggestive that this is slightly more wide-reaching in its scope.

At the very end of the section and into chapter 12, the end of times is very much in view. And so I think what we're seeing here is Antiochus and all those who are like him through all history, all those who are against God's people and against Christ.

What we're seeing in this last section is the Antichrists that will always be present and the great Antichrist at the end of time that will come. So this is a sort of pattern we're to expect.

[40 : 53] This is what it's going to be like from Antiochus onwards. There will always be kings like him until the end. There will be many in the Antiochus epiphanies mold.

There will be many like him until the end. And the pattern here in this last section is very similar to the previous one. There's a rise in power. There is conflict and persecution. There is suffering and there is compromise for some and steadfastness for others.

Just look at how this person, this Antichrist is described. Look at verse 36. The king shall do as he wills.

He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god. He shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished.

For what is decreed shall be done. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his father or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god. He shall magnify himself above all.

[42 : 01] You see, this figure, this king, this Antichrist, is consumed with a quest for his own autonomy.

Consumed with self and seeking his own glory. And that is at the very center of sin, isn't it? Profoundly self-centered and anti-God.

In fact, he wants to be God. To exalt himself. His speech is anti-God's. He speaks astonishing things against the God of the gods.

He has a thirst. A naked thirst for power. It is that he shall honor the God of fortresses. He shall deal with the strongest fortresses. There's a concern with power.

And this is how it's going to be until the end. Where this chapter ends up is where chapter 12 picks up. And by that point in the vision, we are at the very end of time.

[43 : 04] You see, until the end, we're being told there will be leaders and kings. There will be Antichrist just like this. And so we are not to be naive.

It's a very sobering message about the reality of opposition to God and his people and the nature of that opposition.

But there is a ray of hope. We are not to fear because figures like this, people who magnify themselves and threaten God's people, they will pass.

Notice the last verse of our section. The very last sentence. Yet, he shall come to his end with none to help him.

See, after verse upon verse, building up the image of this man's power and terror, he's dismissed in a few words. It's like an irritating fly flicked away.

[44 : 11] In a mere six Hebrew words, he is wiped off the pages of history. Dismissed. His defeat will be as inauspicious as his rise to power as meteoric, says Sinclair Ferguson.

Just swath it away. The apostle Paul makes the same point in 2 Thessalonians. He said, and then the lawless one will be revealed.

That is a king like this, the Antichrist. 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.

See, Jesus will in the end blow him away. He ends not with a bang, but with a whimper. Dismissed. Away.

And that ought to bring us great hope and real comfort. Gives us real solid grounds.

[45 : 16] Not to fear the one who opposes us. This is his end. This is the destiny of all those who oppose God and his people. Dismissed. Gone. And that reality, that hope, ought to stand us in good stead in the midst of persecution and help us not to give in.

Not to compromise, but rather to stand firm. It's a ray of hope. And that is exactly what the Old Testament scriptures are for, aren't they?

The Apostle Paul again in Romans tells us that. He says, whatever is written in the former days, i.e. books like Daniel, are written for our instruction. That is New Testament church.

That through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

That is what the scriptures are for, to give us real, solid hope. And the hope we see here at the end of Daniel 11 is that we will be equipped to stand firm.

Look again at verse 32. Here's the great encouragement and great challenge in this chapter. This great anti-Christ figure, Antiochus and all like him, shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant.

[46 : 38] But the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. Under intense pressure and opposition and persecution that will surely come.

The question is, will you? Will I? Will we be those who know their God and stand firm and take action? What a pity, what a disaster it would be to fall for the flattery of this world's power and to side with those whose ultimate destiny is destruction.

What a shame that would be in light of Daniel 11 to side with the one whose end is destruction.

Don't do that. Stand firm. Take action.

We're to be like those saints described in verses 32 and 33 here. In the midst of verse 33, sword and flame, captive and plunder.

What do God's people do? Look at the start of the verse. The wise among the people shall make many understand. Understand what? What is this?

[47 : 50] We'll look on to chapter 12, verse 3. See, in the midst of this persecution that Daniel has been given this vision of, in the midst of all that, the wise stand firm.

They shine like the brightness of the stars above and they will turn many to righteousness. See, others will be turned and have their eyes open to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, be turned from death to everlasting life.

In the midst of terrible persecution, there is new life for some. Isn't that a wonderful thing to see? In the midst of all this difficulty, there are those standing firm, taking action and helping others to understand and see the glory of the risen Lord Jesus.

See the glory of the God above all gods. So let us consider this chapter.

It's a long chapter. It's a difficult chapter. But don't miss the big things. Let us be wary of the princes and the powers of this world. Do not put your trust in them.

[49 : 14] Do not be naive, but rather be prepared for the hard times and the persecution from the Antichrist that will keep coming. Don't be seduced by the powers of this world, by the powers of culture that beckon us to compromise.

Rather, we stand firm, knowing that we stand on the right side of eternal history, shining like the stars above, shining brightly and bringing others to understand as we hold out the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the very end.

So do not compromise, but rather stand firm and take action. That's the message of this chapter.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you are the God's sovereign over all of history.

And please help us in the midst of our daily lives to take encouragement from this chapter, to see that you are in control, to know that the kings of this world will ultimately fall away, and that we would, as your people, not compromise, but stand firm, and so give of ourselves to what truly lasts.

Help us as a church to shine brightly like the sky above, and to bring others to know you.
[50 : 54] Help us to keep that our priority. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.