

The sermon

Intro

Some of you might be really excited about the prophecy details. Some of you might struggle to see what the details mean for you?

This vision was for Daniel, who was mourning and confused. Are you mourning over the sins of our nation and the damage being done to human lives? Are you confused about how sin can thrive in a world under God's rule? Are you confused when Christians suffer?

Whether we see it or not, Daniel's vision is speaking to these sort of realities.

READ PASSAGE (11:36-12:4)

Body

Passage Focus

We'll cover what's in Daniel's vision. We'll see how the Bible fits together. Big picture stuff. We'll consider what these end-time events mean for us.

Point 1: Antichrist (11:36-11:45)

Evangelicals explain what's going on in different ways.

- 1) Some see 11:36 as a transition to the end-time Antichrist.
- 2) Some see 11:40 as a transition to the end-time Antichrist.
- 3) Some see a double fulfillment = talking about both Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the end-time Antichrist.

I go with option 1. 11:36 begins a statement on the final Antichrist.

Daniel 11:36-39

"And the king shall do as he wills" seems to indicate we're still talking about Antiochus IV Epiphanes. However, 11:35 does set us up for the end of time.

"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." – 11:35

First, this individual matches up nicely with the final, end-time Antichrist. Compare 11:36-37 with 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4.

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.– 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

The future "man of lawlessness" who comes before the day of the Lord exalts himself against every false god and proclaims himself to be God. The individual in 11:36-37 exalts himself above every false god, speaks against the one true God, has no regard for the gods of his relatives (fathers), and magnifies himself above all the gods.

This individual also matches up well with the end-time "little horn" of Daniel 7. **7:25** says, *"He shall speak words against the Most High."*

And this individual matches up with the “*beast rising out of the sea*” in Revelation 13:1-8.

“*And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶ It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.*” – **Revelation 13:5-6**

This individual in 11:36-39 is prideful and blasphemous, meaning he speaks against the one true God.

Some additional details are spelled out in 11:38-39:

1) “*He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these*” (11:38).

He doesn’t worship his ancestral gods in favor of the god of fortresses. Meaning either a false god foreign to his ancestors or the idol of military might.

2) “*a foreign god*” comes to his aid (11:39).

Since false gods do not exist it likely means military allies help him.

3) He possesses might and authority.

Those who acknowledge him (other world rulers) will be given honor, authority to rule, and he’ll sell them land.

Second, this data doesn’t match up with Antiochus. There’s evidence Antiochus celebrated the Greek gods of his ancestors. For example, he turned the Jewish sanctuary into a temple for Zeus.

Daniel 11:40-45

Third, this individual is present at the end of time.

“*At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him*” (11:40) indicates 11:40 is still discussing the individual in 11:36-39. The “him” who is attacked by the king of the south is the self-exalting, God blaspheming individual described in 11:36-39.

More details are revealed:

1) He’s attacked by both the king of the south and the king of the north, but he survives and passes through countries as he desires (11:40).

Note we should be cautious about taking every last detail literally. Daniel’s vision speaks of armies “*with chariots and horsemen*” rather than armies with tanks and helicopters and submarines. Old Testament prophetic visions used the categories of their day to describe the future, not the categories of our day. I’m not expecting horse battles at the end of time.

2) He makes his way “*into the glorious land*” = Israel and kills many, but some nation states will escape (11:41).

3) Some countries, like Egypt, will fall before him (11:42).

4) In defeating nations like Egypt, he’ll acquire their riches (11:43).

5) News (military intelligence?) will draw him away from Egypt where he’ll aim at destroying enemy forces (11:44).

6) He’ll settle between the Mediterranean Sea and “*the glorious holy mountain*” = Mount Zion = Jerusalem (11:45).

7) There he’ll be abandoned and meet his end = die (11:45).

“*At that time*” (12:1) = Antichrist’s death = a time of:

1) Unprecedented trouble = tribulation (12:1).

2) The time when Daniel’s people will be delivered (12:1).

3) The time when the dead will be raised (12:2).

4) The time when eternal destinies will be fixed (12:2).

In other words, this king exercises rule in the final period of human history.

Fourth, his end comes at the end of the age.

In Daniel 7:26-27, his consumption and destruction coincides with the arrival of the eternal kingdom of God. **2 Thessalonians 2:8** says, “*And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.*” In Revelation 19:20, the beast is killed by Jesus when Jesus returns.

Telescoping

This biblical reality where two events separated by thousands of years are placed side by side as if there’s no time gap between them is what interpreters call telescoping. The distant future merges with the near future in the prophet’s view.

One of the most famous advent passages does the same thing.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. – Isaiah 9:6-7

Isaiah’s vision appears to merge the birth of Christ with the everlasting kingdom reign of Christ. But having the New Testament, we know there is a gap of time between Christ’s birth and his unending kingdom rule. Same with Daniel 11. There’s a gap of time between Antiochus’ reign of terror and the future, end-time Antichrist.

What does a final, end-time Antichrist mean for us?

Note the vision came when Daniel was mourning and confused (10:2, 12). People who mourn over sin, people who are confused about God’s workings should expect to find comfort here.

The Antichrist is an evil individual who opposes God, deceives, gains a following, and destroys with his power. Antichrists come and go per 1 John 2:18. So the pattern is present today. Deception and abuse of power abound.

The Bible doesn’t keep us in the dark. God wants our eyes wide open. In this age, we’ll see gross deceptions. We’ll see the culture fall in line. We’ll find ourselves as oddballs and outcasts because we don’t go along. It will be this way till the very end.

We shouldn’t be surprised, but we should be angered and grieved and hopeful and vocal. Hopeful because the Antichrist’s reign is ended by Jesus. Vocal the deceived remain unforgiven of their sins.

Application can come in the form of perspective (seeing correctly) or behavior (doing correctly). Here Daniel’s vision helps us to see correctly. The message to mourners is evil will have its way for a time, but evil won’t triumph forever.

Point 2: Tribulation (12:1)

"At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people.

Michael’s the high-ranking angel who’s tasked with overseeing Israel (10:13, 21). *And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.*

Remember this vision concerns “*what is to happen to your people in the latter days*” (10:14). The latter days of the Jews. This final period of time will be distressing for the Jewish people.

We've already seen that the Antichrist comes "*into the glorious land*" (11:41). And pitches his tent between the Mediterranean Sea and Jerusalem (11:45). He comes to his end in Israel.

As for a tribulation period, this matches up with Matthew 24:29-30, where Jesus visibly appears for all to see with cosmic signs after a period of tribulation.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. – Matthew 24:29-30

This also lines up with Revelation 16:14-16:

For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ¹⁵ ("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!") ¹⁶ And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. – Revelation 16:14-16

The final battle that coincides with the day of the Lord takes place in Armageddon = 60 miles north of Jerusalem, a site where numerous biblical battles took place, including Judges 4-5 (Judg 5:19).

The day of the Lord is Jesus' coming: "*Behold, I am coming like a thief!*" The unbelieving world will be completely caught off guard when Jesus returns, so he says be awake. Be ready when Jesus returns!

What does a final period of tribulation mean for us?

Tribulation = distress resulting from persecution (pursuit, harassment).

A final period of tribulation before the end doesn't mean there's no tribulation today. Tribulation (distress) varies in intensity from place to place. From mockery to insults to slander to loss of employment to being disowned by family to plundering of goods to physical violence to imprisonment to churches bombed to execution.

In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul said, "*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*" Persecution will differ in form, but there will always be a cross to bear for following Jesus. Regardless of when and where we live. Distress as simple as not fitting in at high school or family unrest because of your beliefs.

As long as deception and abusive powers exist, Christians will be oddballs and outcasts. This means life will be hard. That's perspective.

The fact of tribulation says I need God. I need the church. I can't do this Christian life alone. Tribulation says I need outside help. Tribulation trains us to turn to God and the local church. The fact of tribulation prevents us from delusion like all will be smooth and easy because I'm a Christian now.

Because of deception, following Jesus makes us counter-cultural.

Point 3: Deliverance (12:1)

But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

When Jesus returns to end the Antichrist, deliverance will come to the Jews. But not to every Jew. Only to those "*whose name shall be found written in the book.*" In other words, God's promises are not for the entire Jewish nation, but only for the faithful remnant within Israel. The believing Jews at that time will be delivered.

This book that's limited to the names of believers, both Jew and Gentile, would be the book of life we find in Revelation.

The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come. – Revelation 17:8

Those not written in the book will be deceived and celebrate the Antichrist who will be destroyed when Jesus comes.

What does final deliverance mean for us?

Today is the time of testing. Today is the time of character development. Today is the time of learning. Today is the time of endurance. Today is the time of speaking for Jesus when gospel opposition comes.

God sustains us now. When Jesus returns, he'll end the crushing hardships of a sin-filled world.

Final deliverance means the end of bullies. The end of being an oddball. The end of frauds against the elderly.

Deliverance is a done deal. Sure and certain. Why is it a done deal? Because their names were written in the book. Whose names are in the book? All those who will ever believe. Believe what?

Gospel

Jesus' promise of forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who repent and believe on the basis of his death on the cross for sinners. That's turning from sin by trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Jesus ends evil, strengthens his people in tribulation, and ends their tribulation when he returns. Trust him! Celebrate him! Follow him in the strength he supplies.

A little on eternal life

What's the believer's hope at a time like this?

Grief is right and good. Grief exists if love exists.

We can dull a portion of the grief with God's promises. Thanks and joy can co-exist with sorrow and loss.

This is good for Neal. Bad for those he leaves behind. Neal's soul is in God's presence while he awaits that final day when Daniel 12:2 comes true. The reunion of the body and the soul.

On that day he'll see God's glory in the everlasting kingdom. He'll be given a new body that can't die and suffer. He'll be re-united with believing loved ones. He won't be able to sin. The effects of the fall will be undone. Everything sad will become untrue. Death will be defeated. The sorrow you feel today will be a thing of the past.