





# A Note to the Reader

When redesigning booklets for the Daniel series, we had one simple goal in mind — get people to dig into the Bible themselves. An pastor once told me, “Figure out what the text says before you try to figure out what the text means.” That is sound advice, advice I have not always heeded in my own study of the Bible. Admittedly, as a seminary student, my process for reading the Bible often goes like this: read the passage, look up a dead guy for the answers. We live in an age of incredible resources-access to sermons, commentaries, blog posts, lectures, and devotionals. We can walk into any bookstore and find material on marriage, parenting, work, money, anxiety, and emotions.

But there is a downside to all of this. We become hurried readers of Scripture. We become pragmatists, twitching in our seats as we wait for a practical application. “Just tell me what it means. Just tell me what I need to do.” But the Word of God demands more than just our attention — it demands our submission. We cannot simply read the Bible, we must let the Bible read us.

We know in our relationships how important it is to listen to the other person. When we listen, we grow in intimacy and understanding. When we hurry through to “get to the point” we turn people into tools. They are simply a means to an end. How much more is this true with God? As disciples of Christ we must wrestle with the text. We must pray through it so that we are not merely hearers of the Word, but doers as well.

To aid in this, we have broken the booklet chapters into three sections. The “Treasure” section is for slowing down and observing what the text says, holding off on application and simply letting the Bible speak. The “Grow” section takes those observations and through meditation and thought opens up the meaning of the text so that God can speak directly into your life circumstances. Finally, the “Go” is for spurring us on to mission — bringing the gospel to our neighbors, family, friends, and co-workers, that they may treasure, grow and go themselves.

Daniel chapters 7-12 contain some of the most vivid and perplexing passages of Scripture. It does not teach us how to resolve marital conflict, raise children, or deal with annoying co-workers. It speaks of rams and lions, angels and wars, kingdoms and curses. But if we really believe all Scripture is breathed out by God, then we must let Daniel speak. For when Daniel speaks, God speaks. And if we are willing to listen, to wrestle, to pray and to meditate, we will find that God is up to far more than we could ever ask or think.

*“I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.”*

— Psalm 138:2



Bryan Zhang  
General Editor

# Week 8 Daniel 7

## One Like a Son of Man

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.*

### Genesis 3:15

When Adam and Eve fell, they were not only cast out from Eden, but they brought God's curse upon Creation itself. As a result, every generation descending from Adam and Eve would be born into sin and rebellion against God. In Genesis 3:15, God told Adam and Eve that two lines of offspring would emerge from their descendants. The first line would be the offspring of Satan and the second the offspring of Eve. These two families would battle each other throughout the course of human history, until one of Eve's offspring would finally crush Satan.

Daniel 7 unveils in vivid detail the battle between Satan and Eve's offspring. The offspring of Satan emerge as four beasts that rise out of the sea, four kingdoms of the world that will provoke and persecute the people of God. Daniel is in exile. He is under a foreign king. And the kingdom of Israel lies in ruins. The question lingers — where is God? Will he be faithful to his people?

God answers that question with two startling revelations — the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man. Imagine the comfort Daniel and his friends experienced knowing that their God, the true God of Israel, sat above all the kingdoms of the Earth ready to judge. He is the Sovereign Lord and every event, no matter how confusing or dark, happens according to his will. Furthermore, God promises to Daniel that a "son of man" will emerge who will present to God an eternal kingdom composed of people from every nation. And most importantly, this kingdom will never pass away because this kingdom will have an eternal king.

## Week 8 Sermon Notes



## Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts

Daniel's vision of the Four Beasts seems to correspond with his vision of the great statue in Daniel 2.

### First Beast (Lion)

Babylon Empire



The imagery of a lion merged with an eagle demonstrates the regal power and majesty of the Babylonian empire. However, the lion is not self-sufficient, for its eagle wings are plucked off and it is made to stand like a man. Here we see God telling Daniel that the mighty Babylon will be humbled.

### Second Beast (Bear)

Medo-Persian Empire



Commentators are uncertain as to what is symbolized by the bear being “raised up on one side.” Some see it as symbolizing the imbalance of power in the Medo-Persian empire, while others view it as a bear standing in an almost human-like position. What is striking about this image is that the bear receives a command from a mysterious voice telling it to “Arise, devour much flesh.” It is clear that the Medo-Persian empire, for all its vaunted strength, rises and falls based on the words of God.

### Third Beast (Leopard)

Greek Empire



A leopard is swift and powerful — a fitting image for the rapid expansion of the Greek empire under Alexander the Great. And yet even Alexander the Great was given his kingdom by the sovereign hand of God.

### Fourth Empire

Rome/Future Empire



The identity of the fourth beast has been the subject of much discussion in the church. Some believe it to represent Rome, with the ten horns representing ten Roman emperors. Others believe the ten horns simply represent rulers of the current age who resemble the power and might of Rome. The little horn appears to be symbolic of a ruler who is the final consummation of evil who will appear in the last days. Regardless of the exact identity of these horns, we do know from this text that Christ's kingdom will not come without resistance. The kingdoms of the world will not only fight amongst themselves, but ultimately against the kingdom of Christ.

## TREASURE

1) Read through the passage 2-3 times. Summarize what happens in a few brief sentences.

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2) Break the passage down into 3-4 sections and give each section a title.

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3) Write down 3-5 observations about the passage. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why questions.

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4) Write down any questions you have about this passage.

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## GROW

What is the purpose of Daniel's dreams and visions?

Pick out one key verse that explains the heart of the passage. Ask yourself what verse, if removed, would make the passage hard to understand.

Meditate on that key passage by reading through it slowly and thinking through its meaning. In what ways is God calling you to be obedient?

## GO

How would you explain prophecy in Scripture to a non-believer? Why is it important with regard to Jesus?

Write down an insight or encouragement from this passage that you can use to edify your community group this week.

## Discussion Questions

1) Share about a time when you were anxious. What caused you to feel this way? What did you seek for comfort?

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2) Daniel received a vision from God and was anxious and alarmed (vv. 15, 28). Why do you think Daniel was troubled?

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3) How do you feel about the future? Are there certain things that particularly concern you?

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4) In the vision, Daniel sees “one like a son of man coming to the Ancient of Days...and was given dominion and glory and a kingdom” (v. 13-14). Later, it says that the “saints of the Most High receive the kingdom and possess [it] forever.” How might these two facts give Daniel and us hope?

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5) In what ways are you anxious or troubled currently? How can God’s character and promises give you comfort and peace?

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## Short Reading

### From “Daniel: Daniel (The Preacher’s Commentary Book 21)” by Sinclair Ferguson<sup>1</sup>

Are there any statements in the Book of Daniel that give us controls on our interpretation of this vision? Are there practical applications of his vision that help us to do what Daniel himself did—sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? Several factors arise.

(1) The overarching concern of this chapter is to focus our attention on the age-long conflict between two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. Just when Daniel is anticipating the deliverance of the kingdom of God from its oppression in the form of the return from exile, he learns an important lesson: This conflict is endemic to world history until the end. Rather than decrease, it will be perpetuated until it reaches its zenith in the ferocious blasphemies of the little horn.

(2) Daniel sees two things: (a) the first is the throne room of God, the Lord and judge of all the earth. This enables him to face the perpetual conflict in the knowledge that the Lord reigns. The ultimate issue in the conflict is not in doubt. God has already issued His decree of judgment. Furthermore, he sees (b) the destruction of the beast. This appears to be linked with the Son of Man coming to the Ancient of Days with the clouds of heaven to receive His kingdom. This is not the final return of the Son of Man but His approach to the Ancient of Days to receive His kingdom. In all likelihood this should be seen as fulfilled in the death, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of the Son of Man—an event publicized on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of His Spirit (Acts 2:33–36). In this way the kingdom of God is extended. Our Lord claimed at the time of His Ascension that all dominion in heaven and earth was already His; the apostles were to make that a reality by the preaching of the gospel (Matt. 28:18–20). Here, as in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the God of heaven sets up His kingdom among us in time and not just at the end of time.

(3) Although the beast is destroyed, all that it represented appears to live on in the ten horns and to reach a climax in the little horn (which was “making war against the saints, and prevailing against them” [v. 21]). It exercises this power for a “time,” and then consolidates it with increased authority for “times.” Suddenly it is cut down by the Ancient of Days who executes judgment “in favor of the saints” (v. 22). The kingdom is thus given to the saints in verse 27. We have a picture of the entire history of the Christian church. Just as the character of the beast reaches its apex in the little horn (although the beast itself is slain), so the kingdom of God will reach its climax in the destruction of

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<sup>1</sup> Ferguson, Sinclair B. *Daniel: Daniel (The Preacher’s Commentary Book 21)*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988, pp. 163–166

the AntiChrist (even though the kingdom of God has already been established by the Son of Man). Then the kingdom of God will fill the whole earth, just as Nebuchadnezzar had seen (2:35). The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ, and He will reign forever, sharing His rule with His saints. Throughout the chapter, kingdom wars against kingdom until one kingdom finally conquers and becomes the one and only kingdom in the world—the everlasting kingdom of God.

(4) It is perhaps a mistake for us to see verses 9–10, 10–12, and 13–14 as pointing to successive events. Rather, they are three aspects of one event, the outworking of which is not necessarily limited to a single point in time. The sovereign judgment of God on the empires and their successors, the establishing of the kingdom of Christ, and the ultimate destruction of the little horn have all been put in motion. We are now in the last days because Christ has already established His kingdom. Judgment has already been made in favor of the saints, in Christ, and they already experience the kingdom (cf. Rom. 5:1; 8:1; Matt. 5:8, 10). The best interpretation of this passage views the courtroom scene of verses 9–10 as an illumination into God’s sure and sovereign judgment of evil: the destruction of the beast and the rise of the ten horns as events stretching over the years, the centuries, the millennia (for the symbols represent empires, not merely individuals). The consequence of the first scene and the cause of the second is the content of the third: the fact that the Son of Man has accomplished all that is necessary to establish His kingdom. What are the implications for us of this strange vision? (1) The people of God must never be naive about the reality, strength, or durability of evil. Daniel’s sense of horror and his resulting concern for God’s people are an example to us all. We may live in a day and a place where life is relatively tranquil for Christians. Do we remember to pray for those who know evil’s full force? Are we concerned, as Daniel clearly was, for the saints of God in the future who will face such trials? If this vision does not produce a like spirit in us, we have not really understood its message. (2) The people of God must learn that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of suffering. The forces of hell will not prevail against it, but they will do all in their limited power to overwhelm the saints. Suffering of one kind or another is integral to being a Christian (Rom. 8:16–17). That thought may devastate us, but if we learn to accept it, it may also stabilize us. (3) Our gaze must always penetrate beyond the terrible events of history to the throne of God. Only in the assurance that He reigns will we be able to live triumphantly when we cannot trace or understand His plan of victory. (4) Our great hope as the people of God does not lie in the centers of world power. Our aim is not to build the kingdoms of this world but to share in the triumph of Christ. He has already established His everlasting kingdom among men. He reigns now. All kingdoms that stand against His have been judged in the courtroom of God and are destined to fail. Even the little horn cannot overthrow His rule.

We live in the age when we already reign in Christ. Such is the opposition to His reign, however, that often His splendor and ours may be hidden (Col. 3:3). When the little horn appears to wear out the people of God, the reign of Christ will not have high visibility. The little horn does not reign; Jesus Christ is Lord and His saints reign with Him until the day when they will reign publicly and finally. That was Daniel's vision. As Daniel thought of what the people of God would suffer in the centuries after his own death, he was deeply concerned. If we are not, we have missed the point of the vision.



# Week 9 Daniel 8

## How Long, O Lord?

*Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*

**Acts 14:22**

Chapter 8 takes place two years after Daniel's vision in chapter 7, and is a different perspective on the same future events. In Daniel 8, Daniel focuses his prophecy specifically on four beasts followed by an eternal kingdom. In this chapter, a ram and a goat with horns represent three major world powers. The two horns of the ram represent the Median and Persian empires. The goat represents the Greek empire with its first horn identified as Alexander the Great. Following Alexander the great are four additional horns from which a little horn would come forth, which is commonly identified as Antiochus Epiphanies. Alexander the Great was a brilliant military general and conquered much of the known world. Legend has it that at the end of his conquest he wept because there were no more kingdoms to dominate. His empire spread rapidly over thirteen years before his sudden death. After Alexander, multiple kings reigned, but the little horn, Antiochus Epiphanies, garners detailed attention. Antiochus's growth has been described as rising "even to the host of heaven," implying he elevated himself to a divine status and would persecute or "trample" Israel (v.10) and that "he even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host" (v.11) or up to God himself. His name Antiochus Epiphanies means "god manifest." He would eventually target the place of worship where the living God had dwelt with his people and "by him the daily sacrifices were taken away." These events that were to take place would be startling for Daniel even after experiencing similar things from Nebuchadnezzar. There's only one question left to ask: "How long?" The response is "2300 days." There is much debate about this number and how to understand it, but one big point that can't be missed is that persecution has an expiration date. God would sovereignly cast down all his opponents in due time.

Christ tells us that we will be persecuted as he was persecuted. We are his servants and we are not greater than our Master. "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," (2 Tim.3:12) It's natural for us to want to avoid pain, but we cannot forget that we must count the cost of following Christ. We must prepare in order to endure while we trust the sovereign purposes of God. Let us fix our eyes on the only thing that can give us strength to stand. Let us remember the promises, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John16:33). God has loved you and will be with you. Take heart, believe the promises, and hold fast to Christ, your strength and your shield.

## Week 9 Sermon Notes



## Main Characters

**Antiochus Epiphanies:** Antiochus Epiphanies represents a “type” or a foreshadowing of a future figure, the antichrist. He was an arrogant ruler who persecuted God’s people and exalted himself above God. An antichrist is essentially a false teacher. He is someone who utters blasphemous words and strikes against those who are faithful to God. The Apostle John warns Christians that many antichrists will appear in the last hour, which is the period of time we live in.

## TREASURE

1) Read through the passage 2-3 times. Summarize what happens in a few brief sentences.

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2) Break the passage down into 3-4 sections and give each section a title.

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3) Write down 3-5 observations about the passage. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why questions. What does the author emphasize?

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4) Write down any questions you have about this passage.

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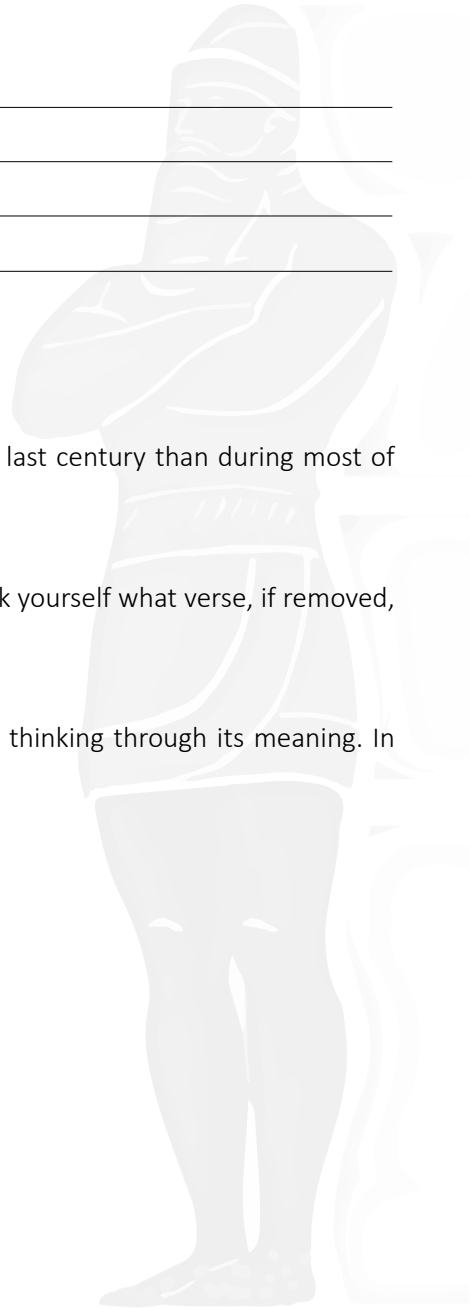
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## **GROW**

Why do you think Christians have faced less persecution in the last century than during most of Christian history?

Pick out one key verse that explains the heart of the passage. Ask yourself what verse, if removed, would make the passage hard to understand.

Meditate on that key passage by reading through it slowly and thinking through its meaning. In what ways is God calling you to be obedient?



## GO

What does it look like to prepare ourselves for greater levels of tribulation?

In what area of your life is God calling you to be a bolder witness? (Be specific)

Write down an insight or encouragement from this passage that you can use to edify your community group this week.

## Discussion Questions

1) What has been your experience related to prophecy? Is there a story that particularly characterizes your experience?

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2) How do you currently feel about prophecy (interested, enthusiastic, confused, apathetic)? Why do you think God gives us prophecy?

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3) In this prophecy, there is a description of kings, including one that is particularly evil. Discuss the ways that the evil is manifested.

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4) While we may not understand every part of the vision, how can this prophecy of the kingdom of evil be of help to us?

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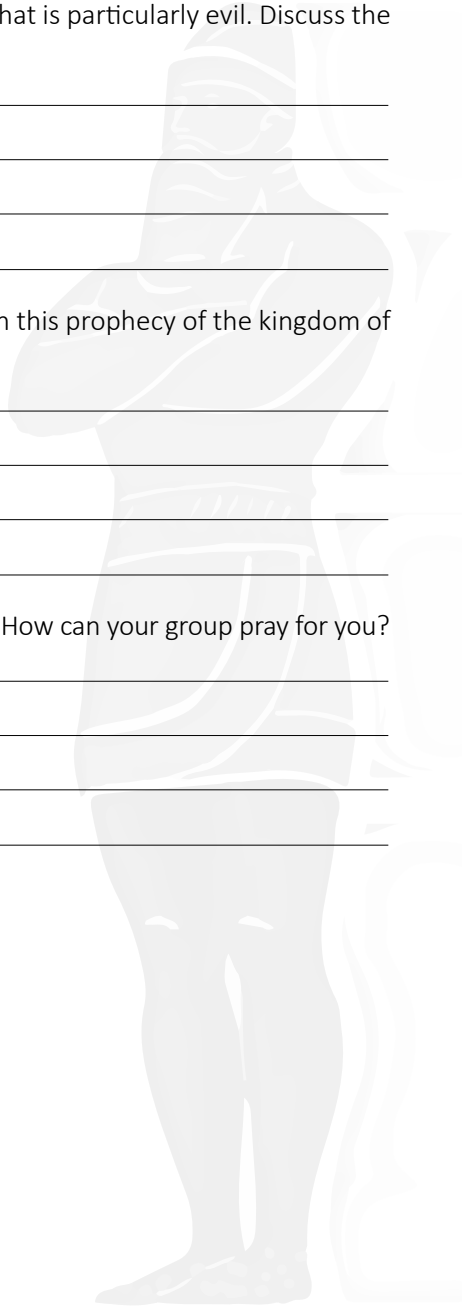
5) In what ways were you challenged or convicted by the sermon? How can your group pray for you?

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## Short Reading

### **“If I Were The Antichrist” by David Murray<sup>1</sup>**

When did you last hear a sermon about the Antichrist?

Probably never for most of us.

Yet, there are numerous references to him in the Bible; in some cases whole chapters are devoted to describing him.

Why then crickets in the pulpit?

I think the main reason is fear of embarrassment. As we look back at history we see that many preachers and writers tried to pin the tail on the donkey and missed by miles. Anyone for Napoleon... Hitler...Saddam Hussein!? Ouch! None of us want to be the next Harold Camping.

But while we might wisely hold back from specifically identifying the Antichrist as Barack Obama, or George Bush, or whatever, we must not hold back from at least highlighting and explaining the characteristics of the Antichrist as described in the Bible. . . .

. . . let me give you four general principles to bear in mind when surveying the biblical data.

#### PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

First, the Antichrist is progressively revealed. Daniel is arguably the first biblical author to focus our attention on the Antichrist, although the principle of Antichrist can be seen in previous figures such as Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. The Antichrist's features are then increasingly revealed by Jesus, by Paul, and by John. The portrait starts out shadowy but gets more and more detailed and colorful as the Bible progresses. We must therefore be careful to take account of all the biblical data, especially the latter parts.

#### MANY AND ONE?

Second, there are many antichrists and there is one Antichrist. This seems contradictory but the Bible speaks both of multiple antichrists and of THE Antichrist, a succession of antichrists and a singular antichrist (1 John 2:18; 2 John 7).

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<sup>1</sup> Murray, David. “If I Were the Antichrist...” HeadHeartHand Blog. [Headhearthand.org](http://Headhearthand.org), 19 Feb. 2014. Web. 09 Oct. 2016.

## NOW AND FUTURE?

Third, antichrist is both now and in the future. This helps us to understand the previous point. While the spirit of antichrist is at work in all ages, and many individuals embody that spirit throughout history, there will be one climactic Antichrist figure who will appear at the very end of time.

## PROPHETIC PICTURES

Fourth, the antichrist is prophesied in apocalyptic books. The books that speak most about the Antichrist are Daniel and Revelation, in sections that are not only prophetic but apocalyptic in genre. The section of Matthew in which Jesus predicts antichrist is also called “the mini-apocalypse.” This much more pictorial language cautions us against a too-literal interpretation; instead we must try to understand the literal principles behind the multiple symbols and metaphors.

This is tricky, isn’t it, and maybe partly explains the widespread quiet. However, this silence is also deeply worrying because it lulls us into a false sense of security, a state of unreadiness and unpreparedness. If I were the Antichrist, I’d be thinking, “Hey the time is just about right. No one is looking, no one is expecting, hardly anyone knows about me, and even fewer would know me if they met me.”

... remember, although THE Antichrist may not yet have arisen, John warns us that there are many antichrists already in the world. So what are we looking for?

### He is Lawless

Paul calls him “The Man of Sin,” literally “The Man of Lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:3). He will disregard God’s Word and God’s law and replace it with his own arbitrary laws. He will re-define what is evil and what is good. He will promote doctrinal and ethical lawlessness.

### He is a Destroyer

In the same verse, Paul names Antichrist as “the son of perdition,” meaning “son of destruction.” He will physically destroy those who oppose him; he will spiritually and eternally destroy all who believe him and follow him.

### He Opposes God

“He opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God” (v. 4). Well, that doesn’t help much, does it? Half the world oppose God and exalt themselves over Him. But what’s unique about this opposition is that the Antichrist opposes mainly by substitution.

### He is a Substitute

As “Anti” can mean “instead of” as well as “against,” Antichrist can mean “replacement Christ,” “instead of Christ,” “substitute for Christ.” Paul confirms this when he says that the Antichrist “sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:4). This is not necessarily an enemy from outside the church, but from inside it. He opposes Christ by replacing him, by taking Christ’s titles, worship, and roles.

### He is a Deceiver

The only other person called “the son of perdition” was Judas (John 17:12). Under cover of professing to be a friend of Christ, he tried to destroy Christ. This theme of deception is taken up by Jesus, Paul, and John when describing the Antichrist. In fact, the dominant message from passages dealing with the Antichrist is, “Don’t be deceived!” Just as Satan rarely comes painted red with horns, a fork, and a pointy tail, the Antichrist will not come with a big “A” on his forehead. Like Satan, he will come with false signs, wonders, and miracles; he will be so plausible and persuasive that, if it were possible, He would deceive even the elect (Matt. 24:24).

### He is a Heretic

John’s main concern with the Antichrist is his promotion of false doctrine surrounding the person and work of Christ (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7). Just like the mini-antichrists in John’s day, THE ultimate Antichrist will not deny everything about Christ, but just enough to undermine the power of Christ’s gracious salvation.

### He is a Politician

While Daniel and Revelation confirm and expand upon these six characteristics, their main emphasis is on the political nature of the Antichrist. He will head up a kingdom, even an empire, similar to other nation states or empires. These books also make clear that this aspect of Antichrist’s work will become clearer and clearer nearer the end of time. Deception will be replaced with destruction, fraud will give way to force, the wolf in sheep’s clothing will shed his fleece and bare his fangs.



# Week 10 Daniel 9

## A Message of Hope

*I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.*

**Acts 14:22**

Daniel 9 is made up of two main sections—verses 1-19 and 20-27. In the first section, Daniel prays for Yahweh to be merciful to Israel and to rescue them from captivity. In the second section, Gabriel comes and delivers a message about Yahweh’s kingdom program for Israel and for the world.

Daniel remembers Jeremiah’s prophecies that Israel’s captivity would last for seventy years (cf. Jer 25:11-12 and 29:10). Nebuchadnezzar took the first wave of captives to Babylon in 605 B.C., and Daniel realizes that the time is approaching for them to return to the land. Rather than reasoning with God and demanding that he be faithful to his promise to Jeremiah, Daniel petitions the Lord to be gracious and merciful. He knows that Israel does not deserve to return to the land (9:13-14).

Although it is not stated in the book, it seems that Daniel was concerned about Israel’s future. The previous two visions he had seen dealt with kingdoms that would arise after the fall of Babylon. Plus, Jeremiah’s prophecy only entailed the 70-year Babylonian captivity. We can imagine Daniel thinking, “What happens to us now?”

As soon as Daniel starts praying, Yahweh hears his prayer and responds (9:23). Although Israel had broken the covenant summarized in Deuteronomy 28, Yahweh will remain faithful. Gabriel lays out God’s plan for restoring Israel to her homeland (9:24-25a) and providing her a Messiah (9:25b-26a).

From the full testimony of Scripture, it’s clear that the final fulfillment of this prophecy will happen when Christ returns to set up his kingdom (cf. Matt 24:44). Only when Christ reigns physically on Earth will Israel, and the whole world, fully experience the promises of Daniel 9:24—sin will be completely annihilated, rebellion will cease, and we will finally have a ruler who will bring in “perpetual righteousness.”



## The Law of Moses

Amid the incredible miracles of the fiery furnace and the lions' den, it's easy to read the book of Daniel and forget that the Israelites were being punished because they broke their covenant with Yahweh. In Deuteronomy 28, Yahweh clearly lays out the blessings for obedience (28:1-14) and the curses for disobedience (28:15-68). Dan 9:13a says, "Just as it is written in the law of Moses, so all this calamity has come on us."

What are the curses that the Israelites have experienced? The curse fell upon everything—people, livestock, and the land itself (Deut 28:15-19). They were plagued with deadly, painful diseases (Deut 28:19-24). They saw other nations exploit all the riches of their land, including livestock and people, and they were powerless to stop it (Deut 28:25-37). They tried to sow but reaped no harvest and had to borrow from foreigners (Deut 28:38-46). They suffered when nations would war against them, sieging and plundering their cities, causing the Israelites to commit despicable acts (Deut 28:47-57). They were slaves among the nations, endured all kinds of illnesses, and their population dwindled. They became reviled among the nations (Deut 28:58-68).

We can certainly experience the blessings and corrections of God (Eph 1:3-14; Heb 12:4-13; Rev 3:19), but God does not deal with us based on the Mosaic Covenant. We relate to the Lord under the New Covenant established through Jesus Christ (Jer 31:32-34; Rom 7:6, 8:2-4).

### Week 10 Sermon Notes

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## TREASURE

1) Read through the passage 2-3 times and write down 3-5 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why questions. What does the author emphasize?

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2) Break the passage down into 3-4 sections and give each section a title.

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3) Write down any questions you have about this passage.

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## **GROW**

Reread verses 1-19. Name five ways that the Israelites had broken their covenant with Yahweh.

Pick out one key verse that explains the heart of the passage. Ask yourself what verse, if removed, would make the passage hard to understand.

Meditate on that key passage by reading through it slowly and thinking through its meaning. In what ways is God calling you to be obedient?

## **GO**

If Daniel were about fifteen years old when taken captive (cf. Dan 1:4, 10, 13, 17), he would have been over eighty years of age in 538 B.C. He had remained faithful to the Lord for over seventy years. What a testimony! Still, notice how humble he is as he confesses his sin and the sin of his people (9:1-17). How does his humility challenge you in your walk with the Lord?

Write down an insight or encouragement from this passage that you can use to edify your community group this week.

## Discussion Questions

1) Share a time when you pleaded to the Lord for mercy. How did God answer you?

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2) Describe Daniel's prayer. How does it reveal God's character and Daniel's attitude?  
How would you characterize your prayers? How are they like and unlike Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9?

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3) Discuss when and how God answers Daniel's prayer. How can this give us insight into prayer and its role in accomplishing God's purposes?

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4) In what ways do you need to reach out to your group today and ask for prayer? Are there any ways you can thank God for things your group has been praying for?

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## Short Reading

### From “Prophecy and Eschatology In Christian Theology,” by J. D. Hays in the Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets<sup>1</sup>

3.1. The Historical Pattern. Much of the OT prophetic material is set in the context of either the Assyrian invasion of Israel or the Babylonian invasion of Judah. Drawing primarily from Deuteronomy, the prophets announce judgment on Israel and Judah for abandoning Yahweh and his law. The future prophetic aspects of the prophets come in this context, as the prophets look beyond the terrible destruction brought on by the Assyrians and Babylonians to a new, glorious restoration. Many of the terms and concepts used by the prophets to describe the wonderful time of blessing in the future are exact reversals of the terms and concepts used for judgment. For example, practically all of the blessings promised in Jeremiah 30–33 are reversals of the judgments proclaimed in Jeremiah 1–29 (e.g., sickness to healing; scattering to gathering; weeping to joy; uprooting to planting; destruction of Jerusalem to rebuilding Jerusalem; harlot to virgin) (Hays, 175). In striving to understand these images of future restoration (healing, gathering, joy, planting, rebuilding, virgin, etc.) and to relate them to NT eschatology, it is important to keep their negative (historical) counterparts of judgment in view.

The NT parallels the OT prophets in the sense that NT eschatological texts likewise proclaim the coming reign of Christ within a context of coming judgment upon unbelieving Israel (e.g., Mk 13), following the OT prophetic pattern.

3.2. The Covenants. Israel’s covenants are deeply imbedded into the OT prophetic message. The prophets proclaim judgment on Israel and Judah because they have seriously violated the covenant that Yahweh made with them at Sinai. Yet when the prophets look hopefully toward the new glorious restoration, they base much of that hope on the promises/covenants that God made with David (promise of king) and Abraham (promise of land, descendants, blessings on nations) (e.g., Is 2:2–4; 9:7; 41:8–13; 51:1–6; 55:3; Jer 3:14–18; 16:14–15; 23:5–8; 30:9; 33:14–26; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Mic 7:20; Zech 8:12–23). Jeremiah goes even further, declaring that God will inaugurate a “new covenant,” one that will work better than the old covenant made at Sinai (Jer 31:30–34) (Goldingay, 382–84, 431–33, 486–90; Hays, 62–69). The NT continues this understanding of the covenants, clearly presenting Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants as well as the one who inaugurates the new covenant.

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<sup>1</sup> J. D. Hays, “Prophecy and Eschatology In Christian Theology,” ed. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 603.

Here's another excerpt dealing with humility specifically, from *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. by Michael William Holmes.<sup>2</sup>

13. Let us therefore be humble, brothers, laying aside all arrogance and conceit and foolishness and anger, and let us do what is written. For the Holy Spirit says: "Let not the wise man boast about his wisdom, nor the strong about his strength, nor the rich about his wealth; but let him who boasts boast in the Lord, that he may seek him out, and do justice and righteousness" (Jer. 9:23–24; 1 Sam. 2:10; 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17). Most of all, let us remember the words of the Lord Jesus, which he spoke as he taught gentleness and patience. (2) For he said this: "Show mercy, that you may receive mercy; forgive, that you may be forgiven. As you do, so shall it be done to you. As you give, so shall it be given to you. As you judge, so shall you be judged. As you show kindness, so shall kindness be shown to you. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Matt. 5:7; 6:14; 7:1–2; Luke 6:31, 36–38). (3) With this commandment and these precepts let us strengthen ourselves, that we may humbly walk in obedience to his holy words. For the Holy Word says, (4) "Upon whom shall I look, except upon the one who is gentle and quiet and who trembles at my words?" (Isa. 66:2).

14. Therefore it is right and holy, brothers, that we should be obedient to God rather than follow those who in arrogance and unruliness have set themselves up as leaders in abominable jealousy. (2) For we shall bring upon ourselves no ordinary harm, but rather great danger, if we recklessly surrender ourselves to the purposes of men who launch out into strife and dissension in order to alienate us from what is right. (3) Let us be kind to them, in accordance with the compassion and tenderness of him who made us. (4) For it is written: "The kind shall inhabit the land, and the innocent shall be left on it; but those who transgress shall be utterly destroyed from it" (Prov. 2:21–22; cf. Ps. 37:9, 38). (5) And again he says: "I saw the ungodly lifted up on high and exalted as the cedars of Lebanon. But I passed by, and behold, he was no more; I searched for his place, but I could not find it. Guard innocence and observe righteousness, for there is a remnant for the peaceful man" (Ps. 37:35–37).

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Clement 13–14. Trans. and ed. Michael William Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 43–45.

# Week 11 Daniel 10

## God's Unseen Work

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.*

### **Ephesians 6:10-18**

Throughout the book of Daniel, we've seen that Yahweh, the God of Israel, stands sovereign over not just Israel but over all human kingdoms. As human kingdoms rise and fall, God is at work to establish his everlasting kingdom that cannot be destroyed (2:44). In this chapter, we see that God is at work to establish his everlasting kingdom, even in the spiritual realm.

Daniel receives a prophetic message/vision about a terrible battle, and he, true to his character, mourns and fasts before God for three weeks. After three weeks, an angel appears to help Daniel understand the vision. The angel explains the vision in chapters 11 and 12. In chapter 10, we see two ways that God is at work in the spiritual realm to build his kingdom: his angels directly battle demons attempting to thwart God's plans, and his angels strengthen God's servants.

Very clearly, there is much more going on in the spiritual realm than we know about. Evidently, fallen angels like the prince of the kingdom of Persia attempt to manipulate human kingdoms to stop God's kingdom from appearing. Such plans might entail the annihilation of the Jews in Persia, as in Esther. (To wipe out the Jews would wipe out the Davidic dynasty and its coming king, entirely undermining God's everlasting kingdom.) Whatever the specific demonic plot, God is at work through his holy angels to ensure his plans are accomplished.



God likewise grants his servants spiritual insight and spiritual strength to stand in the face of the schemes of the devil. Even in the presence of a friendly angel, Daniel's strength is sapped. To have any hope in the spiritual battle that Satan and his minions wage against God and his people, we stand wholly dependent on God for strength.

Note: In Dan 11:1, the angel is still speaking, not Daniel. (The antecedent of "I" in 11:1 is the angel, not Daniel.)

## Angels

There are two dangerous extremes Christians may fall into with regard to the world of angels and demons: to deny the spiritual world exists or to imagine a demon under every rock—to consider the smallest slight as the work of Satan himself.

Angels are spirit beings created by God the Father through God the Son (Col 1:16). As beings, they have consciousness (Rev 22:9), cognition (Matt 28:5), affections (Job 38:7), and volition (Dan 10:21–22). As spirit beings, they have no physical bodies—unlike humans, which are physical and spiritual beings. Angels function as messengers for God (as in Dan 10), worshippers of God (Rev 4:8–11), and ministers to the saints (Heb 1:14). Although they possess superhuman power, their power is finite. Their power is derived from God to be exercised according to divine law in response to divine commands. In other words, the power of Lucifer, Michael, or Gabriel in no way rivals God's. The destiny of Satan and fallen angels is certain (Rev 21:10; Jude 6).

The study of angels is a worthy pursuit, as Scripture presents angels throughout its pages. Scripture does reveal a good deal about angels, but it leaves many questions unanswered. One caution as you study angels: healthy study should yield a respect for angels, greater confidence in God—the creator of all things seen and unseen—and a desire for greater maturity. Put simply, obsession over angels and fallen angels can quickly cause a person to veer from the healthy path of Christian maturity (Col 2:18; Gal 1:8).

The golden statue represents the pinnacle of Nebuchadnezzar's strength and power. The Babylonians did not believe their king to be divine, so the statue was probably not an image of Nebuchadnezzar. It was most likely an image of Marduk, the principle deity of the Babylonians. When the subjects bowed to the statue, they proved they were loyal to the king and worshiped his gods (3:12, 15). But the living God Yahweh transcends all false gods. Convinced of this, the three men refused to bow.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. A vertical margin line is present on the left side, creating a narrow left margin. The paper appears to be part of a binder, as evidenced by the hole punches visible along the left edge. The overall appearance is that of a standard notebook page.

## TREASURE

1) Read through the passage 2-3 times and write down 3-5 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why questions. What does the author emphasize?

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2) Break the passage down into 3-4 sections and give each section a title.

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3) Write down any questions you have about this passage.

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## GROW

Why does the angel appear to Daniel? What does the angel do?

Pick out one key verse that explains the heart of the passage. Ask yourself what verse, if removed, would make the passage hard to understand.

Meditate on that key passage by reading through it slowly and thinking through its meaning. In what ways is God calling you to be obedient?

## GO

How does the reality of the spiritual realm affect your pursuit of godliness?

How does the fact that God is at work in the spiritual realm building his kingdom affect how you share the gospel?

Write down an insight or encouragement from this passage that you can use to edify your community group this week.

## Discussion Questions

1) Have you ever experienced a time of great mourning? If so, share the circumstances and how you felt.

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2) Describe the “man clothed in linen.” What was Daniel’s response to this vision? Why do you think Daniel responded this way?

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3) After seeing the vision, Daniel is touched and then told that he is greatly loved (verse 11, repeated in verse 19). What does this show us about God? How does this point us to the gospel?

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4) After being told that Daniel is loved, he then is told not to be afraid (verse 12, repeated in verse 19). How might being loved and not being afraid be connected? (See 1 John 4:18 for help.)

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5) What do we learn about the cosmic war taking place? How can this description help us today?

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## Short Readings

### Excerpt from *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis<sup>1</sup>

My dear Wormwood,

So you “have great hopes that the patient’s religious phase is dying away”, have you? I always thought the Training College had gone to pieces since they put old Slubgob at the head of it, and now I am sure. Has no one ever told you about the law of Undulation?

Humans are amphibians—half spirit and half animal. (The Enemy’s determination to produce such a revolting hybrid was one of the things that determined Our Father to withdraw his support from Him.) As spirits they belong to the eternal world, but as animals they inhabit time. This means that while their spirit can be directed to an eternal object, their bodies, passions, and imaginations are in continual change, for to be in time means to change. Their nearest approach to constancy, therefore, is undulation—the repeated return to a level from which they repeatedly fall back, a series of troughs and peaks. If you had watched your patient carefully you would have seen this undulation in every department of his life—his interest in his work, his affection for his friends, his physical appetites, all go up and down. As long as he lives on earth periods of emotional and bodily richness and liveliness will alternate with periods of numbness and poverty. The dryness and dullness through which your patient is now going are not, as you fondly suppose, your workmanship; they are merely a natural phenomenon which will do us no good unless you make a good use of it.

To decide what the best use of it is, you must ask what use the Enemy wants to make of it, and then do the opposite. Now it may surprise you to learn that in His efforts to get permanent possession of a soul, He relies on the troughs even more than on the peaks; some of His special favourites have gone through longer and deeper troughs than anyone else. The reason is this. To us a human is primarily good; our aim is the absorption of its will into ours, the increase of our own area of selfhood at its expense. But the obedience which the Enemy demands of men is quite a different thing. One must face the fact that all the talk about His love for men, and His service being perfect freedom, is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda, but an appalling truth. He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures, whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has

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<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, (New York: Harper One, 2015), 37–41.

drawn all other beings into himself: the Enemy wants a world full of beings united to Him but still distinct.

And that is where the troughs come in. You must have often wondered why the Enemy does not make more use of His power to be sensibly present to human souls in any degree He chooses and at any moment. But you now see that the Irresistible and the Indisputable are the two weapons which the very nature of His scheme forbids Him to use. Merely to over-ride a human will (as His felt presence in any but the faintest and most mitigated degree would certainly do) would be for Him useless. He cannot ravish. He can only woo. For His ignoble idea is to eat the cake and have it; the creatures are to be one with Him, but yet themselves; merely to cancel them, or assimilate them, will not serve. He is prepared to do a little overriding at the beginning. He will set them off with communications of His presence which, though faint, seem great to them, with emotional sweetness, and easy conquest over temptation. But He never allows this state of affairs to last long. Sooner or later He withdraws, if not in fact, at least from their conscious experience, all those supports and incentives. He leaves the creature to stand up on its own legs—to carry out from the will alone duties which have lost all relish. It is during such trough periods, much more than during the peak periods, that it is growing into the sort of creature He wants it to be. Hence the prayers offered in the state of dryness are those which please Him best. We can drag our patients along by continual tempting, because we design them only for the table, and the more their will is interfered with the better. He cannot “tempt” to virtue as we do to vice. He wants them to learn to walk and must therefore take away His hand; and if only the will to walk is really there He is pleased even with their stumbles. Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger, than when a human, no longer desiring, but intending, to do our Enemy’s will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys. But of course the troughs afford opportunities to our side also. Next week I will give you some hints on how to exploit them,

Your affectionate uncle  
SCREWTAPE

# Week 12 Daniel 11

## The Lord of Human History

*Righteous are you, O Lord,  
when I complain to you;  
yet I would please my case before you.  
Why does the way of the wicked prosper?  
Why do all who are treacherous thrive?*

### Jeremiah 12:1

Jeremiah's lament strikes at the core of how we process the world around us. We know God is righteous and just, yet his will rarely seems to be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Dictators gain power, people remain oppressed, and wars erupt every year leaving devastation and horror in their wake. At this point in the story, Daniel is still in exile, now an older man living under the rule of the Persian emperor Darius. Babylon has fallen, but Israel is not yet free, which begs the question — will God be faithful to his people? Daniel 11 answers with a strange “yes.” On the one hand, Daniel 11 reveals that the balance of power in the world will shift between two mysterious kings — the king of the north and the king of the south. These two kingdoms will clash and Israel will be caught in the middle until the rise of a wicked leader in the end, likely the anti-Christ, who will rise up against God's people.

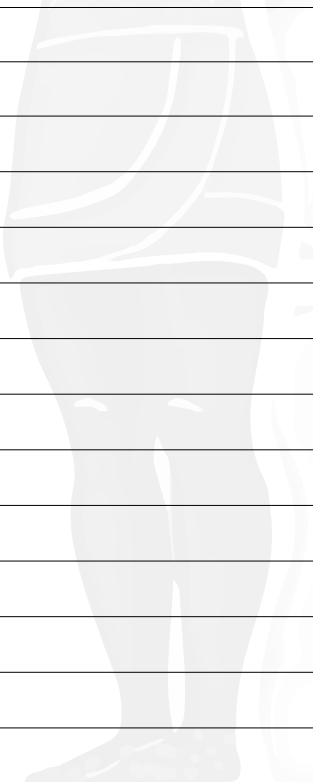
And yet in the midst of all of this chaos, God is in control. God is the one who “changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding” (Daniel 2:21). If we think through this chapter, we realize that even though we may not be able to track every single historical detail, we share the same sense that Daniel did. We are God's people in an unpredictable world trying to figure out our place in it. We cannot control world events. We do not know which leader will fall and what kind of leader will rise in his or her place. However, we do know that God's sovereignty reigns over all human hearts. We do know that God will be faithful to his promises and that his way of accomplishing his purposes will look a lot different than ours.

It is tempting to skip over daunting chapters like Daniel 11. We are unfamiliar with the terrain and impatient with the details. However, we need to keep two important things in mind. First, even Daniel himself did not totally understand the vision he received. He even confessed, “Although I heard, I did not understand.” (Daniel 12:8) So, Daniel can relate to us. Part of the humility of living under the



authority of God's Word is that we do not get to decide what is important and what is not. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16) If we believe Scripture is God-breathed and useful, then it is on us to mine its depths and seek God's wisdom. In other words, if we do not learn something from Daniel 11, it is not because of lack of effort on God's part. Second, we need to recognize that the war between God's people and the world is very real. It does not merely take place in a detached, invisible spiritual realm. Each one of the kings and rulers that Daniel depicts foreshadow the figure of the AntiChrist, the leader who will exalt himself against God toward the end of time. History is full of "antichrists" who persecute the church and try to glorify themselves. As God's people, we must recognize this pattern and order our lives accordingly, understanding that the war between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light is very real and happening all around us.

## Week 12 Sermon Notes



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## TREASURE

1) Read through the passage 2-3 times. Since this is a very dense chapter, just summarize a few key themes this chapter.

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2) In the observation section, write down 3-5 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why? questions.

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3) Write down any questions you have about this passage.

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## **GROW**

What insights can you draw from this chapter with regard to God's sovereignty over your own life?

Pick out one key verse that explains the heart of the passage. Ask yourself what verse, if removed, would make the passage hard to understand.

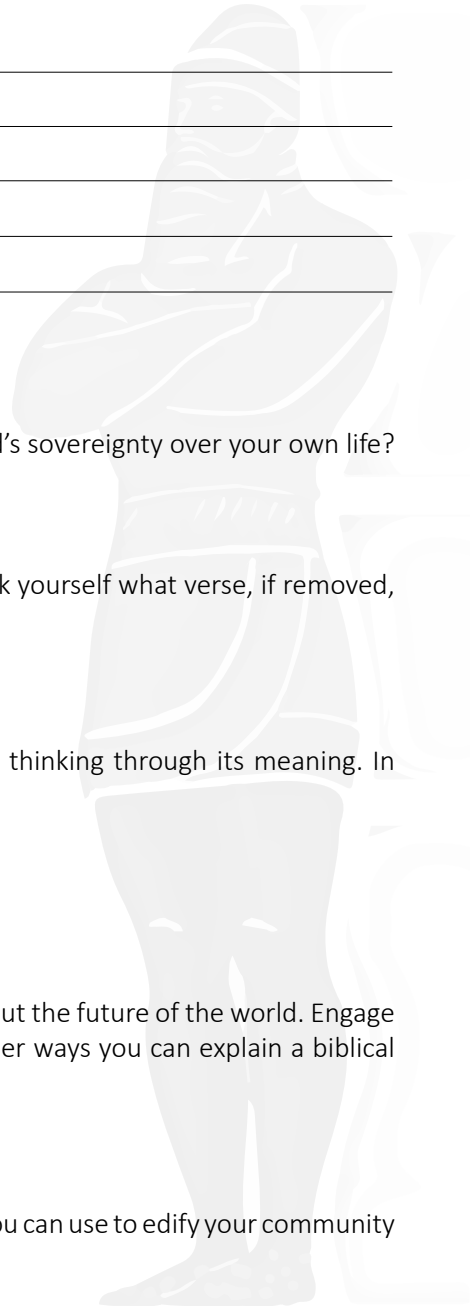
Meditate on that key passage by reading through it slowly and thinking through its meaning. In what ways is God calling you to be obedient?

## **GO**

Ask a non-believer whether they are optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the world. Engage in what their reasons for optimism or pessimism are and consider ways you can explain a biblical view of history to them.

Write down an insight or encouragement from this passage that you can use to edify your community group this week.

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## Discussion Questions

1) Talk about a time you got into a conflict or fight. What happened? How did it get resolved?

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2) Describe the conflict in chapter 11. What is causing the conflict? What is the source of our conflicts (see James 4:1-4)?

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3) Our text warns the godly of the certainty of suffering, but it also assures them of their opportunity for (and success in) ministry in the midst of suffering. Where do we see this in the chapter? How can this encourage and strengthen us in this present age?

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4) How does chapter 11 help to shape the perspective of the Christian who takes this text seriously?

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5) How can your group pray for you as you seek to apply the truths of God's Word to your life today?

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## Short Readings

### From Daniel: Reformed Expository Commentary by Iain M. Duguid<sup>1</sup>

Why did Daniel need to hear about this history in his situation? The goal was to put the difficulties that the Jews were facing in 536 B.C. in perspective. There was nothing unique about the trials and tribulations that faced them. The court intrigues that delayed the building work on the temple in Jerusalem and the opposition from powerful enemies that they encountered were not merely a temporary hiccup but would be an ongoing feature of life in this world. Their experience should therefore not surprise them, as if something unexpected and out of control were happening to them. God was in control of these machinations as well. Nor should they seek to take matters into their own hands, as if by rising up against the authorities they could bring about the establishment of God's kingdom more swiftly. Patient endurance would continue to be the order of the day until God intervened to set up his kingdom.

This is an important lesson for us also to learn from this history. The kingdoms of this world often seem overwhelming in their power to accomplish great things, a power that can easily either cow Christians into a state of depressed submission or, alternatively, seduce them into trying to use the world's power to do God's work. Some Christians seem to believe that they can hasten the coming of God's kingdom by achieving certain political goals. Yet at the end of the story, and for all their vaunted power, the kingdoms of this world can neither destroy God's work nor establish it. They are merely tools in the hand of a sovereign God who is able to declare the end from the beginning because he alone ultimately controls the affairs of men and nations.

This truth is of great practical value in each of our lives. We all experience times when our existence seems caught up in a larger conflict that is completely out of our control. Perhaps our job is threatened when a manufacturing plant is closed by corporate authorities located thousands of miles away. Perhaps political decisions or terrorist acts that are beyond our power to influence threaten our freedoms and lifestyle. Our health, or the health of someone we love, may be threatened by a disease against which we have no ability to guard. We live in a great big world and we are ever so small.

In such times of personal uncertainty, we need to cling firmly onto the knowledge that all world events, from the greatest to the least, are not only known ahead of time to God but are under his sovereign power to control. Even those actions that are initiated by godless men and women in pursuit of their own wicked purposes will ultimately achieve the Lord's holy purposes (see Acts 4:27-28). He is the first and the last; apart from him there is no God. He alone can foretell what the future holds because he holds it in his sovereign hand (see Isa. 44:6-7)

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<sup>1</sup> Duguid, Iain. *Daniel: Reformed Expository Commentary*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008.

# Week 13 Daniel 12

## A Time Shall Arise

*He changes times and seasons;*

*he removes kings and sets up kings;*

*he gives wisdom to the wise*

*and knowledge to those who have understanding;*

*he reveals deep and hidden things;*

*he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.*

### **Daniel 2:21-22**

For all intents and purposes, the exile was over. Two years before the fearsome, lengthy, detailed vision of Daniel 10-12, Cyrus the king had liberated God's people (2 Chronicles 36.22-23; cf. Daniel 10.1). God had fulfilled his promise, and the people of Judah could begin returning to their land. Instead of focusing on the joy of release, Daniel relates a vision of kingdoms rising and falling, with wars, blaspheming rulers, and destruction. Why?

The end of the exile was not the end of God's redemptive plan for his people. Hebrews 4:8-10 teaches, "For if Joshua had given [the Israelites] rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on." Similarly, if the Israelites' return from exile had been their ultimate deliverance, God would not have given Daniel another vision of tribulation and a promise of salvation. They still needed rescuing. So God, through his messenger, gives Daniel a glimpse of the end of history and God's people's final redemption.

Unlike the visions God gave Daniel to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dreams in chapters 2 and 4, this revelation is mysterious, and Daniel does not understand (12:8). His questions meet with strange answers, and the messenger tells him to continue about his business because the words are sealed until the end of time (12:9). The terrifying vision ends with assurance. The sovereign God of the universe reigns over all things, and he has appointed a time to bring all things to an end and to eternally deliver his people (12:1).

## **Still Sojourners**

Since the time of the patriarchs, God's people had strongly identified with the land God promised to Abraham (Genesis 12.1). In many ways, the exodus, the law, the kingdom, and the exile concerned anticipating, taking, maintaining, and losing the land. The land meant rest and God's presence with his people (Joshua 1.9, 13), and displacement was devastating (Psalm 137.1-7). However, Daniel's vision revealed, among other things, that he and all God's people were (and still are) sojourners. How comforting, then, that the messenger of Daniel's vision promises him rest and a place to stand at the end of redemptive history. Like those who came before him, Daniel "died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth... But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:13, 16). We actually lost our place not in the exile, but in Eden. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for his people, and like Daniel, every follower of Christ will have rest and a place to stand at the end of days in God's eternal presence (John 14:1-3).

## Week 13 Sermon Notes







3) Write down any questions you have about this passage.

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## **GROW**

Write down 2-3 impactful things you learned through your study of Daniel.

Pick out one key verse that explains the heart of the passage. Ask yourself what verse, if removed, would make the passage hard to understand.

Meditate on that key passage by reading through it slowly and thinking through its meaning. In what ways is God calling you to be obedient?

## **GO**

How does Daniel 12, with its emphasis on the end of history, God's sovereign plan, and the eternal existence of human souls, influence your perspective on evangelism and missions?

Write down an insight or encouragement from this passage that you can use to edify your community group this week.

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## Discussion Questions

1) Share about something that you finished (project, assignment, degree, season of life, etc.). How did you feel?

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2) Daniel finishes a long series of prophecies with a focus on everlasting life and God's promise to deliver His people and to judge those who aren't His people. How does this promise of deliverance and judgment impact you, your family, your relationships, etc.?

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3) Daniel 12:11 says that the wise will understand. How has your understanding of God and His character grown during your study of Daniel?

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4) In what ways have you applied Daniel to your life this fall? How do you want to grow more? Spend some time as a group thanking God and asking God.

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## Short Readings

### From Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem<sup>1</sup>

#### There Will Be a Sudden, Personal, Visible, Bodily Return of Christ

Jesus often spoke about his return. “You also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt. 24:44). He said, “I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:3). Immediately after Jesus had ascended into heaven, two angels said to the disciples, “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Paul taught, “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God” (1 Thess. 4:16). The author of Hebrews wrote that Christ “will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb. 9:28). James wrote, “the coming<sup>2</sup> of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8). Peter said, “The day of the Lord will come like a thief” (2 Peter 3:10). John wrote, “when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). And the book of Revelation has frequent references to Christ’s return, ending with Jesus’ promise, “Surely I am coming soon,” and John’s response, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20).

This theme, then, is frequently mentioned throughout the New Testament. It is the dominant hope of the New Testament church. These verses predict a sudden return of Christ that will be dramatic and visible (“He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him,” Rev. 1:7). The passages are far too explicit to allow the idea (once popular in liberal Protestant circles) that Christ himself will not return, but simply that the spirit of Christ, meaning an acceptance of his teaching and an imitation of his lifestyle of love, would increasingly return to the earth. It is not his teachings or his style of conduct, but “the Lord himself” who will descend from heaven (1Thess. 4:16). It is Jesus himself “who was taken up from you into heaven” who “will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). His appearing will not be a mere spiritual coming to dwell within people’s hearts, but will be a personal and bodily return “in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

#### We Should Eagerly Long for Christ’s Return

John’s response at the end of Revelation should characterize Christians’ hearts in all ages: “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20). True Christianity trains us “to live sober, upright, and godly lives in

1 Grudem, Wayne. from “The Return of Christ: When and How?” in Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000. pp. 1092-95.

2 The term *parousia* is used in theology to mean “second coming” (of Christ). This term comes from the Greek word for “coming” (*parousia*) which is used to refer to Christ’s second coming in James 5:8 and several other New Testament passages. Because *parousia* is not a commonly used term in ordinary English, I have not used it in this book.

this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-13).<sup>3</sup> Paul says, "our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).<sup>4</sup> The term "Maranatha" in 1 Corinthians 16:22 (NASB) similarly means, "Our Lord, come!" (1 Cor. 16:22 RSV). ...

Certainly we should commit ourselves to long-term activities. It is precisely for this reason that Jesus does not allow us to know the actual time of his return (see below): he wants us to be engaged in obedience to him, no matter what our walk of life, up until the very moment of his return. To "be ready" for Christ's return (Matt. 24:44) is to be faithfully obeying him in the present, actively engaged in whatever work he has called us to. In the nature of the situation, since we do not know when he will return, on that day there will no doubt be some missionaries just departing for the mission field, who will never reach their destination. There will be some men in their last year of seminary education who will never use their training to pastor a church. There will be some researchers handing in their doctoral dissertations on that day, the fruit of years of research that will never be published and never have an influence on the world. But to all of those people who are Christians, Jesus will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 25:21).

### **We Do Not Know When Christ Will Return**

Several passages indicate that we do not, and cannot, know the time when Christ will return. "The Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matt. 24:44). "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matt. 25:13). Moreover, Jesus said, "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch; for you do not know when the time will come" (Mark 13:32-33).

It is simply an evasion of the force of those passages to say that we cannot know the day or the hour, but that we can know the month or the year. The fact remains that Jesus is coming "at an hour you do not expect" (Matt. 24:44), and "at an unexpected hour" (Luke 12:40). (In these verses the word "hour" [hōra] is best understood in a more general sense, to refer to the time when something will take place, not necessarily a sixty-minute period of time.)<sup>5</sup> The point of these passages is that Jesus

3 The word translated "awaiting" here (prosdechomai) has a nuance of earnest or eager expectation: it is used of Joseph of Areimathea, who was "looking for the kingdom of God" (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51) and of righteous Simeon who was "looking for the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25).

The word here translated "await" is apekdechomai, "await eagerly" (note its use in this sense in Rom. 8:19, 23; 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5).

4 The word here translated "await" is apekdechomai, "await eagerly" (note its use in this sense in Rom. 8:19, 23; 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5).

5 A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Ed. Walter Bauer, Rev. and trans. Wm. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F. Danker. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979. p. 896, 3.

is telling us that we cannot know when he is coming back. Since he will come at an unexpected time, we should be ready at all times for him to return.

The practical result of this is that anyone who claims to know specifically when Jesus is coming back is automatically to be considered wrong. The Jehovah's Witnesses have made many predictions of specific dates for Christ's return, and all of them have turned out to be wrong.<sup>6</sup> But others in the history of the church have made such predictions as well, sometimes claiming new insight into biblical prophecies, and sometimes claiming to have received personal revelations from Jesus himself indicating the time of his return. It is unfortunate that many people have been deceived by these claims, because if people are convinced that Christ will return (for example) within a month, they will begin to withdraw from all long-term commitments. They will take their children out of school, sell their houses, quit their jobs, and give up work on any long-term projects whether in the church or elsewhere. They may initially have an increased zeal for evangelism and prayer, but the unreasonable nature of their behavior will offset any evangelistic impact they may have. Moreover, they are simply disobeying the teaching of Scripture that the date of Christ's return cannot be known, which means that even their prayer and fellowship with God will be hindered as well. Anyone who claims to know the date on which Christ will return – from whatever source – should be rejected as incorrect.<sup>7</sup>

### **All Evangelicals Agree on the Final Results of Christ's Return**

No matter what their differences on the details, all Christians who take the Bible as their final authority agree that the final and ultimate result of Christ's return will be the judgment of unbelievers and the final reward of believers, and that believers will live with Christ in a new heaven and a new earth for all eternity. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will reign and will be worshiped in a never-ending kingdom with no more sin or sorrow or suffering.

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6 Their attempt to save face by claiming that Jesus actually did return on October 1, 1914, in an invisible way, is incorrect because it denies the visible, bodily nature of Christ's return that is so clearly specified in several passages quoted above.

7 Even in the "enlightened" twentieth century, such alarms can be persuasive to many people. In the summer of 1988 a former rocket scientist with impressive academic credentials circulated a booklet claiming that Jesus would return on September 12, 1988, and tens of thousands of copies of the book found their way around the United States and to various parts of the world. I was surprised to find that some otherwise sober Christian friends had read it and were alarmed, and to hear that some Christians in our community had pulled their children out of school in order to be together as a family when Christ came back. When the prediction failed, the author, Edgar Whisenant, revised his prediction, saying his calculations were one year off and Christ would return instead on September 1, 1989 (or one day earlier or later), or, if not then, on Rosh Hashanah 1990 or 1991 or 1992, or, at the latest, September 15-17, 1993. Of course, those predictions also failed. But many lives were disrupted and many people had false expectations aroused and then dashed by the publication of this booklet and its sequel. See Edgar Whisenant, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988* (Nashville, Tenn.: World Bible Society, 1988), and Edgar Whisenant and Greg Brewer, *The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989* (Nashville, Tenn.: World Bible Society, 1989).



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**General Editor**

Bryan Zhang

**Authors**

Nathan Fowler, Sarita Fowler, Kyle Kraeft  
Scott Stake, Bethany Wester

**Design & Production Team**

Lori Ivarson, Jay Johansen  
Ginny Schoolfield, Debbie Tanis



## **Four Oaks Community Church**

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### **Killearn Campus**

4500 W. Shannon Lakes Dr.

### **Midtown Campus**

526 E. 8th Ave.

850.385.0004 | [fouroakschurch.com](http://fouroakschurch.com) | [info@fouroakschurch.com](mailto:info@fouroakschurch.com) | [@fouroakschurch](https://www.instagram.com/fouroakschurch)

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