

DANIEL: The Future is Clearly Fuzzy

Daniel 11ⁱ

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! For those of you that are guests, we want to say a special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. Whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are excited to have you with us today. And on behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we welcome you here today.

We would love the opportunity to connect with you and you can do that in a couple ways. You can text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you do that, a reply text will be sent with a link you can click on. That will direct you to a form that will then provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you.

Or you can stop by the information center in the lobby area as we have a gift there for you. Again, we would love the opportunity to connect with you.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

We are approaching the landing of our series through the Old Testament book of Daniel. We have this week and then next week to wrap up our study. On Easter, hard to believe it is just three weeks away, we will kick off a new series of sermons entitled, "Greater Than." I'm fired up about that, but I'm also fired up about our message this morning.

Grab your bibles and turn with me to Daniel chapter 11. It is my plan to work our way through the entire chapter this morning in a message I have titled, "The Future is Clearly Fuzzy."

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Needing Readers

This year I reached a new milestone in my life. I now use reading glasses regularly. I remember the day my parents started holding the paper away from their eyes just so that they could read it. I used to think, man they are getting old doing that kind of stuff. Well, I am now in that old category!

How many of you utilize reading glasses? It is just me, or is that something that just happened all of a sudden? I feel like I was reading just fine one day and the next day I'm changing the font size on my iPhone! Anyone feel me?

There comes a time that we all need help seeing clearly. When it comes to the study of Scripture, there are passages that seem to make sense and then there are those that make you go, huh?

Daniel chapter 11 is, in my view, is one of the most fascinating chapters in Scripture. In fact, I mulled over this chapter more than any other in our study through this incredible book. It is truly mind blowing.

And Daniel 11 can be broken into two parts and that will serve as our outline today. The first 35 verses contain prophecies that have already been fulfilled while the final 10 verses contain a prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled.

BACKGROUND:

To put our study in context, you will remember from the last couple weeks that Daniel had been reading the book of Jeremiah. It detailed the 70 weeks, we know to be years, that the Jews would be captive in Babylon. One the decree was given to allowing the Jews to return and rebuild the temple, only a small portion returned. This caused Daniel to mourn, pray and fast for spiritual renewal. As he was seeking the face of God, an angel, whom I believe to be Gabriel, delivered a vision, what is recorded in chapter 11. It was not what Daniel was hoping for. The discipline of Israel would continue through history to today and beyond.

Now, a couple of things to realize about this revelation. First, to Daniel what is being revealed is all in the future. The majority of the information recorded here is now history; it's already occurred.

Secondly, it is important to see this chapter in light of the 70 weeks of years at the conclusion of Chapter 9. The first 35 verses fit in the 69 weeks of years. They have already occurred. Then there is a pause before the final week, or a final 7-year period. We know this to be the 7-year tribulation period that the apostle John writes about in the book of Revelation.

Some of you might be confused about this pause. Why is there a pause? Well, this type of thing is not uncommon in Scripture. It is referred to as prophetic foreshortening.ⁱⁱ That is while the prophets could see things happening in the future, but they could not determine the sequence or timeline for those events. In other words, for them, the future was clearly fuzzy.

Now, what makes this chapter so incredible is the historical accuracy recorded in advance. In fact, one scholar said that there are 135 specific prophecies in the first 35 verses of this chapter that have already been fulfilled.ⁱⁱⁱ It has amazed even skeptics at the accuracy of this chapter.

So, with all that said, let's jump into our study. Verse 1 of Daniel 11. *"And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.* This is a verse that most scholars believe is a parenthetical statement tied to chapter 10, verse 21.^{iv} Before the angel lays out the vision, he tells us what he did for Daniel. He stood him up and strengthened him.

MESSAGE:

That is the backdrop. Now, let's look at the...

1) Fulfilled Prophecies.

We are going to see the details regarding the kingdoms of Persia, Greece, and the rivalry between the Northern and Southern kingdoms of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. Look at verse 2 of Daniel 11. *"And now I will show you the truth. Behold, **three more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them.** And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall **stir up all against the kingdom of Greece.***

Before we get into the weeds here, let me just say a couple things. 1) I don't have the time to go into all the historical happenings surrounding every single detail Daniel is given here. 2) If that kind of thing does interest you, you can download an outline that I put together on our church's website. Tomorrow, you can visit www.trinitytx.org/sermons. Click on the sermon title from today. Then, on the next screen you will have two download options. One will be my notes that I am preaching from and the other will be the detailed outline of all the historical happenings in this chapter.

Now, verse 2 tells us that there will be four kings arise to leadership in Persia following Cyrus. Remember, Daniel is currently serving Cyrus. The four that follow him, we know from historical writings, to be Cambyses [Kam Bus Us], Cyrus' son, then Pseudo-Smerdis, Daris I Hystaspes [Hay Stasp EEs], and then the fourth is Xerxes. For those of you familiar with the bible, Xerxes is the king mentioned in the book of Esther, who is the king that chooses Esther to be his wife. That will be vitally important in the deliverance of the Jews.

Then the angel tells Daniel that Xerxes would become far richer than the previous kings which we know to have been the case. And verse 2 also says that he will stir up against the kingdom of Greece. We know happened as well. He attacked Greece and lost. 150 years later, Greece would get revenge by capturing Persia.^v Remarkable the accuracy of God's prophecy.

Let's look at verses 3 and 4. *³ Then **a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and do as he wills.** ⁴ 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.***

We know that the Persian Empire was conquered by the Grecian Empire. So, the mighty king mentioned in verse 3 that dominates and does as he wills is Alexander the Great. We have further proof that this was him because his kingdom was divided into four kingdoms: toward the four winds of heaven, north, south, east and west. Those territories were divided among his four generals and not to his posterity, a big word for family. Alexander the Great's sons were murdered and so he did not have decedents to rise to leadership.^{vi}

Verses 5 and 6. *⁵ "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.** 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 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, and her attendants, he who fathered her, and he who supported her in those times.***

Now, from verse 5 through verse 20, we read a lot about the northern and southern kingdoms. Seleucus was the ruler over the northern kingdom and Ptolemy the southern. They are referred to North and South based upon their relation to Israel.^{vii}

[Show Map].^{viii} From this map you see how Jerusalem sits right in the middle of these two kingdoms and the conflict between these two kingdoms will have profound impacts on Israel. That small piece of real estate is still the most prized piece of real estate on the planet and many claim to have rights to it. We know, because of Scripture, that is God's promised land to the nation of Israel.

Verse 6 says that there would be an alliance made between the northern and southern kingdoms. When Ptolemy II Philadelphus ruled the southern kingdom and Antiochus II Theos ruled the northern kingdom, a treaty was made to promote peace. To seal the treaty, Ptolemy's daughter, Bernice, was given in marriage to Antiochus Theos. However, Antiochus was already married so he divorced his wife to marry Bernice. His first wife didn't like that much, and she wound up killing Bernice, her attendants, and her children, just like verse 6 said would happen.^{ix} Remember, this is not history for Daniel. This is future for him.

Now, for the sake of time, there is all this back and forth between these two kingdoms. Daniel records, with impeccable accuracy, the very details between the two kingdoms for what would span 200 years.

Again, if you want a detailed history, you can download the outline online. Fast forward in history to the rise of a king that would persecute the Jews. ²¹ *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.*

From the Northern kingdom, the Seleucid kingdom, arose a contemptible person. This is none other than Antiochus Epiphanes.^x And he obtained the throne by means of trickery as he was not the rightful heir. If you have been with us in our study through Daniel, that name is familiar. He is the little horn in Daniel's vision in chapter 8. His actions profoundly affected the Jews. And we talked about how he is a type of the Antichrist that is to come.

What he would do to the Jews is recorded in verses 29-31 of Daniel 11. And historical writings have confirmed every detail of this prophecy. Let's look at those verses.

²⁹ *“At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before. [Antiochus, in 169 B.C., invaded Egypt, the Ptolemaic kingdom, and that invasion resulted in Ptolemy VI Philometor being imprisoned. That led to an alliance being formed between the Southern kingdom and the up-and-coming nation of Rome.^{xi} In the next verse, we see Rome come to the Ptolemaic kingdom's rescue the second time Antiochus Epiphanes tried to invade Egypt.]*

³⁰ *For ships of Kittim [a fleet from Rome] shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action*

against the holy covenant. History records tell that Rome stopped the invasion. The commander of the Roman fleet then drew a circle around Antiochus and said, “Make your decision to retreat before you leave this circle or face the wrath of Rome.”^{xii} This humiliated Antiochus and he began his journey home. And where did he have to pass through to get home? Jerusalem. So, he took out his anger on the Jews, the people of the holy covenant. Look what he did.

He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. [In other words, there would be Jews that would turn their backs on God and help him]. ³¹ *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.* We talked about, in a previous message, all Antiochus did. He stopped Jewish religious observances, built and alter to Zeus in the temple, and desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on the alter and smearing swine broth all over the temple. He did many other things that would be labeled the abomination that makes desolate. Jesus would refer to this as the abomination of desolation.

So, this completes the section of this revelation to Daniel that are the prophecies that have been fulfilled. Again, this was future for Daniel, but God has seen to it that it would come to pass. This leads us to the second section of Daniel 11...

2) Unfulfilled Prophecy

I want to read verses 36 through 45 and then unpack it. And as I read, I want to encourage you to underline, highlight, or circle in your bible clues you pick up on regarding what is to come. Verse 36.

³⁶ *“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. ³⁷He shall pay no attention to the **gods of his fathers**, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for **he shall magnify himself above all.** ³⁸He shall honor the god of **fortresses** instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. ³⁹He shall deal with the strongest fortresses 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. ⁴⁰“At the time of the end, 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. ⁴¹He 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. ⁴²He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. ⁴³He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train. ⁴⁴But 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. ⁴⁵And 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.

The reason scholars believe this section of verses point to a future event is because of the inability to tie them to a historical event.^{xiii} With the detailed accuracy of verses 1-35, certainly what is contained here will come to pass.

Another reason that points to this not having been fulfilled is the context clue in verse 40. The phrase, “*At the time of the end,*” places this prophecy in the apocalyptic category,^{xiv} meaning the time of the end of the world.

So, if this refers to some future event, what is it referencing? These verses detail the rise and fall of who we know to be the Antichrist.^{xv} The future outlined by Daniel in the first 35 verses is clear and fulfilled. From verse 36 on, the future is clearly fuzzy. In other words, there are things we can gather for certain, and others are theory. I’m going to do my best to give you details regarding the coming Antichrist and draw some application points for us today.

Scripture is clear, in both the Old and New Testaments, that a seven-year period of great tribulation will one day come to the world. Jesus talked about his return being tied to that period of time. For Daniel, in the vision of the 70 weeks of years, the tribulation fits into the last week, or last 7 years. The key event that marks the beginning of the tribulation is a covenant made between Israel and the Antichrist.^{xvi} At that time, Jews will be able to rebuild the temple.

Now, there is debate as to when the rapture of the Church, mentioned in Revelation, will take place. The rapture is the event in which Jesus comes and takes believers to glory. Some believe it will be at the beginning of the 7-year

period. Others believe it will occur at the end of the tribulation. Regardless, 2 things are true. 1) Jesus is coming back and 2) the rise of the Antichrist will be a key indicator of that occurring.

Now, in verses 36-39, we get a description of this Antichrist and then in verses 40-45 we see what will happen to him. So, let’s first look at the description of the Antichrist as recorded in Daniel’s vision.

Throughout Scripture, the Antichrist is assigned 25 different names. Some of those names include, beast, the lawless one, the son of perdition, and the man of sin. For Daniel, he was the little horn with eyes and a mouth in chapter 7.

Verse 36 of Daniel 11 tells us that he will be very prideful. He will “*exalt himself and magnify himself above every god.*” He will also become very successful and amass military might and make alliances with other nations of military strength. This is the reference to honoring the god of fortresses in verse 38. We know that he will have a religious heritage, verse 37, but he will turn his back on that faith tradition. He will then invade other countries and eventually invade Israel. The mentioning of “the glorious land,” in verse 41 is reference to Israel. He will eventually set up his home base between the sea and the glorious holy mountain, probably Mt. Moriah. He will continue to conquer nations to the south including Egypt. This Antichrist will force people into submission by cutting off supplies to only those that have received the mark of the beast. This will be a time that is far worse than any other period in history. But there is hope.

Verse 45 talks about how he will eventually meet his match, the return of Jesus. In a great battle known as the battle of Armageddon in Revelation, Jesus will bring the Antichrist to his end. He is no match for Our Lord and Jesus will destroy him and ultimately sentence him and Satan to eternal doom in the lake of fire forever and ever amen!

Now, people often ask, who is this man, this Antichrist? Where will he come from? These are questions that we do not know. This is the part where the future is clearly fuzzy. All we know for certain is that he will come. Many have made suggestions as to who the Antichrist is, but no one knows, we will just have to read God’s Word, look for clues, and trust the stirring of the Holy Spirit. We will get into more of this next week in our study of Daniel 12.

APPLICATION:

For the time we have remaining, I want to mention a couple of application points from this message today. First, ...

1) Trust God's Sovereignty

The main thing this passage of Scripture reveals to us is the sovereignty of God. God knows all things. To Him the future is history. And the detail by which God reveals the future to Daniel is proof of that. God's specific revelation in prophecy and the historical occurrences of those prophecies shows us that God is moving all of history in one direction. That is the sovereignty of God.

Now, you and I, and everyone on the planet, are morally responsible for the decisions we make. God's sovereignty does not mean that we are puppets on a string. We are responsible for the decisions we make and even the decisions we do not make.

ILLUSTRATION: Cruise Ship^{xvii}

I heard an illustration that has helped me wrap my mind around this truth. I hope it will help you as well.

Let's say we are all on a cruise together. There are lots of people that go on a cruise at a given time. And if you've ever been on a cruise, you know there are a lot of options. That means there are a lot of decisions being made. There are choices in food, choices in activities, choices of relaxation, choices of locations, and the list goes on. The people on the ship are morally responsible for what they eat, what they drink, what they do, and how they behave.

Now, while all that is true, there is a captain of the ship that is carrying all these people, making all these decisions, to a certain location. It does not matter the choices that are being made on the ship, the captain determines the direction of the ship.

This is the picture of God's sovereignty. God is directing history to accomplish His purpose. That purpose is the establishment of His Kingdom forever in the New Heaven and New Earth that is to come.

This truth, beloved, ought to cause us to be able to perceive the events occurring around us and trust that God is ultimately accomplishing His purpose. And if you are in Christ, regardless of what may happen, your destiny is sealed with The Lord in Heaven forever. Trust God's sovereignty.

2) Get Ready

In 1996, Christian singer, Crystal Lewis, recorded a song that has never lost its relevance to me. In fact, the older I get the more meaning it has for me. The title of the song is, "Get Ready."^{xviii} In the song, the chorus pleads with listeners, quote, "People get ready, Jesus is coming, soon we'll be going home. People get ready, Jesus is coming, to take from the world His own."

She begins the song by saying, "Lord, I'm ready now. I'm waiting for your triumphant return. You're coming so soon. This world has nothing for me, so I find my peace and joy solely in You, only You."

Now, I don't know what motivated Crystal Lewis to record those words. But as I imagine, as Daniel is writing down the prophecy we just read, he prayed a similar prayer, expressing a desire for The Lord to come. The reason I believe that to be the case is because of what the Apostle John wrote in the closing verses of the book of Revelation. Chapter 22, verses 20 and 21. *²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! ²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.*

Why are they so eager for The Lord's return? Ever run into anyone that seems eager for Jesus to return? Why? Because they know the surpassing peace and joy of the presence of God. So much so, they desire it above everything else.

What about you? Are you ready? Now, I know that I would love more years here on earth. To see my kids grow up, and to know my grandkids. Sure, everyone wants that. But you know what? I'd be even more overjoyed to spend eternity with them forever in the presence of God.

So, the heart of this pastor is two-fold. I so desire the return of Jesus. The perfection that awaits His triumphant victory over the enemy once and for all. And I so desire you to know Him, too. While the future is clearly fuzzy, and I don't know what awaits us, I know one thing. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

CONCLUSION: Invite the Band to come back up.

As the band comes to lead us in a time of response, I want to ask you a question. Are you ready? Are you ready for what awaits us? Ready for Jesus to return?

Gospel – pray – respond

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: Travis Agnew, “Daniel [Series Overview]”, article published on travisagnew.org on August 13, 2020; Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary: Daniel*, B&H Publishing, Nashville, 1994; Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Resolute: OT Commentary on Daniel*, David C Cook Publishing, 2000; Gene Whithurst, “The Book of Daniel Commentary,” document sent to me via Gene; Troy Rackliffe, “Daniel part 12,” preached at Glade Community Church in Daniels, WV, October 2020; Troy Rackliffe, “Daniel part 13,” preached at Glade Community Church in Daniels, WV, November 2020; Mark Driscoll, “Kingdom Down #11: A Prophetic Sermon About the Future,” preached at Trinity Church in Arizona on March 22, 2020; Skip Heitzig, “I Dare You: Fight!,” taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque on Sunday, June 30, 2013; J.D. Greear, “Shining in Babylon: It’s All Part of the Plan,” taught at The Summit Church on Sunday, August 1, 2021; Dr. Robert Jeffress, Pathway to Victory Podcast, episodes: *The Invisible War parts 1 and 2*, accessed online at <https://ptv.org/series/courageous-living-in-a-pagan-world/>; Dr. Jack Graham, PowerPoint with Dr. Jack Graham, “Angels part 2,” preached at Harvest Bible Fellowship and posted on YouTube on January 14, 2018, accessed online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyDuQXheMzk>.

ⁱⁱ Terminology and definition taken from Pastor Skip Heitzig, “I Dare You: Rest!,” taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque on Sunday, July 14, 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ Donald Campbell, Precept Austin Daniel 11 Commentary. Accessed: https://www.preceptaustin.org/daniel_11_commentary2

^{iv} Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary: Daniel*, B&H Publishing, Nashville, 1994, page 289.

^v Cf. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.20ff.

^{vi} Miller, 292.

^{vii} Discussion regarding Israel being central to biblical geography is discussed by Gene Whithurst in his commentary on Daniel which was emailed to me.

^{viii} Picture of the map used was downloaded at: <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/15183/ptolemaic-egypt-c-240-bce/>

^{ix} Historical discussion on this event can be found in Miller’s commentary on Daniel referenced above.

^x Miller, 298.

^{xi} Miller, 299–300.

^{xii} Miller, 301.

^{xiii} Pointed out by Pastor Skip Heitzig in his sermon, “I Dare You: Rest!”

^{xiv} Miller, 305.

^{xv} Pointed out by Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Resolute: OT Commentary on Daniel*, David C Cook Publishing, page 169.

^{xvi} Ibid, 170.

^{xvii} Illustration was referenced in Mark Driscoll’s sermon mentioned above.

^{xviii} “People Get Ready... Jesus is Comin,’” performed by Crystal Lewis, copyright 1996, Metro One. Words by Brian Ray.