

Kings and Prophets 17-07-06

This is July the 6th, 2016. We continue our study of kings and prophets. We're in this fascinating section of the book of Daniel.

At least, I think it's fascinating. We get a window into the world above and the nature of the aliens that everybody thinks exist elsewhere in the universe. They really do, and these are they.

These are them. They are it. These are the... We call them the angels.

It's really a misnomer. Did you ever notice how they have ancient civilizations in North America and they call them the Clovis people and the this and the that? And they just make up these names. They don't know what the people called themselves.

We don't know what the angels call themselves, but I can promise you it's not angels. Angel being from anglos in Greek, which means messenger. Those are the ones that are detailed to communicate specific messages to specific people from God.

But there are other angels that do many other things, and that's why in this chapter that we have seen, Daniel chapter 10, they are called princes. Princes. But it would be confusing to say, Well, there's fools rush in where princes fear to tread.

It wouldn't connect. At any rate, we are going to resume at the end of chapter 10 and move into chapter 11 tonight. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, cultivate the presence and ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that the time that we spend will be used by God to equip us for every good work.

Shall we pray? Father, we're grateful for this time. We're grateful for the passage before us and the truth that you convey to us through it. We pray that you will be with us, both in the presentation and in the hearing, that despite our human limitations and the necessary distance that we have from the ancient day in which you first sent this truth to Daniel, that it will be ministered to our hearts in a way that is meaningful and helpful, that strengthens us and encourages us and orients us to your plan and purpose so that we can live lives that are pleasing in your sight and glorifying to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in his name. Amen. Okay, so let's just quickly plug ourselves back into the chronology here.

We had the Babylonian Empire and it came to an end when Gubaru came in under the water gate. One of the previous queens had had a pool dug there and they figured out that if they diverted the water, the water level would drop and they waded in about thigh deep under cover of darkness. This was the night of the handwriting on the wall and this was the Medo-Persian conquest of the Babylonian capital and thus the empire.

So that began the first year of Darius the Mede. Another name for Gubaru we think was Darius.

And so back in the previous chapter, chapter 9, it was the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus of the lineage of the Medes.

And we've seen him referenced a couple of times. But he is an older man. You remember we had a really interesting view from some historical sources of the fact that he was sort of an aging general.

This was really his finest hour, his greatest conquest. And Cyrus seems to have granted him the rulership of Babylon as a reward for being so cagey and figuring out this strategy of defeating them without having to knock the walls down and engage in a long siege. And so he seems to have been a good guy.

You remember the lion's den and all of that take place under his watch. But he does not last but about a year. And evidently he died.

So that when we come to chapter 10, it says in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia. I also figured out my confusion on the date here because I gave you two different wildly divergent years for the beginning of Cyrus's reign. And what didn't dawn on me is Cyrus became the king of the Persians a long time before he became the king of Babylon.

And so 536 is the time in which we are listening to Gabriel talk to Daniel. The third year of Cyrus. This is the third year of his kingship over Babylon.

About four years after the conquest. It was conquered in 539. This is Gubaru slash Darius coming in.

Darius rules for about a year. And this is in the third year of Cyrus. So Cyrus formally takes over Babylon after Gubaru, Darius moves off the scene.

And so this is 536 BC. So now if you think about it, why would Daniel be so interested? Because 70 years earlier it was what? 606, 605 BC. This is when he was taken captive.

And so looking at Jeremiah's 70 years, he would imagine, well this is the earliest Terminus ad Quam, if you will. The earliest where the 70 year prophecy could be fulfilled and we would be allowed to go back and so on. And what he doesn't realize at this point is that actually the rest for Jerusalem is going to begin in 586 and go down to about 516.

That's the 70 year span for the Sabbaths that were missed resulting in God's judgment. So anyway, we find ourselves in chapter 10. We're back in the chronology here, 536.

Third year of Cyrus. And we saw the angelic messenger come with this glowing aspect. It is so glorious that many have thought it is a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus.

I personally am convinced that it is not for reasons that become clear when you listen to this personage speak. I think this is Gabriel, but it's difficult after you have been moving in the

heavenly realms where there is light and glory and effulgence everywhere to come down and I imagine they have to come and sort of stand around behind trees and stuff and wait for the glory to wear off before they walk along and become angels that are visiting unawares type of thing. The ones that appeared to Abraham, they may have had to wait a while just to kind of like Moses' face to calm down.

Maybe not, but I imagine it that way. And so he appears and he has come in haste. He has come straight from the heavenly realms.

He has been delayed for three weeks, right? And so he comes evidently straight out of the heavenly realms to Daniel and he hasn't had a chance to fully cloak the heavenly glory that he is used to dwelling in. This is my thought. And God allows him to appear in that guise and to be communicated to us to give us an idea of the transcendent nature of the environment in which God and this higher angelic creation dwell.

So he has a body like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. You just really have to turn the amplitude down on appearance and speech coming from heaven down to earth. We are just a small, pale shadow of heavenly things.

So Daniel saw the vision and Daniel, despite all of his visions and his contact with the Lord and previous visitations from Gabriel and so on, is taken aback. He is weakened. This is overwhelming, I think you could safely say.

And he has to be strengthened as we saw several times. And so what you'll notice, if you just hold your Bible at arm's length and look at this, chapter 10, the entire chapter is nothing but introduction to chapter 11. The vision, the information that is given through the vision to Daniel from this angelic visitor Gabriel, all of chapter 10 is introductory to it.

Now how important a message is it? A, that it is delivered in person by an angel who has been sort of taken off the battlefield to come give it. And B, it's got 21 verses of introduction. And I think, wow, I'm rubbing my hands together, diving into chapter 11, and as I've studied it these past few weeks, I look at 11 and I think, well, I'm initially underwhelmed.

It's just ancient history, literally, to us. Looks like you're going to have some Persians tangling with some Egyptians, and then you're going to have some Greeks, and the Greeks are going to split up, and there's going to be a queen that gets involved, and she tries to make an alliance and it fails, and everything just kind of unravels. And I think, well, why this huge buildup, and then this sort of interesting but not exceptionally powerful revelation? And here's my suggestion.

Anytime you see something like that, that's when you really want to start paying attention, because all is not what it seems. If God gives an entire chapter a buildup for a message, there is something really tornado powerful, important in it. You don't spend a chapter building up to

caution, the Surgeon General has a warning.

I mean, it's a lot more than that. So, as we pick up here now in chapter 10 at the end, the one having, in verse 18, the likeness of a man, touched me and strengthened me, and he said, O man, greatly beloved, fear not, peace be to you, be strong, yes, be strong. So when he spoke to me, I was strengthened, and said, let my Lord speak, for you have strengthened me.

Now, how did he strengthen him? He spoke to him. What is this angel speaking? Is he coming up with stuff on his own? He's the landline, if you will, between heaven and earth. He is speaking the truth of God, right? Now, we're not told what he spoke, but I would suggest that he probably reviewed many fundamental truths that Daniel had learned as a believer in his life.

God in heaven loves you. He has a plan and purpose. He is pleased with your service and your faithfulness over these many years.

He is the God that delivered you from the mouth of the lion. He is the God that delivered your friends out of the fiery furnace. And it says he spoke to him, and I was suddenly strengthened.

What this means is he spoke to him over time. He gave him a Bible class, gave him a review, reminded him of truths that were in his soul, but he was having trouble accessing them because he was so overwhelmed. My first point of application is when we are overwhelmed, the fellowship that we have first and foremost with God himself through the Holy Spirit.

Remember Jesus said when the Spirit comes, he will not speak from himself. He will take of the things of me and convey them to you. He will talk to you.

He will speak to you and strengthen you with this truth. This is where we go for resources. This is where we go for strength.

This is where we go for renewal and encouragement and stabilizing influence. We have this as an anchor in our soul. But sometimes you don't seem to be able to find the line that you have tied to your anchor.

You've got an anchor down there somewhere, but my boat is flailing and I can't get secured to my anchor. This is what God the Holy Spirit does for us. In the Old Testament day, angels would do this.

And in both the Old Testament day and now, fellow believers do this. We speak the truth. How? Speak the truth to one another.

How? In love. O Daniel, man greatly beloved, you are loved. And I am here to speak God's truth to you.

It's easy to miss the fact that there was a Bible class in here. There was an encouragement session that appealed to the truth that Daniel knew. This is what strengthened him.

At the end of it, it could have taken 15 minutes, 20 minutes, I don't know how long it was, but there is time that passes here. And Daniel says, I'm ready now for the new information because you have reminded me and illuminated for me the foundation that it needs to sit on. Anytime we're going to get new information, we want to have our doctrinal foundation, our understanding of truth under our feet so that this will sit on it.

So again, when we get blindsided by things, when we're a little giddy with the speed at which the roller coaster has whipped us around a turn, it is the speaking of God's truth to us, whether internally through the Holy Spirit, externally in fellowship with other believers. It can be in church, it can be in Bible class, it can be a review of what we've heard before. Any place we go where the Word of God, which is alive and powerful, is found, it is what ministers truth and strength and encouragement to our souls.

So the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me and he said, peace be to you, be strong, be strong. When he basically had finished speaking to me, when he had spoken to me with many like and encouraging words, I was strengthened. I said, let my Lord speak for you have strengthened me.

So he said, do you know why I have come to you? And you can again get the idea that this is kind of the finish up of a review because you already told him why he came but now there's been an interlude and he says, okay, back to the reason I came. Do you remember now I was going to come here and give you a message? He wouldn't need to say this if there hadn't been a long interlude between. I must return to fight with the prince of Persia and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come.

But I will tell you what is noted in the scripture of truth. No one upholds me against these except Michael, your prince. I will tell you what is noted in the scripture of truth.

Now, what is he talking about? Scripture of truth. Is this the law of Moses? What would scripture have been in our understanding of the word in this day? You've got scrolls. They've got Jeremiah's letter.

They've got the books of Moses. They've got David's Psalms. But they didn't carry it around as a collected Bible.

These scrolls, to the extent that they existed, were maintained by the priests and an early version of what would become the scribes. But when he says this is recorded in the scripture of truth, I'm going to tell you what's in it. Do you think Daniel is not already, especially at his age, pretty well acquainted with what exists by way of written revelation from God? What is the scripture of truth? And why is it referenced here? There are a lot of writings referred to in the Bible.

We have the book of the living. We have the book of life. We have sometimes the Lamb's book of life.

Jesus said, when the disciples came back and said, we've been able to heal the sick and cast out demons. Jesus told them, don't rejoice over that. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

So we know that there are records. There is writing in heaven. And this particular scripture of truth, this writing of truth is evidently, from the context here, the decrees of God in terms of what is going to happen.

Everything in chapter 11, when it says there's going to be a king of the south and at the end of some years this is going to happen and a branch is going to come out from this and this one is going to do this one in and this one is going to take his place and all of that. All of this is in the scripture of truth and it hasn't happened yet. So when you say, as goes the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, so goes the believer in the New Testament.

If the environment surrounding Israel has been planned and has been laid out and God is either going to allow or He is going to cause various things in the situation for Israel. God is involved. And evidently the angels are involved.

And it has been figured out what will happen and what will not happen, who will be in power and who will not, who will rise, who will fall, who will succeed, who will fail, who will be blessed, who will be judged. This has been written in heaven in advance. In advance.

He doesn't say, O Daniel, all the details of your life have been written in advance. He doesn't say your choices have been foreordained or predetermined. What does He say? The ungodly, unbelieving, goyim, external affairs, God is really only interested in His people.

The nations that surround Israel are stage props. They are wallpaper. They are furniture around which the people of God will move.

Sometimes they sit on it. Sometimes it falls on them. But God isn't shy about dictating what will happen to Gentile nations.

And the reason He dictates it all, notice He doesn't say, by the way, there are a bunch of ancient civilizations in the continents of North and South America and I've also decreed what's going to happen to them. Why are these nations, why is Persia and Egypt and Greece that we're going to see in the last part of chapter 11, why are they written in the scripture of truth? They touch the people of God. They impinge on the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And because they come in contact with God's people, their fate is in God's hands and before God's face. And God writes it down and He says, this far and no farther. I will allow you to be an instrument of my vengeance.

The bitter and hasty Assyrian is going to come and he's going to be the rod of God's anger and the staff of His indignation. But He uses the whole entire Assyrian empire like a big stick. And He sums them up as, that Assyrian empire, Sargon and all those guys, they're just a stick that I use on my people.

So by way of transfer, if you look at the analogous situation, God does not allow anything to touch us that isn't written in His scripture of truth. He saw it ahead of time. Look at the scripture of truth.

The angels are not up there. There's a whole school of theology that says that God and the angels are reacting. That they're moving along in time like us and they're just really, really smart and they're good at extemporaneous solutions and quick responses.

They're good at handling the unexpected but that He doesn't actually know what's happening. And this is nonsense. The scripture of truth goes forward and this is why we talked last week about the fact that this particular angel is dealing with the kings of Persia back in chapter 10 verse 13.

And those kings are going to be mentioned in chapter 11 and it's kings plural. And we don't know how this works. Scripture doesn't say too much about it because we're just incapable of understanding it.

But apparently, this is how I understand it. As this scripture of truth is being written, looking ahead into the future, I don't know if it is argument or if it is actual conflict involved in setting it down, in getting it written. And to determine the outcome of all of the kings of Persia is in the hands of this angel and others.

The fate of the Greek Empire, the fate of the four empires that are going to succeed Alexander, seems to have been in conflict. There is a debate. This isn't angels fighting behind the king's throne and I'm going to sit on his shoulder and whisper in his ear.

No, you're not. Yes, I am. And they duke it out in the throne room.

This is at some level of the forward progress of human history that's just beyond our understanding. What scripture does tell us is there is an active and ongoing struggle having to do with the course of human history. Here it is these nations and these empires.

And he says back in chapter 10 that I would have been here sooner, but I was opposed. When you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before God, back in verse 12, your words were heard. I have come because of your words, but the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me 21 days.

And again, they are outside of time, but they are also in time. Can God's angels forestall and resist and prevent demonic oppression and demonic activity in the time continuum in which we live? Yes, they can. Can demons enter into this and influence people and perhaps indwell individuals as they did particularly in the days of the Lord Jesus? Yes, they can.

And so there is a time element. It takes 21 earth days before this conflict is resolved. But Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me, which made me superfluous there, with the kings of Persia.

He took that over and that left me free to come talk to you. Now, let me just give you one other thing here because we're moving into chapter 11 now. Because he says at the end of chapter 10, now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia.

In other words, Michael is holding the fort while he comes and does this special duty. He's on watch with the Persian Empire. And he's been battling the opposition, the demonic influences on the kings of Persia.

But he's been relieved. He became superfluous. So, earthquake! So he became superfluous and can come give this message.

And then he's going to go back. And that's what he says. I'll go back and then the prince of Greece will come.

And that is future in time. But he says the prince of Greece will come. And he acts as though this is in the near term for him.

But it's, you know, decades if not centuries ahead for human beings. Now, chapter 11. All of that is necessary so that we can get verse 1 here.

Also, in the first year of Darius the Mede, this is still the angel talking, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him. What's he talking about? Persian Empire. He's the angel.

And notice it is a single angel. If he's not there, God has to send Michael to stand in his place. And actually, it's kind of like, well, the boss has to fill in today at the sales desk.

Or, you know, the owner of the business has to go down on the shop floor and run one of the machines because that employee had to go do jury duty or whatever. You know, this is a higher up that is sent down. It's as though he's well qualified.

Maybe he did this at some time in the past or in another venue, and he's moved up. But in a pinch, he can come down and fill in for somebody that God needs to do something else. God wants to send this angel to Daniel so he's relieved.

But he says, by the way, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him. Who does he deal with? Kings, plural, of Persia. What happened in the first year of Darius the Mede? Flip the page back to Daniel chapter 9. In the first year of Darius the Mede, I set my face toward the Lord God to make a request.

Remember that? What else happened in the first year of Darius the Mede, the only year of Darius the Mede? What happened that year? Who got thrown in the lion's den? And who strengthened the king during that time? This angel. Why? Because he's in contact with God's man, with Daniel. So you can see that this is a continuing mission that extends into the past and extends into the future.

In almost the same breath, he mentions that the prince of Greece is coming, and by the way, I

strengthened Darius in the first year of his reign. So in chapter 11 now, let's just go forward. In the first year of Darius the Mede, I, Eve and I stood up to confirm and strengthen him.

Now I will tell you the truth. We would expect an angel from God to tell the truth. What kind of truth is he talking about here? This is from the writing of truth, and this is not moral truth.

This isn't timeless truths of the universe, laws of physics or whatever. This is specifically, this is what has been determined for the course of the nations that impinge upon and surround God's people. This, it isn't just, truth is not the best translation here in English, because we always think, well, it's some sort of an abstraction.

He says, I'm going to tell you what's been written down for the near future. This has been written, so let it be written, so let it be done. That's how it's going to happen.

Written in heaven, happens on earth. So he says, look now, behold, three more kings will arise in Persia. Now how does he know this? He works with the kings, plural, right? Remember verse 13 of the last chapter.

He already sees these kings. He's already working out the influences and the circumstances and what does and doesn't happen, whether it's weather, whether it's allies, whether it's opponents and foes. The angels are busy working out the details under God's direction of what does and doesn't happen to the kings of Persia because of their contact with God's people.

It's a big operation. This is a huge thing. God's not up there just handling single requests that come in in prayer ad hoc or on the fly.

There has been a plan and purpose of God that goes to eternity past. People's names were written in the book before the foundation of the world from our perspective. So we are being impressed with this.

We are being reminded of it. We're being lifted up to try to grasp it here. So three more kings will arise in Persia and the fourth will be far richer than them all.

By his strength, through his riches, he will stir up all against the realm of Greece. Then a mighty king will arise who will rule with great dominion and do according to his will. And when he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and divided toward the four winds.

This great king we know in retrospect is Alexander the Great. That's why the prince of Greece is mentioned. This is Alexander.

When he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven. And you remember his four generals take over. You've got Ptolemy down in Egypt.

You've got Seleucus who is by far the strongest. He has something like 72 sub-kingdoms in his quarter of Alexander's empire. And the Seleucids are named for him.

And they call him Seleucus Nicanor. Nicanor means victor. And so you've got these four splits, if you will, that descend from that.

But none among his posterity or according to his dominion with which he ruled. His successors won't come from his own body. And if you've ever read the biography of Alexander, I don't have time to go into it in detail.

But when he died, he had sons and he had a wife. His mother killed his two sons because she wanted power. And it's worse than Peyton Place because when these people get mad at each other, people die.

Heads roll. And so his whole family was slain and he was left without issue. And so these generals took over.

Then you go on down and we'll just read this very quickly. The king of the south shall become strong as well as one of his princes. He will gain power over him and have dominion.

His dominion will be a great dominion. This is Seleucus. At the end of some years they will join forces for the daughter of the king of the south shall go to the king of the north to make an agreement.

This is one of the Ptolemies. One of these queens is going to go up there and try to cement a relationship through marriage but it's going to fail. And they wind up getting at odds with each other.

They'll be given up with those who brought her. All of this is just gobbledygook to me. And was probably gobbledygook to Daniel.

So why is it here? After this big full chapter introduction, why is it here? No names are given in advance but the movements, the political and military movements are detailed. So what does this tell us? If we're like Daniel or we're like other people who might not have had access to a history book and detailed accounts of what really happened, what would this tell us in Scripture? If I handed you a blue book and said, okay, make an application from Daniel 11, you know, 3 through 9. And all you've got are the details of these people coming and going and one rising and the other falling and this, that and the other happening. It's really important, we know.

So what is the importance of it? Remember the context. Remember the introduction. What was emphasized here? I have come to tell you, and it took me three weeks to hack through opposition to do so, what is written in the Scripture of truth.

This is written. Nothing will change it. There's not going to be three successors to Alexander.

There's not going to be four more kings of Persia. This is what has been written. It is fixed in heaven.

This is one of the verses you have in the Psalms. Thy word, O Lord, is fixed in heaven. And the Hebrew verb there is natsav.

And it means it's in bedrock. It is immovable. It's unshakable and unchangeable.

There may be conflict surrounding the implementation. There may be conflict surrounding getting it written. But what is written in the Scripture of truth is infallible.

It is going to happen. And God went to this trouble for his people Israel. What about the special people that belong to the Lord Jesus? Those who have been baptized into his body, who are God the Father's gift to him as a crown of victory for his work on the cross.

Remember Jesus says all that the Father has given me will come to me. And of those you have given me I have lost none except Judas. But remember that he is perfecting a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

We're a special group, special in the heart of God, special to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the head. We are the body.

We have an even closer and stronger relationship through God the Holy Spirit to God than the people of Israel ever had. They're going to catch up in the Millennial Kingdom. But if God goes to this length, here's my point.

Here's I think the point of this passage. If God goes to this length, angels are fighting over it. Scripture in heaven is being written about it.

And it is a certitude. And it is known on high. And it is being effected with an E. Effected.

It is being brought to pass. What do we have to worry about? Remember when Paul says I'm convinced that neither life nor death, you know, there's nothing that can separate us from the love of God. Things in heaven, things on earth, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

We're held in His hands. Any circumstance that we face, any challenge that overtakes us, any hill we have to climb, any burden we have to bear, any thing that we have to navigate is known beforehand. Planned out.

Super intended. Known not only to God, but known to His angels. Known to the Holy Spirit.

Known to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a super set of knowledge surrounding God's people who are actively living their lives on this earth that is out on the table for an awful lot of attention to be paid in heaven. Jesus alluded to this when He said you better be careful about how you treat the little ones because their angels constantly... And what an odd way to put it.

He doesn't say they've all got guardian angels. He said their angels behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. Remember that? It's in a couple of the Gospels.

He says woe to him who causes one of these little ones to stumble. It would be better if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea. Their angels behold the face of my Father.

There is a counsel. There's a heavenly counsel. It's referred to in the first two chapters of Job.

It is a much bigger theater and a much bigger operation and a much greater effort is involved than we tend to give credit. And what a wonderful privilege and what a blessing to have the standing that we have because of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are valuable in God's sight the way the nation of Israel was valuable in his sight.

We are superintended and watched over. If you want to talk about guardian angels, this is your strongest evidence on the analogy of the princes that are assigned to the nations. But whether it is an individual unfortunate angel that got assigned to me or whether there are angels who are tasked with us in groups or by category or whatever it is, there is angelic attention that is given to us.

Skip down here now because I can give you the details of how this played out in history, but it's just history. Kings rose, kings fell. Alexander came and went.

His generals came and went. But when you get down to verse 14, in those times, many shall rise up against the king of the south. These are the Ptolemies.

This is Egypt. Also, violent men of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision, but they shall fall. These are the kinds of details embedded in the historical sequence that matter.

Men from among your people, there are going to be people on earth who are going to rise up and be violent. These are your Hitlers. These are your Pol Pots and your Ho Chi Minhs and your Stalins who are very powerful and very violent and affect huge numbers of people, but they are under observation.

In some cases, they are allowed to take out God's people, and in other cases, they are not. The message that you get as you read through this is God knows ahead of time in detail what is going to happen, and He has made provision for His people in detail, by name. There's no slack, there's no slop, there's no manufacturer's tolerance in it.

It's perfect provision. If you skip down to verse 20, there shall arise one who imposes taxes on the glorious kingdom, but within a few days he shall be destroyed, not in anger or in battle. In his place shall arise a vile person.

So you start out with one who imposes taxes, and you think, well, that's a burden, that's a heavy load, and then he's taken out, and people are going to say, God has delivered us from the one who taxes us, the one who takes our resources in perhaps an unfair manner, but he's going to be replaced by somebody even worse. What does this tell us? As a general principle, often we

see this happen. We have a little thing, and then it seems to be removed, and then we have a worse thing.

What is our tendency? Discouragement? Scratching our heads and saying, Lord, what are you up to? God is telling His people ahead of time, look, things are going to seem good, and then they're going to go bad, and then they're going to improve a little bit, and then they're going to get worse, and then there is going to be a rise and fall in circumstance. Our tendency is to say, Lord, are you asleep? Are you paying attention down here? The purpose of this account is to tell us, yes, He is, and He knows it ahead of time, and it has been written in the Scripture of truth to happen just this way. So, we have our New Testament Scriptures that say, don't be surprised at the fiery trial you face.

Why shouldn't we be surprised if we undergo a fiery trial? Scriptures like this tell us it is part of the plan. It doesn't make sense to us. We have difficulty even understanding the context in which the plan is formed, much less why the plan is and what the plan is, but God says, this is where your faith comes in.

Trust that it is written in heaven and is supposed to happen this way, and there is provision for us in it. Notice that the people of God historically have survived all of this. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have never departed the face of the earth.

They've had their ups and had their downs, but even in their days of faithlessness and apathy, even in the modern day when there is only a very small Messianic Jewish presence and most Israelis and most Jewish people are not Christians, they are still preserved because they are a link. They are a pipe down to the generation that is going to provide the 144,000 servants of God, and that's their purpose. God has a purpose for them even in their unbelief.

Branches were broken off in unbelief. There's a purpose in that. There's room on the trunk now to graft in the wild branch.

If there had never been a branch to be broken off, if God had not ever allowed that many unbelieving Israelites, where would the grafted branches fit is the idea. God has a purpose even in things that seem counterintuitive to us. I look at them all and think, all of these people, and I'm pretty sure only a fraction of them have any interest in God.

Why does God let so many of us be born? We're just swarming the earth like ants. Why? Does God need all of these? Yes, He does. It is for the same reason that there are so many galaxies in the universe.

You think, if there really were a God and He was setting up the earth and people, well there would just be the solar system and the earth and maybe a planet or two, but why the infinitude of space and all these other galaxies? They are necessary. They were factories to produce the elements. They stabilize the forces of gravity and the laws of physics and the speed of light and all the rest of it we use as reference from these distant things.

They are there because they're part of God's purpose for us here on this earth. Same thing with all of the galaxies of people on the planet. They are context.

They are background. They produce noise and static. They generate circumstances.

They provide background, just as this does here, and it is all a part of God's plan. So, again, more details all the way down and you find out that those who go the way of the world, who try to climb on the bandwagon of these kings, down in verse 26, those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him, his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. The guy that seems invincible and unconquerable and on top of the world, people who come in to feed off of his prosperity are going to end up destroying him.

The people that are attracted to him are going to tear him down. And this, again, is a pattern. All of these things, if we took the time to go through this, each of the details in here fits a pattern that you can observe historically and observe in the present day.

And I wish we had time to look at it in detail, but at the end of the He shall return to his land with great riches. His heart will be moved against the Holy Covenant. He shall do damage and then return to his own land.

You notice again, he is only of interest because he impinges on the Holy Covenant. Then in 29, at the appointed time, notice, at the appointed time, he shall return. It's not a time of his choosing, it is a time of God's choosing.

At the appointed time, he will return and go toward the south. It shall not be like the former or the latter. Ships from Cyprus will come against him.

You get the idea that it's sort of like a cosmic game of strategy and God's angels and God himself on one side have already established fortifications. They have strategies. They know what the enemy is going to do.

He's going to faint here and attack here. I'm going to put a distraction here and I'm going to have my main force over here. I'm going to use the strategy of the indirect approach.

All of this is not known in heaven and it's strategy way above our heads. But there are appointed times and God already knows decades in advance that these ships are going to come from Cyprus. In verse 31, forces shall be mustered by him and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress.

They shall take away the daily sacrifice and place there the abomination of desolation. Daniel, you and your people need to know that no matter how hard you try and how much Nehemiah and Ezra do and how much Herod helps and in building a temple it's going to be destroyed. And when the next temple is built another guy is going to come and he's going to knock it down and he's going to set up an abomination and a desolation.

It's fixed. It is going to happen. There are going to be setbacks.

There are going to be desecrations and desolations. They are appointed. These are the fixed elements in our landscape.

They are mountains that do not move. If you're going to drive from here to Arizona, I found out here recently, you have to go through mountains. You have to go down into canyons.

There are only certain roads that will take you there. There are only certain passes. They are fixed elements.

Wouldn't it be nice if you didn't have to burn extra gasoline climbing the hills? If you didn't have to burn your brakes going down steep inclines? But they are fixed. And wouldn't it be nice if it was always 72 degrees and it wasn't 115 degrees at Camp Wilson out in the middle of the Mojave Desert? But sometimes it is. It is a part of a larger thing God is doing and he equips us to get through it.

That's the big idea. That's why the big buildup. Why does the angel let Daniel know the hardship that he had and the struggles that he goes through and that there is a scripture of truth? To give us confidence.

To build up our faith. To strengthen us. This word should make us strong.

It should stand us on our feet. We don't have to be beaten down by things that are overwhelming. We think the heavenly machinations are too much for me.

God's plan has put me in a place that's too hard. No it's not. Because built into it is that hand on the shoulder and that word that is spoken to stand us on our feet and give us the strength to function and fulfill our part of God's plan.

We are elements in other people's lives. God uses us in ways we will not know until we get to glory. As examples.

As one who delivers a word fitly spoken like an apple of gold and a picture of silver. You don't know what your actions and what your words and what your example contribute. You just know that they do because God tells us they do.

It's all written in the scripture of truth. At the appointed time. Look at verse 32.

Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery but the people who know their God shall be strong. Circle that if you want one theme verse out of chapter 11. People who know their God will be strong.

All of this detail. I'm amazed that Daniel remembered it all. He wrote this all down.

Now what was it that the, how many kings were they going to be again? Who was it that was

going to go attack in the south? How many, was it troops from Cyprus or ships from Cyprus? He got it all down. But this is the key. Those who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits.

You notice great exploits is in italics. They will be strong and they will function. It may not necessarily be a great exploit.

It depends on what your definition of a great exploit is. I think staying cheerful when you feel terrible and everything suggests that you ought to be depressed, that's a great exploit. But there's nothing about exploits.

This says you will be strong and carry on. You will carry on. You will carry out whatever it is God has assigned you to do.

Maybe a small exploit. Those who are faithful in that which is least are going to be entrusted with great things. Those are the people who understand shall instruct many.

This is the heart of it now. You don't get anything else out of chapter 11. This is the heart.

The angel comes and tells Daniel a lot of flack is going to hit. A lot of bugs are going to splatter on the windshield. There's going to be a lot of opposition and a lot of discouraging, depressing circumstances for the people of God.

But those who know their God are going to be strong and keep on plugging. That would be my translation of the Hebrew. And those are the people who understand will instruct many.

Others are going to learn. The scripture of truth that's been shared with Daniel is going to be shared with others. Speaking the truth to one another in love.

Instructing many. This implies that the people of God who care about the things of God are going to get together and talk. They will sometimes fall by the sword and by the flame.

You look at the martyrs. When I was a little kid and first saw Fox's Book of Martyrs, it scared me to death. I'm not sure being a Christian is all that great if you're going to get impaled and boiled and burnt up with tar and all of the awful things that happened to the martyrs.

There were a lot of faithful believers that were fed to the lions in the first few Christian centuries. But they still are instructed. They still are strong.

They still carry on, carry out. When they fall they shall be added with a little help but many shall join with them by intrigue. Some of the understanding shall fall to refine them, purify them and make them white until the time of the end.

Looking toward the time of the end. Some of us can pay the ultimate price. All of us are going to die sooner or later.

Some of these are going to fall under difficult circumstances. Should the rest of us be discouraged? Should we be depressed? Should we give up? Should we quit? God tells us this is the ultimate refining. This prepares them for service at and after the time of the end.

They're going to be purified and made white and this is the only way to do it. King is going to do to his own will. We're talking about now the 70th week of Daniel actually.

He'll regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women or regard any God. This makes some people think, verse 37, makes some people think that the Antichrist may actually be of Jewish extraction. What would be more of a substitute Christ than one who can claim Jewish ancestry? Whether he actually has it or not.

But he says he will not regard the God of his fathers. Could be a Muslim, could be a son of Abraham by some other means as they call themselves. In any case, he is Godless.

He will honor a God of fortresses and a God who his fathers did not know he will honor with gold and silver. This could be the God of technology. This could be the God of chips in your head.

I don't know what it will be. He will act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign God which he will acknowledge. Advance his glory.

He will cause them to rule over many and divide the land for gain. Then you got more details there in verse 40 through 45. But the heart of it is what I pointed out to you.

Verse 32, those who do wickedly get corrupted by flattery, appeals to their vanity. You see this all around us today. But the people who know their God will be strong and carry on.

Those are the people who understand will instruct many. Even if they fall by the sword and the flame, by captivity and plundering, when they fall they will be aided with a little help. Many will join with them by intrigue.

They're going to have to be careful. Even when somebody comes to help, they're going to have to really watch their step. There's going to be many false professors, if you will.

You get the idea this might be infiltrators. You know how they will try to infiltrate gangs. They'll infiltrate organized crime.

Well, the Antichrist is going to try to infiltrate communities of believers. And this is a warning that they're going to have to be careful that some are going to join them by intrigue and try to break them up. And through that deception and through that betrayal some are going to fall.

He says it's going to happen. Just brace yourself. Don't be surprised.

Don't be thrown off. Some of understanding will fall. But this will refine them, purify them, and make them white until the time of the end because it is still for the appointed time.

There is an appointed time when all of this will matter. All of this will be vindicated and justified. And we have to take that on faith.

I can't and don't intend to parse all of the details of the near and far history here. That's the lesson. That's the reason angels delivered it to Daniel.

That's the reason there's a whole chapter of introduction. That's the reason Daniel had to be strengthened three times to cope with it. It's a tough message that hard times will come.

In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, Jesus said. I have overcome the world. It is written in the scripture of truth.

And it's up to us to be strong in the faith, to be firm to the end, like the church in Smyrna, Jesus encouraged them. You're going to have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death.

What do they get? The crown of life. Death is short term. The crown of life is eternal.

You have that thing forever. And all of the other wonderful overcomer gifts, they are eternal. They never fade away.

Anything we try to hang on to in this life is ephemeral. Go to the antique store. Oh my gosh.

Antique stores, I like going to them. It's one of the most depressing things. Everything you look at used to belong to somebody and was elsewhere.

They bought it. They loved it. They used it.

And now it's off hoping somebody else will find it and use it and like it. But most of it won't. It's past its prime.

It's just very depressing to me. It just reminds me of the inevitable decrepitude that happens to everything in this world. It's entropy.

But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. And this ought to be an encouragement to us that no testing befalls us but such as is common to man and in every one of them there is provision, there is strength, there is help. And Daniel stands on his feet, gets this message and preserves it for his people and for us.

Well we're going to pick up at Daniel chapter 12 next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father we thank you that you have seen fit to include us.

We seem so small and insignificant in the face of these large events and eternal things and yet we're precious in your sight. We've been redeemed with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ which is far more valuable than any treasure we could imagine. And we thank you for that.

We thank you for the provision that you have made with your Holy Spirit to preserve in us and help us to hold on to and apply these truths. We pray that as we seek to live a life that is

pleasing in your sight that these things will be a source of encouragement and strength and guidance. That we can speak the truth to one another and be an encouragement that you will activate the spiritual gifts that you've given to each one of us so that we can build up the body of Christ in an effective way that we can bear that fruit of the Spirit that reflects the glory of your Son the Lord Jesus.

We pray these things in his name. Amen.