

## November 1

**Scriptures:** Read Daniel 11 & 12

**Key Verse:** “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” (Daniel 12:3)

### Overview

Chapter 11 continues with the words of the angel Gabriel. He makes it understood that he was a strengthening force behind the success of Darius, who conquered Babylon with the army of the Medes and Persians (11:1). A prophecy is made of the great fourth ruler of Persia, Xerxes, known in the book of Esther as Ahasuerus (486-464 B.C.). His wars against Greece greatly angered them and caused them to ready themselves for stronger warfare (11:2). The great military leader, Alexander the Great, arose to gain dominion for Greece, but when he reached the climax of his reign, he died, and his kingdom was broken up into four divisions under the rule of his four generals. His two sons were murdered, so he had no posterity to inherit his dominion (11:3-4).

The prophecy continues by focusing upon the many conflicts between the two prominent divisions of Alexander's broken empire: (1) the division of the south (Egypt) under Ptolemy I, named Soter, who established the long dynasty of the Ptolemies, and (2) the division of the north (Syria) under Seleucus I, named Nicator, who began the long line of rulers in the Seleucid dynasty. In their struggle for power, the little country of Palestine was caught in the middle, and the two powers continually vied for control over it. The prophecies in this chapter do not comprise a complete history, but they give many predictions that were remarkably fulfilled centuries after Daniel recorded them.

The main ruler with whom this prophecy is concerned is the one who slyly and deceitfully took control over the North. He was the “vile person” (11:21) named Antiochus Epiphanes, of whom Daniel had earlier prophesied (8:9-14, 23-25). This wicked man with his evil doings foreshadowes the wickedness of the coming Antichrist. Epiphanes tried to Hellenize the Jews (make them like Greeks), and to some degree he succeeded. Many Jews followed him and were rewarded by him, and yet in so doing they forsook their covenant with God (11:30).

After Epiphanes had made an unsuccessful campaign against the south, because of the intervention of Roman navy, he took his frustrations out on the faithful Jews and the Temple of God by committing “the abomination of desolation” (11:30-31), in which he defiled the Temple by offering a pig upon the altar and erecting an idol of Zeus. As Daniel prophesied, those who remained true to the faith would be sorely persecuted and killed, yet they would be “the people who know their God” and who could hold up their heads without shame, for they will “firmly resist him” (11:32, NIV).

During this time of tribulation, the resistance movement against the Hellenic domination was made up of those who knew God and were wise. They were separatists, called the “Hasidim” (the righteous), from whom sprang the Pharisees (“separated ones”) of the New Testament. Many of them hid themselves and received help from courageous Mattathias Maccabeus and his

sons. Those who were not totally dedicated to the cause fell away, but for others, the persecution served to purge and purify them. These ones were heroes of faith who will, at the appointed time, be resurrected and share in the glorious coming Messianic kingdom (11:34-35; cf. Heb. 11:35-40).

Starting at 11:36, Daniel's prophecy jumps much further into the future and deals with another vile and willful king whom Epiphanes typified — the Antichrist of the end-times. He shall exalt himself to divinity and speak blasphemy against the true God (11:36-37; cf. 2 Thess. 2:3-4). He will have no concern or regard for God or for "the desire of women", which Jewish tradition says refers to the Messiah, whom every Jewish girl wished to mother. As well as worshipping himself, he will worship and glorify military power (11:38-39). "At the time of the end" (i.e. of the tribulation), nations will come against him, but he will overpower them. Some people, however, will escape his advances. His great power will be only temporary, until God's wrath is poured out upon the earth; this will be a time of unparalleled trouble (11:36b, 12:1; Matt. 24:21-22), yet the archangel Michael will be present to strengthen God's people (12:1).

At the time God has purposed (in the last half of Daniel's seventieth week, 9:27; 12:7, 11), He will deliver all those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Christ's second coming), and for those who have died in the faith, there will be an immediate resurrection to a new and spiritual body (Rev. 20:4, 6). As Daniel indicates, there are two resurrections: "some to everlasting life" and "some to shame and everlasting contempt" (12:2). According to Revelation 20:5a, all those whose names are not in the Book of Life will be resurrected after the Millennium to face judgment, eternal shame, and the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15). What a strong warning to repent of sin and serve the living God! Daniel's prophecy also gives consolation to the persecuted believers, for it predicts the rewards of the faithful who are wise in being good examples and in sharing the Lord Jesus; by doing this, others would come to know Jesus and be numbered among the righteous (12:3; cf. James 5:19-20; 1 Pet. 5:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:5; 1 Thess. 2:19; Prov. 11:30).

Daniel was ordered to preserve and protect his writings, likely in a sealed earthen vessel (cf. Jer. 32:14) that he would leave to trustworthy Jews, so that we today, in this age of mobility and knowledge, might benefit from them (12:4). Even though Daniel received the visions and a partial interpretation, he still confessed his lack of understanding (12:8). Although we have had a fuller revelation of God in the New Testament, there is still much prophecy that remains a mystery. Like Daniel, no one can claim to be a prophecy expert until prophecy becomes history (cf. John 2:22). Just as Daniel is exhorted, we too must keep on trusting and waiting upon the Lord for our promised blessed hope (12:12-13; cf. Titus 2:11-13).

## **Prayer**

Lord, we praise 'You for the provision that You have made for us to be reconciled to You. By repenting, receiving, and accepting the cleansing provided through the blood of Jesus Christ, our names are written in the Book of life. Help us to share this good news with others.