

Oughtness

Some readers of apocalyptic parts of the Bible are drawn to them for their otherness. But most of all, we should be drawn to them for their oughtness.

I am convinced that one of the reasons God gave us this kind of literature is because its images can make deep impressions and move our affections in ways that other types of writing do not. We should not read Daniel to feel pleased if we understand some of it; we should read it looking for how we ought to think and live.

Read Daniel 11 v 2-20

We need another quick history lesson! Verse 2 describes an era of Persian power; verse 3 is probably referring to Alexander the Great, who was succeeded by four rulers over various parts of his empire (v 4). The “king of the South” (v 5) is probably one of them: Ptolemy, who ruled Egypt; and Seleucus and his heirs are the “king of the north” (v 6). One of his heirs, Antiochus III (who is different from Antiochus Epiphanes!), is described in verses 11-19, with a short-lived successor discussed in verse 20.

But of course what mattered most to Daniel and his first readers was: what does this mean for Israel?

- ❓ *What is revealed about that in:*
 - v 14? • v 16?
- ❓ *How will this powerful, oppressive ruler end up (v 19)?*

What is the “ought” here? God’s people ought to keep their faith through trials, knowing God will see them through, and accept God will deliver them in his own way and his own timing; they cannot speed it up.

Apply

The same is true for us as believers today.

- ❓ *How does this encourage and challenge your expectations for your future?*

Read Daniel 11 v 21-35

This ruler is almost certainly Antiochus Epiphanes, whom we have met before. Again, we see how awful life will be for God’s people under his power.

- ❓ *What will happen to some of those who call themselves God’s people (v 32)?*
- ❓ *What will those who truly “know their God” do (v 32)?*
- ❓ *What will happen to the “wise”—ie: the true people of God (v 33, 35)?*

Again, we see that God brings his people through, even using their stumbles for their good. Here is another ought: God’s people ought to endure, teach others, and look for growth when they stumble.

Apply

The angel said that greed, violence, flattery and deceit would all be used by those opposed to God to pull God’s people away from loyalty to him.

- ❓ *Which is most likely to tempt you to turn your back on your faith? Use your answer to fuel your prayers.*

