

GODLY LIVING IN A GODLESS WORLD

Expositional Study Of Daniel

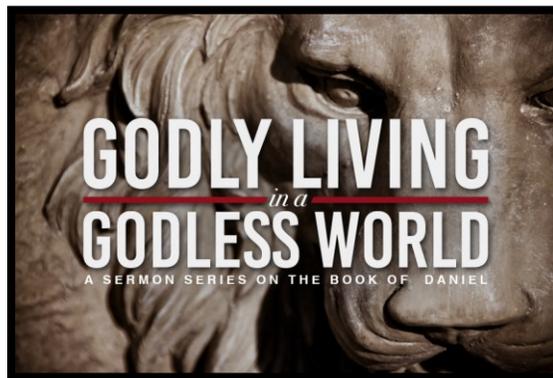
Daniel 11:21-35

Part 3

Written By

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God has a unique, jaw-dropping way of attempting to get your attention. Sometimes He'll use a breath-taking display of vibrant beauty painted on the canvas of an early evening sky, while, at other times, He'll cause you to mathematically freeze up as you consider the odds are 1 in $10^{40,000}$ that a single enzyme, the building block of the gene, which, in turn, is the foundation for a cell, just happened to form by pure blind chance.¹ Right. Right reasoning says His divine, creative fingerprints all over such phenomena.

In other situations, God will cause something so statistically impossible to occur you have no choice but to stop and look toward Him. This is what Daniel learned about God as he remained with his captors in Babylon. You will recall how toward the beginning of Daniel's captivity in Babylon, God stopped ol' King Nebuchadnezzar in his tracks by giving him a precise prophecy concerning the coming demise of his glorious empire (606-539 B.C.), followed, shockingly, by the rise and fall of three consecutive world powers, viz., Medo-Persia (539-331 B.C.), Greece (331-146 B.C.), and Rome (146 B.C.-476 A.D.). Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, a saint and a sinner, lived to see, to varying degrees, that it is true that "... He [God] changes the times and the seasons; he removes kings and raise up kings (Daniel 2:21). Through the precise prophecies both saint and sinner had plenty of

¹Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 65.

evidence God is with us and He is at work to defeat evil and erect His long-awaited Davidic Empire (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 2; 89; Isaiah 2, 9; Jeremiah 30-31).

Toward the end of his life, Daniel received additional precise prophetic information about the rise and fall of the Egyptian and Syrian kingdoms. Looking 372 years down the halls of time, God told Daniel what he and his people, the Jews, could expect as they awaited the coming of the Messiah. In every sense of the word, God's prophetic insights were, well, *tough* (testy and tearful, too). Fulfilled prophetic history would show it would not go well with Israel as Gentile powers attacked each other and also leveled their weaponry on God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 7). But, as Jesus would prophesy some five hundred years later, the "*times of the Gentiles*" would terminate with the visible and powerful revelation of the Messiah (Luke 21;24ff). In the meantime, Israel, along with all saints of all times, should realize God has provided us precise prophecies, like those detailed in Daniel 11, for two main reasons . . .

Precise Prophecies Give Saints Focus And Sinners Facts (Daniel 11:1-45)

Saints can look at this pinpoint prophetic data and rest assured God is, in fact, on His throne working in and through world history to bring to the consummation of the ages. Sinners, conversely, can ponder the fact God seeks to wake up their minds and hearts to His presence and redemptive plan with the evidence at hand. The proofs do not get any better than what is revealed about the ancient rivalry between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires starting with verse 5.

Proof 3: Prophecies About Egypt & Syria (Daniel 11:5-35)

As I have stated, God spent the majority of time in chapter 11 with the political intrigue, hatred, and warfare between these two nations because of three reasons: one, Israel's plight and need of a messianic deliverer was heightened by the geo-political turmoil; two, the constant conflagration would position the people to be deeply committed to God; and three, their collective falls would usher in the Roman period, which would lead to the fulfillment of the prophesied death of the Messiah (Daniel 9:24-27). To these three, I will add number four: *God guides history in order to allow a king to rise to the surface who will become the prototype of the world's final king, the Anti-christ* (Daniel 11:36-45). Once more, God is definitively saying good will triumph over evil, the first will be last and the last first, that dystopianism will be replaced by messianic utopianism, righteousness will be victorious over unrighteousness. All of this is deeply embedded in the prophetic fabric of the three Ptolemaic/Seleucid periods we have already covered. In this study, we will zero in on the last two prophesied periods.

- Period #1 (Daniel 11:5-6).
- Period #2 (Daniel 11:7-9).
- Period #3 (Daniel 11:10-19).

Period #4 (Daniel 11:20). The son of *Antiochus the Great*, *Seleucus IV Eupator*, also called *Philopator* (187-176 B.C.) took control of the beleaguered nation. However, with the Romans exacting an annual tribute of 1,000 talents (silver or gold?), and with his country's coffers empty because of the years of his father's fighting, he did what he had to do to raise the monies for the Romans: he taxed anybody and everybody . . . just like God said he would 349 years before the fact (536-187=349). Listen to God speak:

²⁰Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle.

The Apocryphal book 2 Maccabees, chapter 3, tells us how a Benjamite Jew named *Simon* had a beef with the ultra-conservative *High Priest, Onias*. In a bid to get back at *Onias*, *Simon* told *Apollonius*, the governor of Coele-syria and Phoenicia that the Jewish temple contained a boatload of money. *Apollonius* wasted no time telling the cash-strapped *Eupator* (pronounced, *u-pay-tor*) where he could find his bribe payment to the Romans, and the king dispatched *Heliodorus* to seize the funds for the good of the State. Supposedly, according to the story as recorded in 2 Maccabees chapter 3, one angel mounted on a mighty horse, accompanied by two other angels, basically beat the king's IRS agent to a pulp, sending him away empty-handed. Not long thereafter *Seleucus IV Eupator* passed from the world scene, as prophesied. And he did not die in battle. Scholars think he was poisoned. Shocking, but so typical of the day and time.

Ostensibly, focus for a moment on the desire of *Seleucus* to loot the Jewish temple. His decree and action tells you he cared nothing for the sacred and spiritual. He was a pure Statist, only interested in perpetuating his kingdom and power, at any cost and by any means. His behavior also tells you he had no problem with stepping on the faith of the Jews, and that he was not afraid of offending their God. Think about it. Most would think twice about helping themselves to the offering box proceeds, but not this man. He felt it was his duty for it preserved the health of the State. His activity will also be seen as child's play in comparison to that of his brother, *Antiochus*, as we shall see. Strange how certain types of sin seem to infect siblings in a family unit. Strange how the lurid life of one brother set up the lurid life of another brother in period five.



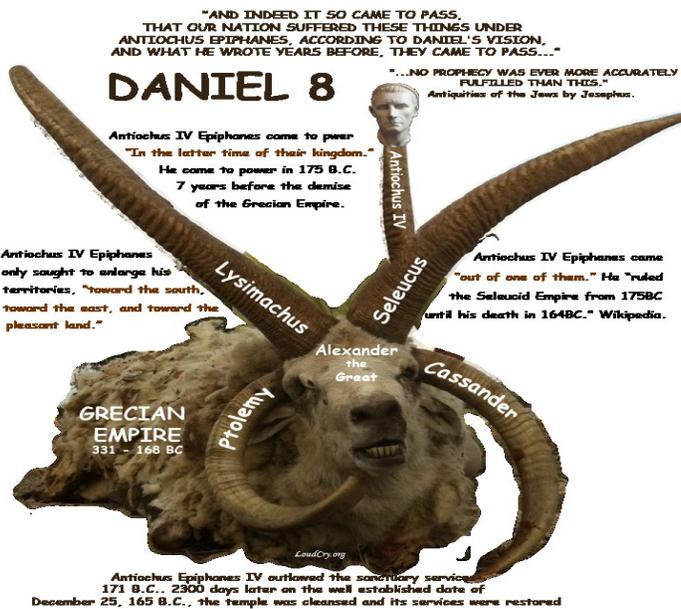
Period #5 (Daniel 11:21-35). Within the next precise prophetic verses we will bump into the Old Testament precursor to the Anti-christ, *Antiochus IV* (175-164 B.C.). He took the title *Epiphanes*, meaning *the manifest One*, or *the manifestation of the Olympian god, Zeus*, stressing his supposed intrinsic awesomeness/deity. The coinage

he minted says it all: *King Antiochus/God Manifest/Victory Bearer*. Talk about pride in a politician . . . the exact opposite character trait you find in the Messiah (Isaiah 53:1-3). His opponents, on the other hand, especially the Jews, employed a play on words and labeled him *Epimanes*, or *the madman*. Indeed, the latter term better typified his character, or lack thereof. Daniel 8 prophesied he would arise like a little, unassuming horn from the four horns, or leaders/generals, of the Grecian Empire (Daniel 8:9-14), but even in this passage, coupled with that of the little horn of chapter 7, verse 8, it is readily and eerily apparent that this particular king serves as a prototype of a more sinister ruler, even the Anti-Christ. We will discover the same dualistic emphasis as we work our way through this pinpointed prophecy about the activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Also, as we work our way through these inspired verses, I would like to point out they are, at places, somewhat historically vague because they are concerned more with the character of Antiochus

than with his precise activity. Hence, where appropriate and possible we will isolate his prophesied activities to demonstrate the precision of the prophetic word.

To helpfully work our way through these complex and theologically deep verses, I propose we move through them expositionally in a three-fold format which arises from the flow of the text. I do not usually go to this level of detail, but then most passages are not this complicated.

First, we shall see what I call **THE RUSE OF ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES** (Daniel 11:21).



²¹ “In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue.

“*In his place*,” speaks of who would replace *Seleucus*. Remember him? To keep *Seleucus* honest so he would pay the hefty tax, the Romans took his younger brother, *Antiochus* to Rome as a hostage, leaving him with his oldest son, *Demetrius I*, the only rightful claimant to the Syrian throne. Before his death, *Seleucus* sent his son, *Demetrius I*, to replace his brother as the hostage so he could have his brother, *Antiochus* at his side. Hold that thought. How would you liked to have been the son of *Seleucus*? Talk about dysfunction. Talk about lack of love between a father and a son. It surely didn't reflect the love between the Father and the Son, did it?

Now, back to the prophetic story.

While in Athens, Antiochus received the news someone, probably *Heliodorus*, had murdered his brother, King *Seleucus*. He quickly made his way to *Eumenes* (pronounced, *u-men-ee*), King of Pergamum in Asia Minor, and through untold levels and methods of political intrigue, he made his way back to Syria where he filled the power vacuum by declaring himself king, even though the role belonged rightfully to *Demetrius I*, or to *Antiochus*, his baby brother who lived in Syria. Power was more important than family to this godless man, and he would stop at nothing to preserve and expand it. Sound familiar? This was his ruse. Everyone must have thought he came to make a move to install *Demetrius* as the new and rightful king, but, as prophesied, he seized the throne for himself after he had *Antiochus*, the baby, murdered. How sinister is the man who will go to this length to grab power for himself. God could not have been any clearer, could he? No wonder God labeled him a despicable man.

All of these leads us contextually, to the next chronological movement I call **THE ROAD OF ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES** (Daniel 11:22-35). His torturous, wicked, brutal, godless road will head into two prophesied directions. We will consider them in the order presented.

First, the road Antiochus walked focused on his “friends” (Daniel 11:22-24).

²² The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. ²³ After an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people.

Verse 22 gives us a broad, though true, overview of what happened when Antiochus came to power. Forces, probably from Egypt and from the Syrian *Heliodorus*, came at him but to no avail, as prophesied. His alliance with the more powerful *Eumenes* gave potency to his smaller forces, enabling him to eventually dominate the superior forces. God also said he would defeat “the prince of the covenant.” “Covenant” is a Jewish term and is typically and contextually tied to Israel (v. 28, 30, 32). Hence, the prophecy said this godless, power-hungry man would go so far as set events in motion to terminate the High Priest, *Onias III*, who was a godly, conservative, moral man who loved God’s rule of law.

Really, *Onias III* stood in the way of Antiochus’ desire to remove Judaism and replace it with his carnal, godless Hellenism. Getting this ecclesiastical problem out of the way, thereby, enabled him to pollute the priesthood and eventually push his personal Statist agenda. *Onias*’ brother, *Joshua* (Jesus), did not like his brother’s commitment to the Torah, and he showed his contempt for his Jewish roots and his new love for progressive Hellenism by changing his name to the Greek name, *Jason*. Next, he, a true Zadokite, offered a massive sum of money to purchase the office of High Priest. Antiochus gladly accepted, especially when the young man said he would turn Jerusalem into a Hellenized town, replete with a gymnasium, a Grecian educational system and so forth. In 172 B.C., however, *Menelaus* (a non-Zadokite; pronounced, *mene-laws*), offered *Antiochus* even more money for the role of High Priest, and he, again, accepted it without question. By 170 B.C., *Onias* was murdered by *Menelaus* when the former accused him of stealing golden vessels from the temple. The Jewish religion, of course, was thrown into absolute chaos because

of this ongoing religious debacle. A group known as the *Hasidim*, however, rose up to oppose this godless watering down of their faith, and eventually they would become the Pharisees who would oppose another king on another day, King Jesus. And they would be so consumed with their own religious power they would call their opponents the Sadducees, not by their name of choice *tsaddiqim*, or the righteous, but *tsadduqim*, the destruction.² All of this, however, gives us a small taste of the activity of the Anti-christ in the future. He is anti-Semitic (and anti-Christian, Revelation 7) and will doggedly work to expunge faith in God from the planet, while imposing his own lifestyle on others.

The next two verses are most interesting:

²⁴ In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but only for a time.

God gives us more inside information at this juncture on how this wicked king was prophesied to operate. He consolidated his power like no one had before him by becoming a card-carrying socialistic communist well before the time, as it were. He took from the wealthy in the Syrian Empire (the one percenters) and gave it to the less fortunate, thus solidifying his power base and respect among the masses. With the masses behind him, he, then, positioned himself for world expansion by going after his long-time enemies, the Ptolemies in Egypt. Yet, God underscored that his wartime successes would be divinely limited “only for a time.” Evil always has an end date and time. Praise God.

Antiochus, as I said, wasted no time turning his attention toward Egypt, toward his foes:

²⁵ He will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him. ²⁶ Those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain. ²⁷ As for both kings, their hearts will be intent on evil, and they will speak lies to each other at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still to come at the appointed time.

Here, the angel foretells that Egypt would attack Syria but to no avail. Historically, this is exactly what occurred. *Ptolemy VI*, the son of Cleopatra, who was the sister of *Antiochus*, was counseled in 170 B.C. to take back the southern Syrian buffer zone called Coelo-Syria (pronounced, *quay-lo*). He made his move around 170 B.C., but was defeated when the more clever *Antiochus* launched a pre-emptive attack on their turf at Pelusium, just east of the Nile Delta area. The result of the blitzkrieg attack was predictable. Much of Egypt fell into Syrian hands, except for the massive

²Alfred Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Part 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 323-324.

city of Alexandria. The Egyptians responded by making *Ptolemy VIII Eurgetes* the new king in Alexandria, and Antiochus installed *Ptolemy VI* as the new ruler in Memphis.

Once more, the Scripture was exact. *Ptolemy VI* was betrayed by his own inner circle in the fight with *Antiochus*, his uncle, and both kings did sit and discuss how they might combine their forces and finish taking all of Egypt. Neither one trusted the other, and when Antiochus went back to Syria, the two brothers worked out a co-rule situation and then he, *Ptolemy VI*, married their common sister, *Cleopatra*, who was named after their mother. It is it not amazing how mess up and wicked earthly rulers were and are? Equally eye-popping is how accurate the Word of God is regarding what would happen so many years in advance. And most instructive are God's words that even this activity would not denote the end of man's reign prior to the revelation of the Messiah. It was only one more sad episode in man's inferior rule.

History tells us that when *Antiochus* returned back to Syria, he could not resist attacking the basically defenseless Jews.

²⁸ Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take action and then return to his own land.

The timing of this punitive action is probably tied to the revolt of the Jews against the godless and murderous activity of Menelaus, the false High Priest. 1 Maccabees 1, verses 20-24 details what Antiochus did when he attacked.

²⁰ And after that Antiochus had smitten Egypt, he returned again in the hundred forty and third year, and went up against Israel and Jerusalem with a great multitude, ²¹ And entered proudly into the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof, ²² And the table of the shewbread, and the pouring vessels, and the vials. and the censers of gold, and the veil, and the crown, and the golden ornaments that were before the temple, all which he pulled off. ²³ He took also the silver and the gold, and the precious vessels: also he took the hidden treasures which he found. ²⁴ And when he had taken all away, he went into his own land, having made a great massacre, and spoken very proudly.

Like his father before him, he hated anything related to God, and thought nothing of profaning the sacred any way possible.

From history, we know that Antiochus launched a second massive strike against Egypt around 168 B.C.. God stated years prior that this military endeavor would not prove as lucrative and profitable as the former.

²⁹ At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before. ³⁰ For ships of Kittim will come against him . . .

“Ships of Kittim” historically denotes the Isle of Cyprus; however, the term also is translated “Romans” by the LXX, or Greek version of the Old Testament. The Romans did, in fact, stop the military advance of Antiochus in his tracks. *Polybius*, a Greek who went over to Rome after the defeat of his nation, wrote about the history of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires in relation to Rome. Concerning this military advance of Antiochus, tells us what happened in this encounter. As Antiochus attempted to take Pelusium and the surrounding area, he ran into Roman troops and their commander who handed him an edict from the Senate. After he forced the Syrian king to read the document, he used a stick to draw a circle around him and said he could not leave the circle until he had answered the will of the Senate.³ With that he acquiesced to the power of Rome and within a few days he started heading north toward Syria.

What happened on his way home is the epitome of wickedness and Anti-christ behavior. Again, the angel foretold how the evil king would behave toward God’s chosen people, Israel.

. . . therefore he will be disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.

You will remember how the Jews, at this time, were divided over those who loved God and the Mosaic law, and those who desired to put away their antiquated religion and fully embrace anything and everything Hellenistic . . . and all that this meant, morally and spiritually. The disgruntled and sore loser, Antiochus, keyed on this latter group and inspired them to turn against their own people in his diabolical quest to stamp out the worship of the living God. Note, beware of these leaders who would dare relegate the worship of God to the sidelines, or who feverishly work to expunge and silence the Word of God and godly people. Such activity has Antiochus written all over it and it also smacks of the spirit of the Anti-christ, who is yet to come.

Beginning with verse 31, we get a taste of exactly what Antiochus did.

³¹ Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. ³² By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, . . .

³Polybius, *Histories*, 29.4, 27.

“The sanctuary fortress,” denotes the temple platform which, in many respects, was built like a fortress in order to protect the temple. Once he breached the fortifications, he went to work discrediting the worship of God. According to 1 Maccabees 1:41-50, he sought to impose their Hellenistic godless customs on all the Jews. He wasted no time disposing of the sacrifices for sin God had given to Israel through Moses (Leviticus 1-7). According to Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian (37-100 A.D.), he declared Mosaic ceremonial action like this illegal and punishable by death.⁴ He, then, created a pagan altar in the form of Jupiter Olympius to stand in the place of God’s altar. No wonder it is called “the abomination of desolation.” Here is how Josephus details what happened (for those who are interested at this level of historical data:

4. (248) Now it came to pass after two years in the hundred and forty-fifth year, on the twenty-fifth day of that month which is by us called Chasleu, and by the Macedonians Apelleus, in the hundred and fifty-third olympiad, that the king came up to Jerusalem, and, pretending peace, he got possession of the city by treachery: (249) at which time he spared not so much as those that admitted him into it, on account of the riches that lay in the temple; but, led by his covetous inclination (for he saw there was in it a great deal of gold, and many ornaments that had been dedicated to it of very great value), and in order to plunder its wealth, he ventured to break the league he had made. (250) So he left the temple bare, and took away the golden candlesticks, and the golden altar [of incense], and table [of shewbread], and the altar [of burnt offering]; and did not abstain from even the veils, which were made of fine linen and scarlet. He also emptied it of its secret treasures, and left nothing at all remaining; and by this means cast the Jews into great lamentation, (251) for he forbade them to offer those daily sacrifices which they used to offer to God, according to the law. And when he had pillaged the whole city, some of the inhabitants he slew, and some he carried captive, together with their wives and children, so that the multitude of those captives that were taken alive amounted to about ten thousand. (252) He also burnt down the finest building; and when he had overthrown the city walls, he built a citadel in the lower part of the city, for the place was high, and overlooked the temple, on which account he fortified it with high walls and towers and put into it a garrison of Macedonians. However, in that citadel dwelt the impious and wicked part of the [Jewish] multitude, from whom it proved that the citizens suffered many and sore calamities. (253) And when the king had built an idol altar upon God’s Altar, he slew swine upon it, and so offered a sacrifice neither according to the law, nor the Jewish religious worship in that country. He also compelled them to forsake the worship which they paid their own God, and to adore those whom he took to be gods; and made them build temples, and raise idol altars, in every city and village,

⁴Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), VII, 5, 4.

and offer swine upon them every day. (254) He also commanded them not to circumcise their sons, and threatened to punish any that should be found to have transgressed his injunction. He also appointed overseers, who should compel them to do what he commanded. (255) And indeed many Jews there were who complied with the king's commands, either voluntarily, or out of fear of the penalty that was denounced; but the best men, and those of the noblest souls, did not regard him, but did pay a greater respect to the customs of their country than concern as to the punishment which he threatened to the disobedient; on which account they every day underwent great miseries and bitter torments; (256) for they were whipped with rods and their bodies were torn to pieces, and were crucified while they were still alive and breathed: they also strangled those women and their sons whom they had circumcised, as the king had appointed, hanging their sons about their necks as they were upon the crosses. And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed; and those with whom they were found miserably perished also.⁵

All of this information validates why *Antiochus Epiphanes IV* is called the Anti-christ of the Old Testament, and to think he is but a pre-figurement of the true Anti-christ who is predicted by Jesus in His Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:15) and is detailed and described by other New Testament writers (2 Thessalonians 2:3-8; 1 John 2:22; Revelation 11:7; 13:1). John also warns us that his evil teaching and methods are still with us today as we head toward the consummation of God's magnificent kingdom program (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:1-3; 2 John 1:7). But be not fearful, but educated and motivated, yes, motivated to speak truth where there is error so people can be challenged to come to the true Christ in saving faith (Acts 4:10-12).

Did all of Israel bow at the feet of this godless, maniacal man? No. God's prophetic revelation informed Daniel that there would be those, like him, who would not compromise the faith God had given them. God also said it would be tough for them, but such is the way of those who desire to hold on to the absolute religious/spiritual truth God has given to us.

... but the people who know their God will display strength and take action.³³ Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days.³⁴ Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy.³⁵ Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.

We will dig more into this resistance movement in our next study, but for now focus on the fact that when good men oppose evil, evil responds with even more hate, but then it is forced to retreat.

⁵ Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 12.247-256.

Are you one who resists the false teaching and false movements of our day, while holding tenaciously onto the truths of God, or are you one who caves all too quickly for the sake of peace and tranquility?