

THE ONE YEAR BIBLE Reading For December 3:

Daniel 11:2-35:

Daniel 11 is in the midst of one long vision (10-12) in which Daniel is shown the cosmic spiritual conflict taking place both as post-exilic Israel seeks to rebuild the temple and also the spiritual conflict related to God's people leading up to a victorious end of time.

Commentators Duguid and Wegner give this overview of Daniel 11: "This passage gives a selective yet detailed overview of the flow of history from the time of Daniel in the late sixth century B.C. until the end of the world, the final climactic conflict and victory of God.... Such an assurance of God's sovereign control of history would have been profoundly relevant for Daniel's day. Judah was about to be restored from exile...and yet it was not really free. It would be subject to the Persians, and then to Alexander's Greeks; after that it would be caught in the middle between powerful heirs of Alexander's empire, the Seleucids and the Ptolemies.... Pious Jews would readily fall into bewilderment: how do these circumstances display God's concern for his people, and how will God ever use his now-insignificant people to bring blessing to the whole world? The vision is therefore reassurance for the faithful."

1 John 3:7-24:

In 3:7-10 John concludes his discussion on the difference between those who belong to the devil (those who continue in a life chiefly characterized by sin) and those who belong to God (those who abide in Christ and thus are transformed). Since part of the purpose that Jesus Christ came into the world was to destroy the works of devil (which include works of evil and unrighteousness), it is impossible to be saved and not transformed.

In 3:11-24 we learn that a large part of the transformation (defined here as keeping the commandments of Jesus Christ) which comes from trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior (cf. 24), involves loving fellow Christians. Anyone who does not love fellow Christians in a way that flows into actions shows he really doesn't know Jesus Christ as Savior.

It has become very popular in some Christian circles to argue that as long as we believe the right things (e.g. Jesus is Savior) or pray a prayer of confession in Jesus Christ, then we are saved, regardless of how we live from there on out. Yet, this runs counter not only to the entire New Testament, it very much runs counter to the message of 1 John. Some important questions arise from today's reading which we must all face. Does your life show evidence of transformation? When you teach your children about Jesus Christ or when you share the gospel with other people, do you make it clear that when we trust Jesus Christ, this should lead to change?

Psalms 122:1-9:

Psalms 122 celebrates Jerusalem as the place where God's realized presence is in the temple. It is a glorious thing to go there (1-2) because of the glory of Jerusalem (3-5) and, as such, we should pray for the peace of Jerusalem and those who go there (6-9). Since the New Testament Church comprises the people of God now and the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16), the primary way this psalm is applied

now is to understand the glory of being part of those who are baptized into the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13) and therefore to pray for the peace, the wholeness, the health of the Church! (1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 6:16; Philippians 1:2, 9-11; Colossians 1:2, 9-12)

Proverbs 29:1:

Several times in Proverbs we have learned the importance of accepting counsel and correction from those who are wise. Yet, here a new twist is added. If a person continually ignores such counsel and correction, if they form a habit of not listening to others who seek to warn them, the outcome will be that they will eventually destroy themselves to a point of no return. By implication this would also apply to those who refuse to listen to the gospel. Often, as we see in Ecclesiastes 12, the older a person becomes, the longer they ignore the truth of God, the harder it becomes to reach them or for them to respond.