

DANIEL 11



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Daniel 11
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Cover art: Rembrandt, *Daniel in the Lions' Den*

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Daniel 11: Introduction

Daniel 11 presents the most detailed and terrifying vision thus far. Armies and nations clash back and forth over the “Glorious Land,” and the people of God are caught up in the wash.

The Lord is trying to prepare His people for difficult times ahead. He has given them the promise of His coming Kingdom, and He does not want them to lose sight of this. Paul said that we do not enter the Kingdom of God without many trials and tribulations, and he may well have been think of what Daniel foresaw in this chapter.

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T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 Keep Focused!

Daniel 11 (1)

Introduction

Daniel 11 gives us the most complete details about events that will take place following the fall of the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians and the empire of Alexander the Great. All the kings and rulers and princes here can be identified, and I encourage you to consult online resources or commentaries for the details. Our approach will be to understand the revelation of this chapter as Daniel would have, and as they were intended for those who were returning to the land of Israel. The Lord wanted Daniel and His people to know that a political food fight was on the horizon, and they must be careful not to get messed up in it. They must keep their focus on restoring the temple and looking ahead to the coming of the promised Kingdom of God (Dan. 7.13-18). Thus the purpose of Daniel's book is similar to that of the book of Revelation.

Read Zechariah 4.

Read Daniel 11.1-4.

Think it through.

1. The events of Daniel 9-11 all happened in fairly close proximity in time. God intended Daniel to record these details faithfully, even though neither he nor any of the people who read these words would have been able to understand those details exhaustively. The revelations of these chapters are intended to evoke a *mood* and a *mindset* within the people of God. What kind of mood and mindset? As they were anticipating these earthly events, understanding the spiritual backdrop against which they would unfold, and remembering why God through Cyrus was sending them to Jerusalem (Ezra 1.1-4), what would they have been feeling and thinking, and what overall mood and mindset was God trying to establish within them? Why would this be important? Does it matter what kind of mood and mindset we take into our daily lives? Explain.

2. People can become distracted from their divine callings by the events and affairs of everyday life. When large events – political, military, economic – are unfolding and swirling around us, we can easily lose sight of the larger picture in which these things occur. That was certainly Israel's case prior to being taken captive to Babylon. Now they were going back, and what was going to unfold around them for the next few hundred years had the potential of being even more distracting than what Israel had experienced in the past. Our calling, like that of Daniel and the people of Israel, is to serve God in an unbelieving world by receiving His truth, staying close to Him in prayer, and fulfilling our individual callings day by day. What kinds of things can distract us from this focus? How can we maintain a proper focus on our calling, and the kind of mood and mindset to carry out that calling each day?

Meditate.

“Moreover it should be observed that after he has specified four kings of Persia after Cyrus, Daniel omits the nine others and passes right on to Alexander. For the spirit of prophecy was not concerned about preserving historical detail but in summarizing only the most important matters.” *Jerome (347-420 AD)*

I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." Revelation 1.9-11

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Lord, how much can we know about unfolding world events? Very little, to be sure. But concerning Your Kingdom, we can know that it will increase in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit without end (Is. 9.6, 7). So today, help me to keep focused on...

Pray Psalm 9.1-8.

Hostility toward Christ and Christians appears to be growing, but we need not be distracted by this. Praise the Lord for all His marvelous works, including His rule over His enemies!

Psalm 9.1-10 (*Diademata: Crown Him with Many Crowns*)

I will give thanks, O Lord, with all my heart to You!

I'll tell the wonders of Your Word, so many and so true!

With joy to You I cry; Your glory I will raise;

Your matchless Name, O Lord on High, will I forever praise!

Backwards my foes shall fall before Your holy face.

You rescue all who on You call by Your all-glorious grace.

The nations lie in ruins; the wicked are no more;

Our enemies have come to doom in wrath and judgment sore.

Lord, You forever reign in judgment on Your throne.

The world in bitter wrath and pain Your righteousness will own.

All those who know Your Name, though in this life oppressed,

You shelter from the storms of shame and keep them ever blessed.

2 Fightings and Fears

Introduction

The history of nations and empires from Alexander to the coming of God's Kingdom is a history of tumult and violence. Self-interest, revenge, and greed drive the emotions and decisions of world leaders, who seem to have nothing better to do than to waste the lives of their subjects in wars of conquest and revenge. God wants to make sure His people understand the futility and fleetingness of earthly powers, so that they don't fall into that trap again.

Meditate on Psalm 33.8-22.

Read Daniel 11.5-13.

Think it through.

1. The Messenger employed a variety of words to describe the political activity and posturing of the nations surrounding the people of Israel. Define each of the following:

- become strong (v. 5):
- gain power (v. 5):
- have dominion (v. 5):
- authority (v. 6):
- join forces (v. 6):
- deal with them and prevail (v. 7):
- assemble a multitude of great forces (v. 10):
- overwhelm and pass through (v. 10):

Why does the Lord use so many different, powerful terms to describe the actions of these empires and kings? Do any of these have lasting effects? Why does God want His people to understand this?

2. Much of the fighting and struggle that would ensue over the next several hundred years would be around, or in, or through the restored nation of Israel. This would make it increasingly difficult for the people to keep focused and not give in to the temptation to make political alliances, like their forebears had done. In some ways, this situation is not unlike that which churches face in our day. All kinds of political, economic, and cultural struggles rage around, within, and through the Church. But these must not keep us from our true focus and calling (Matt. 6.33; 1 Thess. 2.12). What are some ways a church can *lose* focus in a day like ours, and how should God's Word to Daniel instruct us for our day?

Meditate.

"But no further notice is taken of the other kingdoms, Macedonia and Asia Minor, because Judea lay in a midway position and was held now by one group of kings and now by another. And it is not the purpose of holy Scripture to cover external history apart from the Jews but only that which is linked up with the nation of Israel." *Jerome (347-420 AD)*

For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. 2 Corinthians 7.5

Today, Lord, as I go out into the world as Your ambassador, I know many things could distract me from my focus on You. Help me to set my mind on You, so that in all I do I...

Pray Psalm 9.6-12.

Conflicts and struggles of many kinds swirl around us as the people of God. Pray that you will find refuge in Him, and put your trust in Him, whenever the world presses in too much.

Psalm 9.7-13 (*Diademata: Crown Him with Many Crowns*)

Lord, You forever reign in judgment on Your throne.
The world in bitter wrath and pain Your righteousness will own.
All those who know Your Name, though in this life oppressed,
You shelter from the storms of shame and keep them ever blessed.

Praise then the Lord of Zion; declare His deeds abroad!
Praise Judah's mighty saving Lion, the ever-blessèd God!
Whose blood has washed us clean, Who hears our plaintive cries,
Who good to us has ever been and lifts us to the skies!

3 In the Glorious Land

Introduction

Israel was not immune to, nor could it entirely avoid, the violent struggles of pagan nations. Indeed, even the “Glorious Land” would become caught up in international war and suppression. The people who read and meditated on Daniel’s prophecy for the next several hundred years were to be neither surprised nor dismayed by the ongoing violence that surrounded and affected them. But they must never forget that theirs was the “Glorious Land.” They were to seek the blessings and peace of God, and not those of fleeting political powers.

Read Deuteronomy 28.1-14.

Read Daniel 11.14-19.

Think it through.

1. The phrase *Glorious Land* (v. 16) may be more accurately translated as *Land of Beauty* or *Honor*. Meditate on Psalm 48.1-3 and Deuteronomy 28.1-14. To what does this phrase refer? Why is this an apt description of God’s intentions for His chosen people? The sudden appearance of this phrase in the midst of these visions of violence and war is meant to shock and remind the reader of Israel’s true calling. Explain.

2. The *Glorious Land* is beautiful and honorable, not because of what any political power can bestow, but because God has designated it as such. Only God can make His land and people beautiful, honorable, and a source of joy to the world. And His people, like Israel of Daniel’s day, can only realize that promise by looking not to the fleeting, fading fortunes of political powers, but to the unchanging and unfailing promises of God, especially as these are all realized in our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1.4; 2 Cor. 1.19, 20). Israel would find herself caught up in world events and political and military struggles, but she must at all times remember who she is, why God has raised her up, and how she may hope to realize her promised potential. Is there a word of warning for the Church today in the message given to Daniel?

Meditate.

“The term ‘glorious land,’ or, as the Septuagint interprets it, ‘the land of desire’ (that is, in which God takes pleasure) signifies Judea, and particularly Jerusalem, to which Antiochus pursued those men of Scopas’s party who had been honorably received there. Instead of the phrase ‘glorious land,’ as Aquila rendered it, Theodotion simply puts the Hebrew word itself, Sabin; instead of that Symmachus translated it ‘land of bravery.’” *Jerome (347-420 AD)*

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. Colossians 2.8-10

“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Luke 12.32 (cf. Dan. 7.18)

Lord, we live in the world, but we must not be of it, for You have called us to Your Kingdom and glory. Thank You, Lord, for the promise of Your beautiful and honorable Kingdom. Help me to seek Your glorious Kingdom today as I...

Pray Psalm 9.11-14.

Offer your daily trials and troubles to the Lord, and firm up Your resolve to be Christ’s witness today. Pray for an opportunity to live out the praises of God.

Psalm 9.11-16 (*Diademata: Crown Him with Many Crowns*)

Praise then the Lord of Zion; declare His deeds abroad!
Praise Judah's mighty saving Lion, the ever-blessèd God!
Whose blood has washed us clean, Who hears our plaintive cries,
Who good to us has ever been and lifts us to the skies!

Lift up your voice in praise before glad Zion's gate!
Rejoice in Jesus' saving ways; His glory celebrate!
The nations fail and fall, condemned by their own hands;
The Lord Who showed Himself to all o'er them in judgment stands.

4 Adulterous Entanglement

Introduction

Keep in mind that we're trying to understand these prophetic words as Daniel, and those who were returning to Jerusalem, would have read them. Real historical people are indicated, and most commentaries can help you sort out the details. For our part, we're trying to focus on the central message of these words, and not the peripheral details. In this section, we see that the "glorious kingdom" and the "prince of the covenant" are drawn into the political strife and struggles of the day, so that the "holy covenant" comes under attack. And yet all this happens according to "the appointed time".

Read Proverbs 6.20-29.

Read Daniel 11.20-28.

Think it through.

1. The Messenger warns of Israel's increasing entanglement with worldly powers. Verses 20-22 indicate that future Gentile nations will impose their will on Israel. This is described in three ways, which together indicate a deepening entanglement and oppression of the people of God ("prince of the covenant" here probably refers to the high priest). Explain. Verses 23 and 24 describe the effects of this entanglement on the people of the "glorious kingdom". He (the ruler to come) "shall enter peaceably". What does this suggest? But what happens next? In previous generations, prophets warned Israel against playing the harlot with foreign powers. What does that mean? Why would Israel do this? Was the message to Daniel a similar warning? Explain.

2. Verses 25-28 warn that such rulers and nations cannot last. Knowing this should expose the folly of becoming entangled with worldly rulers, agreeing to and supporting their "peaceable" policies. Notice what happens to the wealth of God's people in verse 28, and, in the same verse, how the kings whose "hearts *shall be bent on evil*" and who "speak lies" feel about God's covenant and the people who live within it. Concerning all this political posturing and scheming, "it shall not prosper, for the end *will still be* at the appointed time" (v. 27). What does this indicate, and how does it serve to remind Israel of her proper focus?

Meditate.

"But nonetheless he will then return to his own kingdom with much wealth and great abundance. 'And his heart will be against the holy covenant.' At last, he will have one endeavor, namely, to destroy the law given by God to the Jews. Because he desires this, he puts his plans into effect. 'And he will act and return to his land.' The book of the Maccabees and the history of Josephus explain this." *Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. Galatians 4.17, 18

O Lord, the temptation is great to think that our hopes lie in securing a favorable political climate, where leaders enact policies that favor our cause, so that we will be zealous for them. But we must be careful here, because...

Pray Psalm 9.11-20.

Praise God, Who is Lord of men and nations, and firm up your resolve before Him to serve *His* purposes, to proclaim and seek *His* Kingdom, and to look only to *Him* for all your needs.

Psalm 9.11-20 (*Diademata: Crown Him with Many Crowns*)

Praise then the Lord of Zion; declare His deeds abroad!

Praise Judah's mighty saving Lion, the ever-blessèd God!

Whose blood has washed us clean, Who hears our plaintive cries,

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Who good to us has ever been and lifts us to the skies!

Lift up your voice in praise before glad Zion's gate!
Rejoice in Jesus' saving ways; His glory celebrate!
The nations fail and fall, condemned by their own hands;
The Lord Who showed Himself to all o'er them in judgment stands.

All who forget the Lord shall perish evermore.
Condemned by His blessed holy Word, their punishment is sure.
The poor and troubled rest in God's all-loving care;
While fear of Him, Whose Name is blessed, grips nations everywhere.

5 All in the Appointed Time

Introduction

In the days between Daniel and the Messiah, when Gentile nations overrun and subjugate the people of God, many will turn away from God's covenant. But some will remain faithful and will courageously resist the enemies of God. Commentators have seen in this passage a reference to the last days and the coming of the antichrist. These will be terrible times, indeed. But they are "the appointed time", and all that takes place in them "has been determined". No matter how terrible things become, Israel must not lose sight of God. He is with them, and He will be exalted among the nations of the earth.

Read and meditate on Psalm 46.

Read Daniel 11.29-39.

Think it through.

1. Verses 29-35 refer in more detail to Antiochus and the abominations he would introduce to the temple and the "glorious land". Many would forsake the covenant to avoid his wrath (v. 12), and he would reward those who do (v. 32). Some, however, would remain faithful. How are they described in verses 32 and 33? How would their faithfulness be evident? What would become of them? Notice that this section is bookmarked by the phrase "the appointed time" (vv. 29, 35). Why?

2. Beginning with verse 36, some commentators – both from ancient times and our own day – see this vision springing forward to the coming of antichrist and the last days before Christ's return. That may well be. At any rate, what is envisioned is a time when government exalts itself "above every god" and even "speaks blasphemies against the God of gods". And even as it does this, it shall prosper. Why? Why does God allow this to happen (v. 36, end)? Verses 37-38 show that this particular government's lust for power is all-consuming. Have you seen in the past, and do you see any evidence now of this kind of behavior on the part of world governments? Explain. As governments increasingly become laws unto themselves, what must we as God's people remember and do?

Meditate.

"Those who properly use the knowledge supplied by God will utterly despise that fellow's laws and will prefer death for the divine law to a life of godlessness." *Theodore of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1.11, 12

Thank You, Father, that all of time and everything in it are in Your hands! Knowing this encourages and emboldens me today to...

Pray Psalm 9.1-13.

Whom can you tell today about the wondrous works of our sovereign God?

Psalm 9.1-13 (*Diademata: Crown Him with Many Crowns*)

I will give thanks, O Lord, with all my heart to You!
I'll tell the wonders of Your Word, so many and so true!
With joy to You I cry; Your glory I will raise;
Your matchless Name, O Lord on High, will I forever praise!

Backwards my foes shall fall before Your holy face.

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You rescue all who on You call by Your all-glorious grace.
The nations lie in ruins; the wicked are no more;
Our enemies have come to doom in wrath and judgment sore.

Lord, You forever reign in judgment on Your throne.
The world in bitter wrath and pain Your righteousness will own.
All those who know Your Name, though in this life oppressed,
You shelter from the storms of shame and keep them ever blessed.

Praise then the Lord of Zion; declare His deeds abroad!
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Who good to us has ever been and lifts us to the skies!

6 Coming to An End

Introduction

The vision is almost complete, and the violence and turmoil increase toward “the time of the end”. Again, many commentators see this as referring to the time before the coming of Christ, and this may well be so. But let’s try to keep focused on how Daniel and those returning to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple would have received these words. If we can understand what God intended for them by this vision, we’ll be able to gain the benefit He has in store for us.

Meditate on Daniel 2.44, 45 and Isaiah 9.6, 7.

Read Daniel 11.40-45.

Think it through.

1. The mention of Edom, Moab, and Ammon – nations contemporary to Israel in Daniel’s day – suggests this prophecy has more immediate implications than the time prior to the return of Christ – closer to the first coming of the Messiah than the second. But if that is the case, to what would “the time of the end” refer? The message to Israel is clear: Prepare for turmoil, violence, conquest, and oppression. But how should the people of God prepare? To what should they look to sustain them through these times? To what should we look as troubled times descend on our world?

2. Again, mention of the “Glorious Land” and the “glorious holy mountain” makes it clear that the disturbing action outlined in this vision is taking place right across and throughout the land historically identified with Israel. There will be no escaping the troubles to come. But isn’t this always the case in the life of faith (cf. Jn. 16.33)? What kinds of “tribulation” can we expect? How should Christians help keep one another focused and holding fast to their faith during times of tribulation?

Meditate.

“They say that in his haste to fight Ptolemy, the king of the south, Antiochus left untouched the Idumeans, Moabites and Ammonites, who dwelt to the side of Judea, lest he should make Ptolemy the stronger by engaging in some other campaign. The antichrist also is going to leave Idumea, Moab and the children of Ammon (i.e., Arabia) untouched, for the saints are to flee there to the deserts.” *Jerome (347-420 AD)*

“Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, ’spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” Matthew 24.15-22

Every day has its trials and tribulations, Lord, but I know that I can persevere and grow through them as I...

Pray Psalm 9.11-20.

Seek the mercy and help of God for today’s troubles and renew your resolve to be faithful in your witness to Christ.

Psalm 9.11-20 (*Diademata: Crown Him with Many Crowns*)

Praise then the Lord of Zion; declare His deeds abroad!
Praise Judah’s mighty saving Lion, the ever-blessèd God!

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Whose blood has washed us clean, Who hears our plaintive cries,
Who good to us has ever been and lifts us to the skies!

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Rejoice in Jesus' saving ways; His glory celebrate!
The nations fail and fall, condemned by their own hands;
The Lord Who showed Himself to all o'er them in judgment stands.

All who forget the Lord shall perish evermore.
Condemned by His blessed holy Word, their punishment is sure.
The poor and troubled rest in God's all-loving care;
While fear of Him, Whose Name is blessed, grips nations everywhere.

7 Tribulation

Introduction

Daniel 11 and Matthew 24 have much in common. Both are forward-looking. Both envision times of tribulation and trial. Both are intended to warn and encourage the people of God not to lose faith. And both reveal aspects of the good and perfect – albeit sometimes troubling – will of our sovereign God.

Read Matthew 24.

Read and Meditate on Daniel 11.

Think it through.

1. We have seen that these visions were a heavy burden for Daniel to bear. He did not understand them completely – any more than we understand Matthew 24 or the book of Revelation completely – but he understood them *enough*. For Daniel, it was important to write these visions down so that those who were returning to Jerusalem would know what to expect. Of all the visions Daniel has received thus far, Daniel 11 is the most focused and fearful, especially since it impinges so directly on the “Glorious Land.” But Daniel 7.13-27 is the most important of these visions. Why was this message so important for the Jews returning to Jerusalem? Why is it so important for us? How does the message of Daniel 7 relate to Matthew 24? To the book of Revelation?

2. Except for a very small remnant, the people of Israel after Daniel’s day were not able to stay focused on the promise of God’s Kingdom. They were not able to rest their hope in the coming of the Messiah. And they became entangled in all manner of political jockeying and jostling in an effort to secure the best overall conditions for themselves. Why was this *not* what God wanted for His people? Why is it not what He wants for us today? What can we learn from Daniel and from Israel’s history about how to keep from becoming entangled like this?

Meditate

“Daniel implies, ‘From the first year of the reign of Darius, who overthrew the Chaldeans and delivered me from the hand of my enemies to the extent of his ability ... I for my part stood before God, and I besought God’s mercy on him, in view of the man’s love for me, in order that either he or his kingdom might be strengthened and confirmed. And since I persevered in my prayer, I was answered by God and given to understand the following information.’” *Jerome (347-420AD)*

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” Revelation 11.15

Lord Jesus, may Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven! Help me seek Your Kingdom daily, and rest in Your Word and Spirit so that...

Pray Psalm 9.1-20.

Only as we seek the Lord can we expect Him to arise and lead us further into His Kingdom and glory. Let Psalm 9 give you an overall outlook on the world, and help you to keep focused on the Kingdom of our Lord.

Psalm 9.1-20 (*Diademata: Crown Him with Many Crowns*)

I will give thanks, O Lord, with all my heart to You!
I’ll tell the wonders of Your Word, so many and so true!
With joy to You I cry; Your glory I will raise;

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Your matchless Name, O Lord on High, will I forever praise!

Backwards my foes shall fall before Your holy face.
You rescue all who on You call by Your all-glorious grace.
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Our enemies have come to doom in wrath and judgment sore.

Lord, You forever reign in judgment on Your throne.
The world in bitter wrath and pain Your righteousness will own.
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All who forget the Lord shall perish evermore.
Condemned by His blessed holy Word, their punishment is sure.
The poor and troubled rest in God's all-loving care;
While fear of Him, Whose Name is blessed, grips nations everywhere.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Why does this chapter include so many details about nations and armies and conflicts?
2. How should God's people have prepared to meet this coming time of tumult and tribulation?
3. Is it necessary that we understand *all* the details about future events, such as revealed in Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation? What *is* important?
4. How can believers use the book of Daniel to encourage one another in our Personal Mission Fields?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

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