

### Daniel 11-12 script

Now, I don't know about you, but when I first heard this I really related to what Daniel says at the end of the vision. 12v8 "I heard, but I did not understand." It's difficult, isn't it! Kings, angels, times, days – what does it all mean? And more importantly what does it all mean for us? One commentator, Leupold says "This chapter might be treated in Bible classes. We do not see how it could be used for a sermon". Which might be why Charlie has given me this chunky passage and hopped off to Trinity Free church this morning! But no, Charlie hasn't thought that, because we at CCH believe that this chapter *is* good for a sermon. We believe that all scripture is God-breathed – this is God's word to us this morning. And we believe that all scripture is *useful*. It's not just information, it has a purpose. But as it's God's word, let's pray that he'll reveal it to us this morning.

#### PRAY

How should we live in light of the end of time? I think that's what Daniel 11-12 gives us. Daniel 11 is a big sweep of the whole of history, and a little window into the future, even our future, and then in Daniel 12, the angels tell Daniel what he should do in response. And we need to listen too, to see what we should do, because our world is very much like Daniel's at this point.

Let me explain – back in chapter 10 we get a date marker, Chapter 10v1 "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel". The Babylonian kings have gone, now we have a Persian king, Cyrus. Remember Nebuchadnezzar's statue, the head of gold, Babylon has fallen off, we're now moving through the kingdoms. But also it's the *third* year of Cyrus. We know from the history books of the Old Testament, for example Ezra, that in the *first* year of Cyrus, God moved his heart to send the people of God back to Jerusalem! Finally! They've been in Babylon in exile for seventy years, and now they're back! This is the big event that Daniel's life and Daniel's book have been leading up to! But it's also the big non-event of the life and book of Daniel. We know that because the book doesn't end here. The return to Jerusalem is not the eternal salvation of God's people. They still face oppression, they still deal with sin, and the temple – the heart of the community, the dwelling-place of God – well it's nothing compared to how it was in Solomon's day.

How should Daniel live in the world that's not what he's hoped for? And today when Christians face oppression, when the church feels weak, when we're tempted to give up, when God's promises seem so far away and our church life, prayer life and Bible reading move further and further down our priority list. How can we motivate ourselves to keep going? Is it even worth it?

Well the answer of Daniel 11-12 is a resounding "Yes!". In Daniel 11 we see two truths about God. He is the God who knows, and the God who wins. And then in Daniel 12 we see Daniel as part of The People who wait, and what I want to invite you to this morning is to be part of the people who wait.

## 1) The God who knows (11v1-35)

We've got a lot to get through so here goes. v1 continues on from chapter 10, detailing the cosmic spiritual battle going on behind the scenes, and then in v2 the angel says "Now I will show you the truth". Strap in, because in v1-35 we deal with about 300-350 years of history. I'm going to go in a bit to the history and how it lines up, but if you want to know the details, you can borrow this commentary, it's great, and goes into some more of the details.

Basically the main thing we need to know here is that God is the one who knows the future. If you don't like history and end up switching off for a bit, please remember that – God knows the future. He is the God who knows. But this history is really interesting, so do listen in – I'm going to put my history hat on now, and we're going to go into it.

So, we didn't get v1-35 read out, not because they're not important, do go home and read them! But just to save time, I thought it would be worth summarising them instead. Please keep your Bibles open so you can check what I'm saying is from the text. So v2-3 "Three more kings will arise in Persia, and then a fourth who will be far richer than all the others" These are kings following Cyrus, including a rich one, who we now know is Xerxes – read the book of Esther if you want to know more about him. "When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. Then a mighty king will arise, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases". That mighty king is not a Persian, he's Alexander the Great. Remember the Ram and the Goat in chapter 8 – the Goat is the kingdom of Greece, with a mighty horn that is then replaced by four smaller horns. That one mighty horn is Alexander the Great. This king. A king with great power who did as he pleased. Then look at verse 5, his empire will not go to his descendants, and will be broken up. That is exactly what happened with Alexander the Great – non-Christian historians will tell you that. After he died, his land was divided among his generals, not his descendants. And God knew! Over 100 years in advance. In fact, some liberal scholars don't know how to explain these predictions and they explain them away by saying it can't be prophecy at all, it must have been written afterwards.

I think that's a load of nonsense, why would history pretending to be prophecy be accepted as scripture by the Jews? Why would they find that to be any encouragement? It just wouldn't have made it into the Bible! I think the far more logical explanation is that God is God and he knows the future! We'll come onto what this means for us later. But for now let's move on with the history.

We've dealt with Xerxes and Alexander in two verses – the rich and the powerful will all come to nothing. Did you notice that? No matter how great a king is, he will die, no human power lasts forever, but God is the one who knows the future.

But now we come on to a long section from v5-20 about the kings of the North and South. These aren't 2 kings, these are two lines of Kings. The Ptolemies and the Seleucids – two dynasties descending from the generals who succeeded Alexander the Great. And it's a messy history! There's marriages, alliances, vengeance, battles, sieges, different rulers

controlling “The beautiful land” which means the land of Israel. Again, it all lines up very neatly with what happened in history, even non-Christian scholars accept that.

If you lived in Israel at this time, you would have had different rulers, and it would have been hard to say who was worse or better. God is warning Daniel, and the people in Jerusalem, that their suffering is not over yet.

And then it gets worse. v21 we meet the “contemptible person” who is a man named Antiochus Epiphanes, from the Seleucid dynasty. He’s the little, boastful horn from Daniel 8. And he does something v24 “that neither his fathers nor his forefathers did”.

A bit of history, he was trying to conquer Egypt, but a Roman general told him to turn back or else Rome would declare war on him. He had no choice but to turn back. Embarrassed, humiliated, made to look like a little boy caught stealing from the biscuit tin, he’s going home, and – oh look, there’s Israel! And he wants to feel like a big dog again, so he goes and conquers it. This is described in v30 “Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant, He will return and show favour to those who forsake the holy covenant”.

He set up an altar to Zeus in Israel, he sacrificed pigs, unclean animals in the temple. And he called people to abandon their faith, to forsake the covenant. You can read about this in the Jewish book of Maccabees.

Ok, history hat off now. But, v32 “The people who know their God will firmly resist him”. This is why Daniel needs to know this. He’s not going to be around for this persecution, he’ll be long gone! But he and all of God’s people need to be prepared to resist these kings, especially Antiochus Epiphanes. And how do they resist him? By knowing God. Are you ready for persecution? What would happen if someone like Antiochus Epiphanes conquered the UK tomorrow and banned all worship of God? How do we get ready? It’s not about psyching ourselves up, or finding strength to resist – it’s about knowing God better. Because when we know him, we’ll see that suffering disgrace or suffering for his name is so worth it, because he is so glorious! So get to know your God! God knows – know him!

This passage is an air-raid siren warning God’s people of coming persecution. But it’s more than that too. Persecution like this may never happen to us, but Daniel 11 goes further – it’s also as we’ve said, evidence of God’s knowledge of the future. He is the God who knows. Isaiah 44v8 “Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses, is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one”. Whatever happens in your life, however unexpected it is to you – God’s not surprised. He knows what’s going to happen, and the forces of the world march to his timetable. God organises and controls the boundaries of evil. One preacher imagines it as if God gets to the point in his script and says “And now enter Antiochus Epiphanes! Yes, there we go, right on time.” Yes many fall by the sword, or are burned, or captured or plundered, but Antiochus will not last, and he cannot do anything that God does not allow him to do. And God will not allow his people to be wiped out. Somehow God has planned this, and is using it. He knew when Alexander the Great was going to die, he knows when Putin is

going to fall, he knows when the next crisis is going to hit your life. Isn't that a comfort. God knows. He does! God really does know. Whatever you're going through, it's not a crisis to him, he declared it long ago – so come to him in prayer and trust him. "Do not tremble, do not be afraid".

Yes it's still painful when bad things happen – we don't just become stoic, stiff upper lip, nothing can hurt me people. But even in the deepest despair, there is comfort, because we know God has it all under control. We don't always know why things are happening, we don't always know how he's working it for good – but we always know that he is in control, he is on the throne. "Though I may not see what the future brings, I will watch and wait for my saviour king".

## **2) The God who wins (11v36-45)**

At this point we read about "The king" and some people think this is still a prophecy of Antiochus Epiphanes, but a failed one. They think someone wrote all this down after Antiochus Epiphanes had conquered Israel but before his death, and they had a go at predicting the future, including him conquering Egypt (v42) and dying in Israel (v45). But this didn't happen, so it's a failed prophecy, God doesn't know the future after all.

But hold on a second, because there's another option – and I think it's far more likely. v37 says this king will exalt himself above all the gods of his ancestors. But that's not what Antiochus did at all! He worshipped Zeus and the Greek gods! And also, v40 says "At the time of the end" – it would be strange then if it was speaking about 300 BC. And going back to our discussion of "How did this get into the Bible" surely if it was failed prophecy, the Jews would throw it out, or edit it out?

So, a common theory, which I agree with, is that "The king" who "will do as he pleases" in v36 is not AE, but a new character. A prophecy maybe of a specific person, or maybe a pattern of all the people who put themselves in the place of God before the final end.

It could be that we're still waiting for this figure, like the "Man of lawlessness" in 2 Thessalonians. Or the "Antichrist" in 1 John. It could be that before the end of time when Jesus returns, there will be one final scourge, one final enemy who does what is worse than anyone else.

Or it could be that God is giving us a pattern here for all the leaders who set themselves up as gods, oppressing Christians, exalting themselves, saying "unheard of things against the God of gods" (v36). In fact that's what John writes in 1 John – the antichrist is coming, and many antichrists have come. Many will follow this pattern, even if there is a final fulfilment to come. This is a pattern followed by Hitler, Pol Pot, even Putin, and ultimately the devil.

But what happens to this king? And what happens to God's people? Well, just like Xerxes and Alexander the Great, and Antiochus Epiphanes – "He will come to his end, and no one will help him" (v45). God is the God who wins. All these enemies will fall. Even the great final enemy marches to God's appointed timetable. Read the book of Revelation, there is a date set when Satan will be cast into the pit of burning sulphur, and all evil will come to an

end. Keep going, Jesus wins! That's one of the big messages of Daniel. No great enemy can stand in the face of God, he is the God who knows what's coming and who wins in the end.

### 3) The People who Wait (12v1-13)

So, what are we to do? Well let's go on to chapter 12 and see "The People who Wait". "There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt".

Now, with New Testament goggles we miss how amazing this is. This is a promise of resurrection! And that is not common in the Old Testament. This would have been huge for Daniel and for God's people. A promise of life after death. At the end of time, all God's enemies will be defeated and those people who have died will be raised, either to everlasting life, or everlasting contempt, or suffering.

Remember what we saw about Antiochus Epiphanes – the people who know their God will resist him. We resist the temptation to give in to God's enemies and give up on God, by knowing our God – by knowing this promise of resurrection and eternal life. Is your name written in the book? Are you trusting and following Jesus, even when you're tempted to give up? If you've never put your trust in him before, maybe today's the day you could do that. The end is coming, God wins, will you be on his side?

So what's Daniel to do? v4 Seal up the words until the time of the end. That doesn't mean hiding them, that means keep it safe, make sure it gets preserved. Because many will go here and there to increase knowledge – people will look for the truth, so make sure this truth gets preserved.

And in v5-7 we get an interaction between two angels, asking how long it will be before all this happens – wouldn't we like to know that! I'd love to know when Jesus is coming back. But as the kids reminded us last week – we just don't know! But a day is set, the angel is sure "A time, times and half a time" – God knows what that means – but it certainly means there is a set amount of time until the end. We're closer every day, and God has got it on his calendar. "When the power of the holy people has been finally broken" When God's people, when Christians seem to have nothing, even in the darkest days when the church looks weak and powerless. Only then – then, will all these things be completed. Even in the darkest misery, there is hope.

And then Daniel asks a question, basically "What on earth does all this mean? What will the outcome of all this be?" and the angel says "Go your way... Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked." Not everyone will get it. There's division between God's people and the wicked – don't expect some great global Christianity where everyone follows God. Even at the end people will be sinful.

But, there are some people who will make it through. Some people who will continue in dogged, constant endurance. The numbers in v11-12 are a bit confusing. Maybe we'll get it

in heaven – and I think if anyone tells you they’re sure about what it means, I think we should be a little suspicious. I have an answer that I’m happy with, linked in with the seventy sevens of chapter 9, ask me later if you want to know.

But the big thing about these numbers is this – there’s a time of persecution (1290 days) and there are people who will make it through that time, and more, to make it to the end of the 1335 days. Making it through persecution and more. Being the people who know their God, being the people who wait for the end, who persevere through tough persecution, waiting to see God. Those are the people who are given the promise that Daniel receives in v13 “You will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.” If you persevere, if you keep going with Jesus, there is an inheritance for you in heaven. There is eternal life with Jesus to be enjoyed, if you persevere to the end of the 1335 days. Will you be part of the 1335 club?

One thing we’re all looking for as people is to belong. People support football teams to belong to a community, people go to the pub, join gyms, social clubs – all to belong. I think that’s one of the big appeals of the LGBT community for young people today – come and belong, we’re like you. But God promises something better. Being part of the people who know their God – the ones who wait until the end of days, those who are wise, those who awake to everlasting life. The 1335 club.

In Daniel we’ve seen so much about God, his power, his control, his judgment, and today – his knowledge of the future, his victory, and his requirements for his people. If you don’t know Jesus this morning, come and join this people – get on the winning side. If you do already, then wait patiently through suffering for the certain end. This world is not our home, we’re heading to a greater future. When we’re tempted to give in, when it would be easy to go along with what our friends do even when we know it doesn’t please God – be part of the people who wait. Know your God, spend time in his word and in prayer, spend time with other members of the 1335 club, and resist the temptations of this world. And let’s do as 12v3 says “Those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars for ever and ever”. Who can we lead to righteousness? Who can you tell about Jesus this week? How will you live for him as part of the people who wait?

Do not fear, for this truth remains, that our God is the Ancient of Days – the one who has ruled from the beginning and knows the future. There is a God who knows the future, a God who wins – will you be part of the people who wait – the 1335 club?

Let’s pray.