

STUDY NOTES

# DANIEL 11-12

# ALPHA + OMEGA

DANIEL 7-12



## Daniel 11-12

In chapter 10 Daniel is strengthened and assured for the vision the cosmic vision he is about to receive in chapters 11-12.

### **Battles of the Kings of the North and the South (11:1-20)**

History (or the future) unfolds before Daniel in the rather overwhelming detail of chapter 11. Let's attempt to break this down, without getting lost in the detail. Vv 2-4 explain how the Persian kings are conquered by a Greek king, Alexander the Great. Vv 5-20 then turn our attention to the Kings of the North and the South. The Southern kingdom is the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt. The Northern kingdom is the Seleucid dynasty in Syria.

Vv 5-9 speak from the perspective of the Southern Kingdom in its battles with the North, while vv 10-20 focus on the Northern Kingdom in its battles with the South. From the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC (v 4) to the death of the 'tax collector' identified with Seleucus IV in 175 BC (v 20), a century and a half has passed. As always, we may observe that as rulers become stronger their arrogance brings them undone. Kingdoms are broken up, retreats take place, and they eventually fall to another. Human glory is always fleeting. Yet the oscillating picture of vv 1-20 is preparation for an even more imposing rule (humanly speaking) introduced in v 21.

### **The Contemptible Person (11:21-45)**

It is generally agreed that Antiochus Epiphanes IV is the usurper introduced in v 21, whose oppression in the chapter outlines the emphasis on the persecution of the people of God. He deposes the present Jewish High Priest (v 22) and, having no intention of keeping the agreements he has made (v 23), plunders the lands of the wealthy Jews of the day (v 24). Antiochus invaded Egypt twice (vv 25-26 firstly), but on the second time was compelled by the Romans to withdraw (vv 29-30).

Vv 31-36 speak of Antiochus' sacrilege against the temple and ongoing persecution of the people of God, who none the less stand firm. Vv 33-35 appear to refer to what is known as the Maccabean revolt. Vv 36-39 depict the relentless arrogance of the Northern king as his atheism reaches new levels, though it is worth noting that his audacious rule has an ending (v 36).

The prophecy is more problematic to understand in vv 40-45 as the apocalyptic narrative turns from history to a cosmic picture of the end times. Some argue that the rule of Antiochus is therefore pre-figuring the Antichrist to come. The rise and fall of many nations will take place, and persecution of God's people will be the reality until the end comes (v 45).

Throughout the book of Daniel we have noted that its rulers have become progressively more anti-God as the prophecy draws to a conclusion. Here in chapter 11 we are witnessing the climax, which speaks not simply to any particular ruler in history, but to the reality that human pride will ultimately be expressed as opposition to the creator, and those who are loyal to him.

It will always be a question of allegiance. No human being, ruler or otherwise, can claim to be neutral when it comes to our position before the Lord of Heaven and Earth. Whether your opposition or acceptance is passive or active, it is none the less testimony to the reality of where you stand.

### **Protection and Resurrection (12:1-13)**

The relief of chapter 12 is palpable, and can be summed up in two words: 'God knows'.

Michael the archangel and ambassador for the people of God enters, to bring about a conclusion to the battle(s) of history in the midst of a time of distress that has not previously been witnessed (v 1). 'The Book' is the register of all those who have survived God's judgment (v 2) and will live as citizens of the new Jerusalem (see Malachi 3:16-18). The resurrection of v 3 affirms that the future is not in doubt and the outcome for the 'wise' (see Isaiah 52:12) is eternal glory.

This prophecy is sealed in v 4, which speaks both to the authenticity of the testimony, and that it will be preserved until the day it is required. This is the final time of crisis in vv 5-10 where the saints will need it for their perseverance.

Two important questions are asked in this final section, the first by the man standing on the bank of the river, who asks "*How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?*" (v 6). The answer to the question in v 7 is both powerful (both hands raised symbolising heavenly authority), and perplexing: "*a time, times and half a time*". This phrase has been used before in Daniel (7:25) and is alluded to in 9:27. From the book of Daniel the period of time represented has been represented in three ways:

- a) Jewish suffering up until the time of Christ
- b) Jewish suffering between the time of Christ and the destruction of the temple in AD 70.
- c) the period between the first and second comings of Christ.

We assume the message of the prophecy must ultimately apply to all three eras. Even though the suffering of the saints will reach extreme proportions, it will come to a conclusion under God's sovereign hand. Vindication of the saints will take place.

## **Go your way and rest**

The second question raised by Daniel asks about the outcome of the prophecy. He willingly expresses his lack of ability to understand (wouldn't we all!) and is graciously instructed to seal the prophecy. For the present, what he needs to know is sufficient.

So much time has been spent on the numbers in vv 11-12 (see a commentary if required) we won't spend further deciphering them here. The question for us is whether the book of Daniel was written to understand the future in terms of these days, or to sustain and encourage the saints to lift their sights in times of trouble and persecution? The book's conclusion gives us a clue:

*"As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."*

Saints of every era must be drawn to the assurance and confidence that in an uncertain world the future with God is fixed. Because of Christ we know that when the books are opened, and the events and issues have been judged, the saints will be vindicated through the powerful and eternal work of the cross, to receive and share together in the promised inheritance.

*"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4)*

## Getting Started

1. Humanity gets smarter and more able to cope with the troubles of this world each successive generation. Reflect/Discuss.

## Into the text

### Read Daniel 11:1-20

2. Summarise the characteristics of the kings of the North and the South.
3. What do the events of these verses reveal about human rule?

### Read Daniel 11:21-39

4. Summarise the characteristics of the contemptible character of vv 21-39.
5. What is the experience of God's people during this king's reign?
6. Who are the wise of vv 33-35? What makes them so (see also 12:3)?

### Read Daniel 12

7. Despite a time of distress like never before, list the comfort for God's people in vv 1-3?
8. Identify the two questions asked in vv 4-8. In what way do you think these are answered, and what questions do they still leave you (and Daniel) with?
9. What do these concluding verses teach you about suffering as a follower of Christ (see also 2 Cor 1:3-11)?

## Takeaway

10. Why is perseverance hard for the Christian? What are its benefits?
11. Daniel is the model of a servant who is able to live in the world, but not of the world. What lessons have you learned from the book that have enabled you to do likewise?