

Armagh Baptist Church: Sunday 10th March 2019 – 11am

Daniel 11:32-12:4

“How to be wise at the time of the end”

Introduction

Now I know it's a couple of weeks ago since we were last in Daniel, but let me remind you that last time we looked at most of Daniel ch.11 in one go (vs.2-39).

We saw that it was clearly referring to a time of 'trouble' or 'conflict' (9:25, 10:1). It was talking mostly about 3 Greek Kings, who reigned between Daniel's time (in the Medo-Persian Empire) almost down to the time of Christ. Those 3 Greek Kings were all referred to as 'Great'.

1. Alexander the Great (vs.3-4) – He was the first King of Greece (v.2b).

2. Antiochus the Great (vs.10-19) (Antiochus III) – He was brought down (v.19).

3. Antiochus 'The Greater than Great!' (vs.21-35) (Antiochus IV Epiphanes)

We saw how he was the worst of them all. In fact, before the account of this king ends, around about Daniel 11:35 (or maybe Daniel 11:40) the prophecy appears to move seamlessly from talking about **Antiochus** to talking about the **Antichrist** who will appear at the end of time!

Bible Prophecy has a habit of doing that – not just talking about one period in time, but running a number of phases of history all into one. If we were standing where Daniel was standing at his point in history, looking forward into the future it would be a bit like climbing Slieve Donard. I wonder have you ever done it? Starting off in Donard car park, you make your way up alongside the river, through the trees, and when you get to the top of that bit you think you must be nearly there. You're nowhere near it! Then when you get up to the Quarry, you think you're nearly there. Nowhere near! Then when you go up the valley to the saddle, you think you're nearly there. No! Then you have to turn left, and go up a steep section along the wall, and when you get to the top of that, you think you're there, and then you see the peak of Slieve Donard beginning to appear out of the mist, and soon you get to the top!

There are a lot of false dawns along the way. Many times you think you're at the end, but you're not. It's a bit like that with Bible prophecy.

Daniel got to see to the end of the Babylonian Empire (ch.5).
Then he got to see to the end of the Medo-Persian Empire (ch.8).
Then he gets to see the 3 Great Kings of the Greek Empire (ch.11).
And the last one just merges into a character who'll be around at the end of time. The New Testament calls him the **Antichrist**, or the **Man of Lawlessness**.

In the middle of this section we got our text last time – the lens through which, I believe, we must see this chapter. Our text last time was Daniel 11:32...

***'BUT the people who know their God will firmly resist him.'* (v.32 - NIV)**

So that is the secret of being able to stand up against this ungodly ruler, this antichrist, whenever he appears. We must know our God in an intimate way, if we're going to be able to stand firm, if we're going to be able to firmly resist him.

But now I want you to listen to the verses that follow (vs.33-35)

*'And **the wise** among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall **stumble** by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder...
...and **some of the wise** shall **stumble** so that they may be refined, purified, and made white,
until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.'* (vs.34-35)

Now there are a few things I want you to notice before we go any further:

- Notice the reference to some people who are called **'the wise'** (v.33)
- Notice that for some days some of the wise will **'stumble'** (v.33 & 35)
- And notice the phrase **'until the time of the end'** (v.35)

A few things we want to think about this morning, as we come towards the end of this great Book of Daniel. (We have another one or two studies still to go).

1. Who are the Wise?

'The Wise' is actually a term that is used about 158 times in the whole Bible. 128 of those are in the Old Testament; 30 of them are in the New Testament.

The first one is in Genesis 3:6 when Eve discovered that the fruit on 'the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil' was good for making you **'wise'**.

One of the last references to wisdom in Scripture is 2 Timothy 3:15...

*'From a child you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you **wise for salvation**, through faith in Christ Jesus.'*

The last is James 1:5 – *'If any of you lacks **wisdom**, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault.'*

So the question is: where does **true wisdom** come from?

It's a question that runs throughout Scripture.

This term **'the wise'** actually appears 17 times in the Book of Daniel alone.

So we are meant to understand something about this term by now, since we've made our way through the whole book.

Do you remember the battle that was going on in the earlier chapters of Daniel? Every time King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, what did he do?

He called for the **'wise men'** of Babylon.

Were they able to interpret his dreams? No!

Why? - Because their *'wisdom'* was only of this world.

Who was able to interpret his dreams? Daniel!

Why? - *'Because he had the spirit of the holy gods within him.'* (4:18).

We would say, because he had the Holy Spirit in him.

That's what Nebuchadnezzar came to realise, and that's why he continually put Daniel in charge of the **'wise men'** in Babylon, because Daniel had true wisdom, for he was in touch with the Living God - and through Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar actually came to believe in the Living God and to worship Him, as God!

At the end of the Babylonian Empire, the last king in charge was Belshazzar (ch.5) When the writing appeared on the wall at the party that night, it was the Queen Mother who remembered that there was only one **'wise man'** in Babylon worth sending for - and that was Daniel. He interpreted the hand-writing on the wall, delivered the message to the king, and that night the king's life was brought to an abrupt end, and so was the Babylonian Empire! (Daniel 5:7-8)

And then we come to ch.11:33-35. We've just been told that the only way to stand up against this awful king - whether he's **Antiochus** Epiphanes at the end of the O.T. - or whether he's the **Antichrist** at the end of the N.T. - is to really *know* God!

*'The people who **know** their God shall stand firm and take action.'* (Daniel 11:32)

Now **'Wisdom'** is not the same as **'Knowledge.'** I'm sure you've heard the saying that *'Some people can have so much sense; they have no common sense!'*

True wisdom is being able to put the knowledge that you do have into practice.

Wisdom is being able to **apply** what you **know** about God to your everyday life.

So what do we **'know'** because of our studies in Daniel?

- We know that **God is in control** from start to finish.

- We know that **Our side wins in the end.**

- We know that **All of history is HIS Story.**

- We know that **Times are going to be tough.** That all kinds of wicked kings and kingdoms will rise and fall, and that it will get worse towards the end, with the appearing of the antichrist, but we also know what lies beyond that - there's going to be a **general resurrection** of all who are in their graves (12:1-3).

We're all going to stand before the King of kings and Lord of lords. We're all going to have to give an account of ourselves. So, with that end in view, with the rewards that are awaiting us in mind, it would be foolish to go along with the *'wisdom of this world'* and try to convince ourselves that God doesn't exist, or that we're just the

products of random evolution, so we can live as we like, and when we're dead, we're gone, and there's nothing coming after!

No! Now that we know what lies ahead, we'd be better to **'wise-up'** and realise that there is a God that one day we will have to stand before.

There is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned, and the only way to get right with God is to realise that...

'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God' and to realise that *'from childhood'* we have had the privilege of **'knowing the Holy Scriptures'** and to realise that they can *'make us wise for salvation'* but that's only *'through faith in Christ Jesus.'*

This theme of the wise and foolish continues on into the New Testament:

In Matthew ch.2 we have the visit of **'The Wise Men'** - where did they come from? They came from the East - from Babylon or Persia.

So enough of *'the Gospel'* (the Good News of a coming King) must have been left behind by Daniel and his friends in that part of the world, that they knew to look out for him all those years later. And why did these Wise Men travel all that way? Because they were looking for the New King who had been born. They had seen his star in the east and they had come to **Worship Him!** - Wise Men indeed!

What about a few chapters later in Matthew ch.7? The story Jesus told about... **The Wise and Foolish Builders.** What was the difference between them?

The foolish man built his house upon the sand, the wise man built his house upon the rock - that Rock was Christ Jesus. But how did Jesus explain the difference? The wise man is the one who *'hears my word and puts it into practice in his life.'* That's the one who is building their house upon the rock. Not just having **knowledge** of God's Word, but having the **wisdom** to put it into practice in his life and act upon it, by believing in the one it tells you about - The Lord Jesus Christ.

And then what about the story Suzanne told us about in the Children's Talk a few weeks ago? **The Wise and Foolish Virgins** - or the Ten Bridesmaids (Matt 25).

Five were **wise**; five were foolish. They were all supposedly waiting for the coming of the bridegroom. But five of them had come prepared; five of them hadn't. Five of them were **wise** and brought extra oil for their lamps. Five were foolish and hadn't. So when the bridegroom finally appeared: five were ready to go in with him to the marriage supper; five of them weren't, and they were shut out!

So it's the importance of being wise; the importance of being ready for the coming king. And that's the significance of **'the wise'** that we read about in Daniel 11 & 12. They were **wise** because they were looking for, and expecting, the coming King!

'The Wise' in their generation, will be just like Daniel was in his generation. They'll know not to go along with the crowd; they'll know that they need to stand out and be different; they'll know that God is control no matter what else is happening, and they'll keep believing that, and looking forward to Christ's coming, no matter what trials or tribulations come their way. **So are you one of the wise?**

Look at Dan.11:33 – *'The wise among the people shall make many understand.'* They will try to convince others to get right with the Lord during these difficult days:

*'The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
and he that winneth souls is wise' (Proverbs 11:30)*

We get the same idea at the end of this section in Daniel 12:3 – at the end of time, beyond the General Resurrection that is talked about in v.2, we read:

*'And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above;
and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.'*

So the people who are truly **'wise'** in God's eyes will be busy seeking to win others for the Lord during these days of trouble and turmoil - and they will succeed – some will join them. Maybe not as many as they would want, but some will nevertheless. They will leave the folly of this world behind, and they will come to trust in Christ as their Lord and Saviour. They will shine like stars forever!

2. Why will some of the wise stumble? (vs.33 & 35)

Notice that some of *'the wise'* will **stumble** in these difficult days, because the pressure will be so great - the pressure to conform to the ways of this world; to the thinking of this world; to the wisdom of this world. But as it says here: though some stumble because of sword, flame, captivity and plunder (v.33)...this will actually be a time of refining, a time of being purified and made white until the time of the end.

And that is still the case to this day – wherever the Church of Jesus Christ is passing through a time of **Persecution** it is always a time of **Purification**, a time of refining for God's people. The church that comes out the other side after a period of persecution is always a purer church than what it was before. Just think of the church in China, compared to the church in the West. We're flabby by comparison, they are fit and lean and ready to stand up to anything!

So let me ask you: are you among **the wise** this morning? Have you heard God's Word and put it into practice in your life. Has it made you **wise** for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus? Or are you trapped in the *'wisdom of this world!'* ?

(See 1 Corinthians 1:18-31) *'Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?'*

So we've thought about *the wise*, and why they might *stumble*, but the question is:

3. When is the time of the end?

That's the big question that everybody wants answered!

As well as noticing the reference to *'the wise'* in this passage: (11:33-35) (12:3,10) And the fact that even some of them will *'stumble'*; It's also important to notice the references to **'the time of the end'** – four of them: Daniel 11:35 & 40, 12:1 & 4. That's why we know this passage is getting us pretty near the top of the mountain!

So much of this chapter has already been fulfilled in history, in the Greek Empire from 336 to 163 BC. But as I said earlier, this passage (v.36 onwards; or certainly from v.40 onwards) has moved seamlessly from talking about **Antiochus** to talking about the **Antichrist**...

Not all of the details in vs.40-45 can be accounted for in the life and times of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. A lot of the descriptions do fit with him, but some don't.

The description of **Antiochus** in this passage merges into the description of the **Antichrist**, who will appear at the end of time (*'the time of the end'* 11:35,40; 12:4)

The point is that the reign of **Antiochus** and the reign of the **Antichrist** will be marked by the same characteristics:

(v.36) **'The king shall do as he wills.'** – It will be a time of persecution!

It's also something else. This is a king who exalts himself way above God! (v.36)

**'He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god,
and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods.'** (v.36)

*'He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers,
or to the one beloved by women.
He shall not pay attention to any other god,
for he shall magnify himself above all.'*

We might describe this today as Atheism. The idea that there is no God. That God is dead, has been most prevalent in this past century e.g. Albania: *'God does not exist.'* But as I said last time, this was the beginning of the Emperor Cult – where the emperor himself claimed to be God, and demanded to be worshipped as God. The Greeks started it, the Romans perfected it, demanding that citizens would confess: *'Caesar as Lord!'* instead of saying *'Jesus is Lord!'* – but there are still plenty of megalomaniacs in power in our world today! They think they're in control!

But look also at v.38:

*'He shall honour **the god of fortresses** instead of these.
A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honour with gold and silver,
with precious stones and costly gifts.'*

As I said last time, just think of all the money that has been spent on military hardware down through the centuries and you get the idea:

Some put their trust in false gods, idols and images, some put their trust in great wealth, but some put their trust in weapons of war, and in their military hardware, and think they are invincible.

(v.39) *'He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god.'*
'Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honour.
*He shall make them rulers over many
and shall divide the land for a price.'*

And then in vs.40-44 the writer runs away with himself. These verses cannot be applied to the life and times of **Antiochus** IV Epiphanes, but these verses will apply to the **Antichrist** who is still to come. (Read vs.40-44). He will be out to dominate the whole of the Middle East, if not the world, as he sweeps through many nations! But look at the end of v.45:

'Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.'

This was true of **Antiochus**; it will also be true of the **Antichrist**. He'll be gone!

Now the New Testament writers take up some of these ideas and give us a fuller picture – such as 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. **The Man of Lawlessness.**

John, in his epistles, makes some very important points about **the Antichrist**. (See 1 John 2:18-22, 1 John 4:1-4, 2 John 7) He tells us that not just one Antichrist, but many antichrists will come, and have already come! So 'the spirit of antichrist' will be prevalent in this age in which we live. Everything around us will be sounding more and more anti-christian!

And isn't that what we are facing right now!? With the changes in marriage laws, abortion laws, transgender issues, etc, etc. - The squeeze has already started!

It's not going to get any better; it's going to get worse. That's why we need to be **wise**. We need to know our God. We need to know how things are going to develop, and in being forewarned we can also be forearmed, and able to stand.

So in short this morning, it's time to **'Wise-up!' – it's time to be wise like Daniel**. Stand up for God and His Word and His Truth. Don't be taken in by falsehood/lies!