

**Armagh Baptist Church: Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 – 11am**

**Daniel 12:5-13**

**“What do we do between now and then?”**

**Introduction**

It's taken us a while, but we've got there. We're finishing our Daniel series today! It's taken us 20 sermons to get through it. As I said last Sunday morning, I've learned a lot preparing for this series. I hope you have too, as you've listened and tried to follow it week by week. It hasn't been easy, but I hope it has been useful?

Last week we focussed in on the four verses at the beginning of this chapter. Those four verses talked about: **What's going to happen at the end of time?**

1. There'll be a **Time of Trouble** like never before (v.1a)
2. Then an **Important Book** will be opened (v.1b)
3. There'll be a **Physical Resurrection** for all (v.2)
4. That will usher in a **Glorious Future for Some** (v.3)
5. But it will be **Eternal Condemnation for Others** (v.3)

So now that we know all this, the question for us this morning is this:

**What are we supposed to do between now and then?**

A Reggae singer from the 1970s called Jonny Nash from Jamaica used to sing:

***'I can see clearly now the rain has gone!'***

Maybe that's how you feel as you come to the end of our studies in Daniel today? You can see things a little more **clearly now** as far as end-times prophecy goes. Or maybe you can identify better with another one of his songs. It was called:

**1. 'There are more questions than answers!' (See vs.5-8)**

I think that's how Daniel must have felt as he came to the end of this vision in ch.12:5. It started away back in ch.10:4.

Remember, he'd been standing on the banks of the River Tigris, when he looked up and saw a man clothed in linen, with a belt of gold round his waist.

We weren't sure whether it was a pre-incarnate vision of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, or whether it was the angel Gabriel who had been sent to give him answers to his prayers.

But now that the vision of chs.10-12 has come to an end, we are brought back to that scene by the Tigris River in ch.12:5...

*'Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream, and someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream...*

**Q1. 'How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?'**

There's the first question that Daniel still has in his mind as we come to the end of this book and to the end of his life. **'How long will it be till the end of all this?'**

And I think it will actually comfort you to read on into vs.7-8...

*'And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. - I heard, but I did not understand.'*

I don't know about you, but that's strangely comforting! As we come to the end of the 12 chapters of the Book of Daniel, we've heard a lot of wonderful stuff, we've been transported back and forwards throughout time, from Daniel's time down to the cross, and the present, and on into the future! We've heard a lot, but there are some things that we still don't understand! - **'I heard, but I did not understand.'**

**And that's OK!**

Maybe it was particularly that phrase, *'that it would be for a time, times and half a time'* that Daniel didn't quite understand. If so, he's in good company. I can't find any Bible Commentator who can give me a clear answer as to what that means!

Some think it refers to a period of one year (a time) and then 2 years (times plural) and then half a year (half a time) giving us a total time period of 3½ years.

But if that is so, then what does that mean in the context to an answer to the question that was asked in v.6 *'How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?'* There is no way that all we have looked at in this vision that runs from Daniel chs.10-12 can fit into 3½ years! Some of it was talking about Antiochus Epiphanes 150 years before Christ, and some of it was talking about a Time of Great Turmoil or Tribulation that is still to come just before the end of time. So there is no way that all of this can fit into 3½ years.

This is a phrase that we have come across a number of times before in Daniel. *'A time'* – seems to refer to a king's rise to power. *'Times'* (plural) – seems to refer to that time when he is in power and looks like he can go on forever! (We even talk about *the life and times* of a particular king).

'Half a time' – reminds us that even the greatest king's reign can suddenly be cut short!

So if that's a good way to understand these terms, then we need to remember that God has it all under control. There will be the rise and fall of kings, nations and empires. They will look as if they're going to go on forever. But God is able to cut any of them short in His time. We have to keep believing that God is in control!

Remember, when we started our series in Daniel, there was something new happening as far as Brexit was concerned, practically every week, and we were told we'd be leaving the European Union on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019? Well, here we are on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, and we still haven't left, and the sky hasn't fallen in! And we've seen that Mrs May isn't in control; Parliament isn't in control - **God is!**

But this heavenly being, with his hands raised towards heaven, said something else in v.7. *'When the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.'*

In other words, when God's People look as if they've had enough; when God's people look as if they're about to be completely wiped out; when all looks lost, that's exactly when God will step in and bring it all to an end. Remember v.1...

*'There shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation – a time of trouble, the likes of which we have never seen before – 'but at that time your people shall be delivered' – rescued, saved – 'everyone whose name shall be found written in the book of life.'* (v.1)

God will not abandon His People – even at the very end of time. He will step in, and bring this old world to an end, but He will rescue His People before He does so. That's our Hope! That's what we need to keep remembering. God's got this! God is in control – right to the end!

So as you can see, **'there are more questions than answers'**. Daniel hears, but he doesn't understand. And then comes another question from Daniel's lips:

## **Q2. 'O my Lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?' (v.8)**

What's going to be the end of all this? Daniel has been told so much, he can hardly take it all in, his mind is in turmoil, trying to sort it all out in his head, but he can't. And you know what? That's probably where most of us are this morning too! We've heard so much over the last number of months as we've made our way through this wonderful Book of Daniel, but we have to admit, there is still so much that we don't understand. How will it all come to an end? What will be the outcome

of it all? There are some things that **'we can see clearly now'** - but there are still **'more questions than answers!'**

And you know, this time, Daniel is simply told in v.9...

**'Go your way, Daniel,**  
*For the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.'*

He's not going to get any more information. He's not going to get any more Divine revelation. That's all he was going to get, at that time, 500 years before Christ. It would be the end of the First Century AD before any more revelation would be given. And that would be to the Apostle John, as he sat imprisoned on the Island of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea. That's the next time any more revelation about *'the outcome of these things'* would be given.

We have the Book of Revelation at the end of our Bibles. It's the Final Book of the New Testament that was written. But even when you've studied all the way through Daniel in the O.T. and then all the way through Revelation in the N.T. you have to admit, if you're being anyway honest, that there's still a lot we don't know.

God has only revealed what we **need to know** about the future, not **all there is to know** about the future. As it says in v.4 *'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.'* But that doesn't mean we'll **'know it all'** before the end comes.

N.B. All of this should be sounding alarm bells for you, as far as preachers of end-times prophecy are concerned. Especially those who try to tell you that what's happening in Europe, or what's happening in Brexit, or what's happening in Syria, or what's happening in Israel, at the moment, are all particular signs that we're coming to the end of time. Down through the ages there have been all kinds of preachers who have put a date on the return of the Lord, and then when it doesn't happen, they revise their dates, and set another one! Jesus clearly told us in Mark 13:32, while he was here on earth, that *'concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.'* So if Jesus didn't even know the time of his second coming, then who do these preachers think they are, when they claim to know more than the Lord himself!

I am aware of other churches, even here in Armagh at the moment, who are running preaching series on the Book of Daniel, or the Book of Revelation, or they're running a series of prophetic ministry meetings. All I will say is, be careful! I have tried to be faithful to the passages, week after week, as they have come up in the Book of Daniel. I have tried not to speculate. I have tried not to go beyond what is written. I have tried not to rip verses out of their context. I have tried to use the same principles of Bible interpretation in this book, as I would use in any other book of the Bible. So I've tried to be faithful, and one day I will answer to God for

my teaching. But please be careful when other preachers are making wild claims about what's going to happen at the end of time. They don't know it all; none of us knows it all. We have been told enough, but we haven't been told everything. So that's where we need to leave it. Daniel was told to go his way. We need to also!

So it's not so much that we can see everything clearly now. There are still more questions than answers. Why?

### **Because God's Word is Shut up and Sealed until the time of the end (v.9)**

**So let me leave you with Two Questions:**

#### **1. Will you be Wicked or Wise? (v.10)(v.3)**

Look at v.10 for a moment. It says...

*'Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but **the wicked shall act wickedly.** And **none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.'** (v.10)*

There are two groups of people mentioned in that verse: the wicked and the wise. It reminds me of v.3 that we touched on last time...

*'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.'** (v.3)*

There are clearly two categories of people that we are meant to see here before we leave this book. Some who are wicked, and Some who are wise.

Well, the wicked are those who are against God's people. They're the ones who are unleashing the persecution on those who are wise, those who are the Lord's.

You see, as we get closer and closer to the end of time, things will become so much clearer. Things will get better and better, but they will also grow worse and worse at one and the same time. What do I mean by that?

Well, as people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation come to faith in Christ, then the church of Jesus Christ will be growing and growing. More and more people from every background under heaven will be added to the church of Jesus Christ worldwide, as they put their trust in Christ for salvation.

It'll get better and better. - But in another sense it will grow worse and worse.

What do I mean by that? Well, opposition to the Gospel will be on the increase. Persecution of God's people will be on the increase. It will be harder and harder to stand up and be counted as a Christian. But just like it was for Daniel when he arrived in Babylon, it will still be possible.

We saw that phrase at the start of v.10 somewhere before:

***'Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined.'***

We saw it before in Daniel 11:32-35. Just after that great verse about really knowing God: *'The people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.'* In the midst of severe persecution they will still be able to stand up for their faith.

But then in those verses that followed it said that some believers would stumble:

*'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. When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. 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.'***

The persecution is going to be very hard to stand up to. It will be a time of turmoil like we've never seen before. But even as the believers pass through that time, they will be purified, made white, and they will be refined. They will come out through the other side, truly the Lord's and truly wise, for all they've been through.

That's the wise. But the wicked will continue to act wickedly. They will continue to be anti-God and against God's people. So there will be two very definite groups. Two very distinct camps. You're either in one or the other. So are you wicked? Or are you wise? There will be no sitting on the fence when that day comes. There will be no ifs or buts then. Either it'll be obvious you belong to the Lord, or it won't. Which is it for you this morning? Because as we saw last week, we will all be raised out of our graves, but some will be raised to eternal life, and some will be raised to eternal condemnation. Which will it be for you? And so my final question:

#### **2. Will you Rest and then Rise? (vs.11-13)**

Look at vs.11-13 as we come to a close...

*'And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be **1290 days.**'* (v.11)

Again, we have more questions than answers here! And Daniel isn't given any explanation as to what these numbers mean. From the time that the end of the regular burnt offering in the temple in Jerusalem, and the setting up of the abomination that causes desolation on the altar, there will be 1290 days.

Again, that's a period of roughly 3½ years. In fact it's 43 months: (an extra month).

But, no sooner does it say that figure, than it quickly adds this:

*'Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1335 days.'* (v.12)

If the first figure, 1290 days, was a month longer than 3½ years, then this figure is another 45 days longer again. 2½ months longer than 3½ years! It's hard to know what is meant here. Again no commentator seems to be able to come up with an answer. But the idea seems to be – **Hold on just a little while longer!**

If you were passing through a time of severe persecution, and you felt like giving up, wondering if you could go on even a day longer, it would be good to know that the Lord would come in a month's time, or two month's time, or 2½. It would just be good to know there was some end in view, and that it wasn't too far away.

In Revelation 6:10, when the souls of the martyrs under the altar wanted to know, 'How long until the Lord would avenge their blood?' they were told to wait, or 'Rest a little longer.' We would love to know the date and the time of when the Lord will return, but as we get to the end of the book of Daniel, we still don't know, and Daniel doesn't know! But he was told this in v.13:

***'But go your way till the end.***

*And you shall **rest** and shall **stand** in your allotted place at the end of the days.'*

**And we need to do the same!** No, we don't know everything about 'end-times' as a result of studying Daniel, but we do know enough. God is in control, and He will bring all things to an end in His time, and in His way. We need to go our way in the meantime. Get on with life, until that day comes. But make sure you're ready for it!

## **Conclusion**

I want to finish with a quotation from the Book of Job – one of the oldest books in our Bibles. It comes from the same time as Genesis. It's Job 19:24-29.

<sup>24</sup> ***Oh that with an iron pen and lead  
they were engraved in the rock forever!***

<sup>25</sup> ***For I know that my Redeemer lives,  
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.***

<sup>26</sup> ***And after my skin has been thus destroyed,***

***yet in my flesh I shall see God,***

<sup>27</sup> ***whom I shall see for myself,***

***and my eyes shall behold, and not another.***

***My heart faints within me!***

<sup>28</sup> ***If you say, 'How we will pursue him!'  
and, 'The root of the matter is found in him,***

<sup>29</sup> ***be afraid of the sword,  
for wrath brings the punishment of the sword,  
that you may know there is a judgment.'***

This teaching is as old as time. There is going to be a judgement. Don't doubt it!

If the Lord hasn't returned in our life-time, we are all going to die one day. We are all going to rest in our graves until the end of time. But after our flesh has decayed, we are going to be raised to life again.

In my flesh I shall see God. I shall see Him for myself. My eyes shall behold him. Not somebody else's. My heart faints within me at the very thought of seeing an utterly holy God; who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. But I will see Him!

**The question is, can you say: '*I know that my Redeemer lives!*'**

Do you know Jesus Christ as your Redeemer, as your Lord and as your Saviour?

If you do, then you have nothing to fear. Because at the end of time He is going to be there too. He's going to return from heaven and at the end He will stand upon the earth. And we shall see Him!

The thought of looking into the eyes of an utterly holy God should put fear and dread into every one of our hearts, because we're all sinners!

But the thought of standing before Him, not in our own strength, or in our own righteousness, but standing there with Him, Christ our Redeemer, and clothed in His perfect righteousness – that's what's going to make all the difference.

We'll have nothing to fear!

**So will you be Wise, or Wicked?**

**Will you Rest in your grave, and then Rise to meet the Risen Lord**

To see the holiness of God, and to bask in his glory forevermore?

Which will it be for you? Will you be Wise or Wicked?

**'Go your way' - but make sure you're ready for what is yet to come!**