



Study 6— A Vision of the End

Daniel 10-12

Imagine you were sitting on the bus preparing your bible study for Daniel. The person next to you notices what you are doing and asks - 'What's the book of Daniel about?' From what you've learnt over the last 5 weeks, what would you say?

From what you knew of Daniel before you started this series, do you think your understanding has changed at all?

Setting the Scene

These three chapters are a record of what Daniel saw while he was standing near the Tigris River (10:4-5 and 12:5-6). In this case Daniel is not given a dream as we've seen many other times. He's given a 'revelation' or vision. Other people are with him but they run away in terror – 10:7. As you read these chapters you'll notice that the vision is different from what we have seen so far in Daniel. There's no mention of beasts coming out of the sea, no bears, goats or horns. But there are kings and rulers – which is what we have come to expect.

Read chapter 10

According to 10:1 & 14, what can you say about this vision that Daniel saw?

What is the effect on Daniel of being given this vision?

We're now going to look at the central part of the vision – chapter 11. As you'll discover, it can be somewhat hard to follow! But as you read, keep a little scorecard and see if you can count how many military campaigns are conducted between the 'king of the South' and 'the king of the North'.

Read chapter 11

The vision presents the ongoing rivalry between two kings and the surrounding struggle. Historians have pointed out that the various elements in this vision match with striking detail the tumultuous times that was the period following the disintegration of the Greek empire in the 2nd Century BC . Following the death of Alexander, the empire was divided between four of his generals (11:4). At this point, the land of Israel finds itself at the centre of two of these new Greek empires - the Ptolemies (South- Egypt) and the Seleucids (the North- the old empire of Persia and Babylon). There are many battles and much political maneuvering in their quest for supremacy. From the Seleucids in the North emerges the power hungry and deceptive King Antiochus IV or Antiochus Epiphanies who will brutally attempt to Hellenize the people of Israel. Jewish freedom fighters resist Antiochus and much blood is shed.

The sad reality that Daniel sees in the vision is that God's people will be caught up in the turmoil. From 11:29-33 what can God's people in the future expect?

Despite the fact that things look so bleak, it is not all bad news. From verses such as 11:19-20, 27, and 31-35, what is 'the light at the end of the tunnel'?

Read Daniel 12:1-4

Daniel's vision seems to be bi-focal – he sees a picture of the second century BC, but he can also see beyond this to another time, even further away. What can we say about 'the end'?

How does this compare with what we've have seen in the rest of Daniel?

Read Daniel 12:5-13

What indications are there that Daniel is not to know when these things will be fulfilled?

What is Daniel told to do?

As we've worked away through the book of Daniel two big themes have cropped up again and again. Firstly – God's people encounter suffering, sometime almost unbearable suffering. And secondly – God is powerful and good. These two things may seem incompatible but we need to hold them together. The reality is, that when God's people are faithful to Him, the world's authorities are inevitably opposed to them. But it's not that God has abandoned them. God is sovereign. God has these authorities in his control. And he will humble them and bring them to an end.

That combination of suffering and, God's goodness and sovereignty is seen most powerfully with Jesus dieing on a cross. The suffering that Jesus went through was almost too much to bear – abandoned by God, absorbing the punishment that others deserve. But this is God's good purpose for the world to bring about relationship between himself and humanity. And ultimately, Jesus isn't defeated. Jesus is raised from the dead to experience a new and glorified life.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 and 4:16-18. What does this passage tell us about Paul's attitude toward the inevitable suffering that came upon him as an apostle? What positive features or outcomes from this suffering are there for him?

When things are going badly for you because of your resolve to be a Christian, what is your first reaction? What have we learnt in this study that might change this reaction?