

## “Those Who Are Wise”

Daniel 11-12  
September 30, 2007

There is a choice to be made.

Daniel is all about the choice to be made: do we trust in the sovereign God, or do we put our trust in anything else?

It is a choice with consequences. It is a choice that has eternal ramifications.

We are wrapping up the sermon series on Daniel this morning, covering both chapters 11 and 12. I am only going to gloss over what is in chapter 11. Before we read Chapter 12, let me give a brief summary of what happens in Chapter 11. It is an more complete explanation of Daniel’s previous visions, talking about things yet to come. For our purposes, what we need to know is this: God reveals, Daniel sees, history records.

The messenger begins with the Persian empire that came to power within Daniel’s lifetime. Next, he describes the Greek empire under Alexander, including the division into four regions after Alexander’s death. This is 200 years after Daniel’s time. Then, there are details about the 150 years of in-fighting between the Egyptian and Syrian parts of the Greek Empire after Alexander’s death. Ultimately, as we have seen in earlier sermons, the “little horn”, Antioches Ephiaphanies, would arise and commit the sacrilege in the temple. Verses 31 – 35 culminate the description of the rebellion against God,

Forces sent by him shall occupy and profane the temple and fortress. They shall abolish the regular burnt offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate. He shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant; but the people who are loyal to their God shall stand firm and take action. The wise among the people shall give understanding to many; for some days, however, they shall fall by sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder. When they fall victim, they shall receive a little help, and many shall join them insincerely. *Some of the wise shall fall, so that they may be refined, purified, and cleansed, until the time of the end, for there is still an interval until the time appointed.*

The “interval” is the description of the time in which we live. During the interval will come the Antichrist. The final battle is described, with the conclusion being, “He [the antichrist] shall come to his end, with no one to help him.” In other words, God will prevail.

And that brings us to Chapter 12.

Daniel 12

I want to focus our attention on verse 3. Certainly, as you listen, you hear the theme of God's sovereignty and the importance of persevering. But verse 3 is a challenge to us. There are two aspects to it: those who are wise, and those who lead many to righteousness.

### **Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky**

What is wisdom?

Well, the Old Testament teaches us that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to discern between good and evil. Shunning evil is wisdom. Wisdom is the value of experience. Wisdom is following God's law.

Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men. Wisdom leads in straight paths. A wise person is humble. Wisdom is cause for a man to be respected. Wisdom is better than weapons of war. Wisdom is mightier than strength.

The New Testament teaches us Christ is the power of wisdom, the power of God revealed. The foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. Our faith does not rest on man's wisdom, but on God's power. The wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. But the wisdom of God is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Wisdom is seeing the whole picture – even the part that is not visible to the eye. The story is told about Henry Ford, who asked electrical genius Charlie Steinmetz to build the generators for his factory. One day the generators ground to a halt, and the repairmen couldn't find the problem. So Ford called Steinmetz, who tinkered with the machines for a few hours and then threw the switch. The generators whirred to life--but Ford got a bill for \$10,000 from Steinmetz. Ford, who was known for being rather tightfisted, inquired why the bill was so high.

Steinmetz's reply: For tinkering with the generators, \$10. For knowing where to tinker, \$9,990. Ford paid the bill.

Wisdom is valuable. Godly wisdom is eternally valuable. Wisdom is seeing the whole picture – even the part not visible to the eye. You see, wisdom recognizes God's sovereignty even when under the rule of an earthly emperor. Daniel remained faithful and recognized God's sovereignty under two empires and four rulers. Wisdom recognizes God's sovereignty even when threatened with fire. Wisdom recognizes God's sovereignty when threatened with lions. Wisdom recognizes God's sovereignty when telling the king that his rule has been weighed and found wanting. Wisdom is following God obediently. Daniel followed God faithfully.

The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the LORD is the realization that God is holy – purely, eternally, transcendently, entirely holy – and that our sin is an offense against him. God is more than “disappointed” in our sin; God will not allow

rebellion to exist within the Kingdom of heaven. When we realize that our lives are touched through-and-through with rebellion, we fear.

If you wonder about whether that is true, consider the examples in the Bible where individuals encounter the throne room in heaven. Isaiah says it best when he realizes where he is, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips from a people of unclean lips.”

Remember in Daniel 9? Daniel confesses the unfaithfulness of the people, including himself. Why does he do that? Not just because he wants to tell God what he thinks God wants to hear, but because he is genuinely repenting of the ways he has rebelled against God. He asks God to forgive the people based on God’s righteousness, not because the people deserve it or have earned it. Only God can save. And a savior is what we need.

Daniel makes it clear that God is more than a self-help program. God is the absolute king, the one who has total authority to make decisions. It is God’s will that is revealed to Daniel, he sees it, and history later records its fulfillment.

So often these days, we have reduced God to something like, the force that can help me have a better life. Does God want us to live fulfilled lives? Absolutely. However, a fulfilled life begins with understanding our relationship with God. Until we do that, we find ourselves struggling to unsuccessfully be the god of our own lives. We were not designed to be gods. We cannot stand in the presence of God’s holiness in our own power.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom because it results for our realization we need a savior. We are incapable of saving ourselves in the face of God’s unwavering holiness. Our sin is a rejection of God’s holiness, essentially saying that we know better than God what is good and what is good for us. We need a savior who is able to deal with our sins, who is able to stand in our place.

Receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is the first manifestation of wisdom.

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the sky because they will be washed in the blood of the Lamb to be white as snow, pure and clean. They will shine like the brightness of the sky because they will be living in the presence of the living God, who Himself will be their light. It is the promise of life as the eternal children of the kingdom of heaven. Paul says it this way in Philippians 3,

Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, but the power that also enables him to make subject to himself.

(And he concludes) Therefore, my brothers and sisters, who I long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Those who are wise will live their identity: children of the king. They will shine like the brightness of the sky because God will transform their humiliation to his glory.

**Those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.**

Who are the people who brought you to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? If you are here today and not done so, please, please, please stop listening to me and start praying that God would open your eyes and your heart to his saving grace.

But for those of you who have been born again, who have accepted God's gracious gift in salvation through Jesus Christ, who were the people God used to draw you? For many, it was their parents. For others, it was a friend. For other still, it was someone who spoke to you honestly about how your life was leading to destruction. For most of us, it was not just one person.

What was it about those people? You admired their lives. They had integrity. They had peace. They struggled, too, but there was something guiding their steps that garnered your respect.

One of the people I who drew me to Christ was the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in West Chester when I was growing up. His name is Bob Young. Week after week he stood in the pulpit and proclaimed the gospel. He was winsome, measured, and thoughtful. He had a great sense of humor. He was not linear; by that I mean, he could tell a story. You never knew where it was going to end up until, pow! The point jumped out at you. I have been blessed to go back and visit several times since my ordination.

The older I get, the more I respect the things I saw in him. We are very, very different kinds of people. Even so, I remember his way and his words when I meet with people in the office. I think about him as I make decisions in ministry. I thought he was really wise. I look at the legacy of his ministry and marvel at how God used him to touch and transform so many lives. In this life Dr. Young will never know the scope of impact his life has had; yet, in eternity, I am confident that he will shine like the stars forever with the joy of seeing how God blessed others through him.

When I think of a pastor, I think of Dr. Young – and how different we are. But if God uses me to reach people the way Dr. Young reached me, praise God. I won't see it or know it in this life, but I hope and pray that God will use me in the circumstances of my life so that I, too, am filled with the eternal joy of seeing how God has blessed others through me.

Who are the people looking to you? Your family? Is there anyone in your family who has not received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? How about your friends? If you can say no to both of those, that everyone you know is a disciple of Jesus Christ, praise God. However, the job is not done. Is there anyone here in Chula Vista that does not know the good news?

I suspect so. If we were to go out this morning and drove around to see what everyone who is *not* here is doing, I think we would see many, many folks who are lost.

Let me be clear. It is not my expectation that any of you will save anyone – not one of us is capable of doing that. All we are able to do is share the good news that we have received. Only God can save. Some will have ears to hear, others will not. We have been given this great treasure to share, we cannot bury it here on this campus and hope that others will come looking. We are called to “go,” leading others to righteousness, not to stay put hoping that they will find us.

The promise is: those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever.

### Conclusion

So, as we conclude the Book of Daniel for our sermon series, we should take a moment to consider what we have seen.

Daniel was written at a time when God’s people were taken into exile; an act of judgment by God for their persistent unfaithfulness to the covenant. In the first half of the book, we saw episode after episode where the lesson was explicitly stated, “the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and gives it to whom he will.” No matter what the circumstances look like to us, God is sovereign.

Daniel lived his life in exile, a foreign man in a foreign nation. He remained faithful when everything he could see made obedience seem futile and hopeless. Because of his faithfulness, God revealed what would happen. Daniel had eyes to see how God had fulfilled the promises in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. Throughout his life, God demonstrated his sovereignty over the greatest powers on earth.

In the second half of Daniel, we can sum things up by noting, God reveals, Daniel sees, and history records.

The dreams, visions, and messengers are paradoxically scary and comforting. They reveal how we experience the rebellion against God’s holiness. Rebellion against God is awful; it makes Daniel sick. The dreams and visions also show how those rebellions are temporary and unsuccessful; that God is sovereign over heaven and earth.

Finally, there is reason for us to be faithful. The struggles, hurts, and shames that we experience in obedience to God will be transformed into glory.

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who love us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8)

There is a choice to be made.

Daniel is all about the choice to be made: do we trust in the sovereign God, or do we put our trust in anything else? “See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” (Rev. 22:12-13).

It is a choice with consequences. It is a choice that has eternal ramifications. So, choose this day who you will serve; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.

Amen.

8:45 prayer and offering

10:00 offering