

Daniel Chapter Twelve

The *final* (fourth) vision has unfolded the *near* future, now history to us (11.2-35), before leaping to the *far* future of the tribulation and Antichrist (last Gentile ruler) of which Antiochus Epiphanes is a mere shadow (11.36-12.4). The vision closes with Israel's ultimate deliverance and resurrection to the blessings of the kingdom of God (12.1-3).

There are good reasons for suggesting that these final verses do not refer to the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes:

- **First**, v.35 speaks of a period of refining persecution for the nation of Israel 'until' (or 'during') the 'time of the end' (cf. 8.17; 12.4). Thus, these closing verses of the prophecy (11.36-12.4) describe God's appointed end of such suffering. In addition, 'at that time' (12.1) links the period of Jacob's trouble (the Great Tribulation) to 11.36-45.
- **Second**, whilst the prophecies of 11.2-35 have been minutely fulfilled in history, there is nothing to compare to 11.36-45 in the record of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. For example, v.45 suggests the king shall 'come to his end' in the land of Israel, but Antiochus was killed in 164BC attempting to rob a temple in Media.
- **Third**, interpreting these verses as a direct reference to the Antichrist has been the traditional interpretation of the Christian church since ancient times (e.g. Chrysostom, Theodoret).
- **Fourth**, during the time of this king there will be a 'time of trouble such as never was' (12.1). The Lord Jesus spoke of this period as yet future, transpiring immediately prior to His manifestation (Matthew 24.21-22, 29-31).

The Character of the King [11.36-39]

v.36: The king introduced in this verse is unique; he is not Antiochus IV Epiphanes. He is introduced with distinction by a definite article, 'the king' and seems to be distinct from the 'king of the north' and 'king of the south', rulers so prevalent in the preceding verses (cf. v.40). The article suggests 'the king' is well-known, and indeed, he has appeared previously in the prophecy as the 'little horn' (7.8), 'king of fierce countenance' (8.23) and 'coming prince' (9.26).

- **Prominence** (v.36). He does 'according to his will' and is therefore an absolute dictator. He will recognise no law or authority higher than himself. What a contrast to the Lord Jesus (Mark 14.36)! His ruling authority originates from the devil and is strengthened by his confederacy (Revelation 13.2; 17.12-13).
- **Pride** (v.36). He will 'exalt himself' (cp. Philippians 2.8) and 'magnify himself above every god'. Unlike Antiochus who promoted the gods of Greece, this man will only worship himself, and demand all others to do the same (2 Thessalonians 2.4). Though he will use false religion to gain power and prominence, she (the harlot) will be destroyed at the mid-point of the tribulation (Revelation 17.3, 16). He will blaspheme God (Revelation 13.6), even speaking 'marvellous (shocking) things' against the 'God of gods'. The NIV translates as 'unheard-of-things', perhaps a 'unique form of derision and blasphemy, peculiar to himself' (Allen).
- His **Period** (v.36). He will initially be permitted to prosper, but not continue unabated. His time is limited 'until' the outpouring of God's wrath (indignation) on the earth has run its course, i.e. the seven-year tribulation. Ultimately, the purpose of God will be realised in his judgment at the coming of Christ the King (2 Thessalonians 2.8).
- **Profanity** (v.37). He will not respect the 'gods of his fathers' (NET). The word translated 'gods' is *elohim* and used in Scripture to refer to pagan deities (Exodus 23.24) as well as God Himself (Genesis 1.1). In fact, derivatives of El are used *eight* times in these few verses (vv.36-39), but only *twice* in the plural, making it clear that pagan deities are in view here as in v.36, 'God (singular) of gods (plural)'. There is therefore no suggestion this man is a Jew. Whatever his heritage, he has no interest in the traditional religion and worship of his ancestors.
- Neither does he respect the 'desire of women' or 'the one desired by women' (NIV). While this *could* mean he has no interest in the love of women (or is a homosexual), this is unlikely given the immediate context of his object of worship. Instead, this may be an allusion to the Lord Jesus as the 'desired of the nations' (Haggai 2.7). The aspiration of all young godly women in Israel was to be the mother of the Messiah and bring in the promised Seed (Genesis 3.15). Thus, this man hates God and His Christ. The only god he worships is himself.
- **Power** (vv.38-39). In the place of God, he worships military might (or 'the God of forces'). Godly kings of old placed their trust, first and foremost, in the 'strong fortress' of their God (2 Samuel 22.33). But not this man. His sole confidence is the exaltation and celebration of human power and attainment. Unlike his predecessors, he will deify war by pouring his material resources into increasing the size and strength of his army. In his quest for world domination he will attack 'mighty fortresses' with the help of a 'foreign deity', a possible reference to the dragon (Satan) as the source of all his power, sovereignty and authority (Revelation 13.2, 4). 'To those who recognise him he will grant considerable honour' (NET), apportioning land and positions of leadership to any who acknowledge his ultimate authority.

The Conflict of the End [11.40-45]

v.40: These verses record the final demise of the kings of the north and south and therefore help to explain the rise of Antichrist to world supremacy. It is eminently possible the conflict described here is to be equated with the invasion of Gog (Ezekiel 38-39). They appear to occur at similar times, when Israel is dwelling in peace and safety during the first half of the tribulation. The same peoples are involved, Ezekiel mentioning *Gog* (Iran, Turkey and Russia) as well as *Persia* (Iran), *Libya* and *Ethiopia* (including Sudan). These are areas that form part of militant Islam today.

First, the 'king of the south' (i.e. Egypt, possibly with Ethiopia and Libya) will launch a military attack against Antichrist, possibly striking his forces stationed in Palestine as a result of the covenant signed with Israel to guarantee their peace. Second, the 'king of the north' (i.e. Syria, but evidently supported by Iran and Russia) moves 'like a whirlwind' (suddenly and unexpectedly) with great force down through the land of Palestine (Ezekiel 38.9) invading many countries with his vast array of chariots, cavalry and warships. This is likely a north-south Arab alliance, possibly a militant Islamic group angered at the Antichrist and his western alliance supporting the claim of Israel to the land of Palestine. **v.41:** The nearest antecedent to 'he' is the 'king of the north', and thus it is difficult to see these statements referring to the Antichrist especially as the protagonist comes to his 'end' in v.45, *before* Michael stands up to signal the time of the Great Tribulation (12.1). Thus, the 'king of the north' will sweep into the 'glorious land' of Palestine causing 'many' (people) to 'fall' (NET) – there will be a great slaughter of Jews. It is even possible that this attack will kill the Antichrist himself, thus facilitating his pseudo death and resurrection and ultimate claim to deity (Revelation 13.12, 14). But Edom, Moab and Ammon (countries which comprise the modern-day nation of Jordan) will escape from his power. This is likely by divine protection as the city of Petra (or Bozrah) will become a refuge for a godly Jewish remnant in closing tribulation days (cf. Matthew 24.16; Revelation 12.6, 13-14; Isaiah 33.16; Micah 2.12). **v.42:** Ignoring what may have been an initial alliance to attack Israel, the king of the north moves through Palestine to conquer Egypt. **v.43:** He will be enriched with the 'treasures' of Egypt (cp. Ezekiel 38.12-13) and supported by the nations of Libya and Ethiopia (including modern-day Sudan, cp. Ezekiel 38.5) who will follow 'in his steps', i.e. triumphant train. **v.44:** However, whilst in Egypt, news from the 'east' (China) and 'north' (Palestine) will cause him great alarm and rage. **v.45:** With the purpose of 'annihilating many' – the extermination of the Jewish race – he will make his way back to the 'glorious land' and pitch the 'tabernacles of his palace' (palatial tent) between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas in the vicinity of the 'glorious holy mountain' of Zion. The tidings from the *east* could be the mobilisation of the largest army the world has ever seen (cf. Revelation 16.12-16), which arrives at Armageddon at the time of the end. The tidings from the *north* could be the pseudo-resurrection of Antichrist and his claim to deity and subsequent universal worship. Yet, in great solemnity, it is stated that 'he shall come to his end' for God will directly intervene to preserve the remnant of His people (Ezekiel 39.1-6; Joel 2.20). Antichrist will claim the victory and seek to fill the power vacuum that remains.

The Consummation of the Age [12.1-3]

v.1: The conclusion of the vision gives Daniel great reason for hope. Though this will be a time of special distress, there will be a mighty *defender* (Michael), divine *deliverance* and a glorious *destiny* for his people. At the time of the end, Michael, the one who 'guards' (watches over) the people of Israel shall 'stand up' in preparation for deliberate and decisive action on their behalf. This coincides with the mid-point of the tribulation described in Revelation 12.6-7. Antichrist has claimed deity, and the abomination of desolation has been reared. This signals the beginning of the Great Tribulation described as the worst since nations were formed, i.e. the history of the world (cf. Matthew 24.21; Jeremiah 30.7). It is Michael's responsibility to *defend* and *preserve* the faithful remnant in a time of bitter persecution. Though many will die as martyrs (Revelation 6.11; 15.2-4), ultimately Daniel's people would be 'delivered' (rescued), cf. Joel 2.32; 3.16. That the deliverance in view is more than a mere physical and national deliverance from tribulation (or death) is plain from the mention of the 'book' of life. This is the divine register of all those who, through the ages, have received *spiritual* deliverance from the guilt of sins through faith in God and His Christ. All those of Daniel's people whose names are recorded here will share in the deliverance Christ will bring at his second coming.

v.2: This verse clearly helps Daniel to understand the 'deliverance' of all those who have died *prior* to or *during* the tribulation. It does not provide a detailed *timeline* of resurrection. *OT saints* will be raised at the end of the tribulation period (along with tribulation martyrs, Revelation 20.4). *Church-age believers* are raised at the rapture. *Unbelievers* are raised at the Great White Throne in eternity (Revelation 20.11-15). This verse is not metaphorical for the spiritual resurrection of Israel, neither does it teach a general resurrection. SP Tregelles translated this verse: *And many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake; these shall be unto everlasting life; but the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time, shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt.* Thus, distinct stages of resurrection are disclosed. Physical death is described as 'sleep', which, in Scripture, is never an activity of the *soul* but the *body*. *The reason for using 'sleep' here as a metaphor for 'die' is that sleep is a temporary state from which we normally awake, and so the reader is prepared for the thought of resurrection.* The OT saints, including the faithful remnant of Daniel's people, will be raised to 'everlasting life'. One thousand years later, at the Great White Throne, all remaining individuals

are raised to 'great shame' (plural of intensity) and 'contempt' (an object of abhorrence, Isaiah 66.24). So shocking will be the fate of the lost that onlookers turn their faces away in horror or disgust. Both the shame and contempt are 'everlasting' – enduring for eternity in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 22.11). **v.3:** The 'wise' (their character) equate with those that 'turn many to righteousness' (their ministry). They *know* their God (11.32) and have the spiritual discernment that comes from believing and obeying the word of God (11.33). By their instruction and testimony, they direct others to the righteousness obtained by faith. Such individuals will shine forth in blazing manifestation of the glory of God in the millennium. Just as the 'heavens declare the glory of God' (Psalm 19.1), so the saints will eternally display the same.

The Charge and Concern of Daniel [12.4-13]

v.4: With the vision having come to an end, Daniel is charged to 'shut up the words' and 'seal the book'. This does not mean that the message was to be *hidden*, but *safely preserved*. Important documents were often duplicated, one copy being *sealed* for authentication, and one left *open* to read (Jeremiah 32.9-15). The important book of Daniel would be preserved until 'the time of the end' suggesting much of the revelation contained therein would be of great relevance at that time (cp. Revelation 22.10). This is indicated by the phrase 'run to and fro' which describes the movement of people in search of information (cf. Amos 8.11-12). Those seeking for answers in the tribulation will find them in the prophecy of Daniel. Thus their 'knowledge' (understanding) of end time events will be 'increased'. **v.5:** The Man clothed in linen was accompanied by two angels on each bank of the river Tigris (cf. 10.4). **v.6:** The angel was concerned about the 'astonishing things' (wonders) that had been revealed in the vision. The question concerns not *when*, but *how long* they will they last. Clearly, he perceives the Man in linen to be omniscient and therefore able to answer his question. **v.7:** In standing 'upon' the waters, the Man displays omnipotence and authority. Raising one's *right* hand was the gesture of making an oath. In raising *both* hands, the Man makes a doubly binding affirmation to declare the absolute assurance of his promise. In swearing by the 'living God' (Joshua 3.10), He cannot swear by any greater (cf. Hebrews 6.13). The Man (God) thus calls upon God to assure Israel that the period of allotted suffering will be 'a time, times, and an half', i.e. 3.5 years of great tribulation, otherwise declared as 1,260 days or 42 months (cf. Daniel 7.25; Revelation 11.2-3; 12.6, 14; 13.5). This time has been designed by God to 'shatter' the stubborn will of the Jewish nation and bring them in repentance before the Lord.

v.8: Daniel could not grasp a complete understanding of all he heard. His question differs from that of the angel (v.6) in that he is not asking *how long* the wonders would last, but rather what would happen 'after these things' (NET), i.e. the final outcome. **v.9:** Daniel is not rebuked for his curiosity but encouraged to take up his charge (v.4) and leave further investigation and understanding until the 'time of the end' – then all these things would be fully revealed to those who seek for such insight. God was in full and total control. **v.10:** In partial answer to Daniel's question, the angel reveals that the tribulation will have a *twofold* impact on humanity. For those who respond by faith to the word of God, the great tribulation would serve to purify, cleanse and refine. But for those who refuse to repent, the lawless, they will remain in their wickedness (Revelation 9.20-21; 16.9, 11). These individuals will not seek after or understand the revelation of this prophecy and thus be deceived by the devil.

v.11: In a fuller response to Daniel's question, the angel speaks of a period of 1,290 days from the taking away of the 'daily sacrifice' and the 'abomination of desolation'. With these events taking place at the mid-point of the tribulation, 1,290 days is 30 days longer than 3.5 years! It could be that the 'abomination of desolation' is set-up 30 days *before* the mid-point of the tribulation *or* the additional 30 days could be associated with a period of cleansing *after* Christ comes. For example, there must be time for the *resurrection* and *reward* of OT saints (Revelation 11.16-18; 20.4) and the judgment of Israel (Ezekiel 20.33-44) and the living nations (Matthew 25.31-46). **v.12:** Furthermore, blessing is called upon those who come to the 1,335 days – a full 75 days after the end of the tribulation and coming of Christ! This possibly signifies the date of the official inauguration of the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth and the coronation of the King (Psalm 24), as well as the marriage supper of the Lamb. The word 'blessed' describes those who enter into the glorious reign of Christ – for it will literally be heaven on earth. *Matthew 25.34: Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye **blessed** of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Revelation 19.9: And he saith unto me, Write, **Blessed** are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

v.13: The last word of the prophecy must have been of great comfort to the aged servant. First, he is told to 'labour on', i.e. take up his daily duties until the 'end' of the divine programme. In the calm assurance of the settled purpose of God, Daniel was to '*Get back to his desk and filing cabinet... and finish his day's work; plod along in living quietly and working with his own hands and being faithful to King Cyrus*' (DR Davis). Very soon he would 'rest' from his labours in physical death (Revelation 14.13) and then 'stand' – which must be physical resurrection – and receive his allotted inheritance (cf. Colossians 1.12). He would be raised to receive his portion in the future glorious kingdom of Messiah – his **due** for a life of faithful service.