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Sermon Notes

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The People Who Know Their God

Daniel 11

I. Knowing God

A. The Constant Thirst for Knowledge

1. CNN: immediate access to information of any event going on anywhere in the world
2. Direct TV: immediate access to television programming anywhere in the world
3. Internet: immediate access to data bases and information all over the world

B. Is Knowledge a Good Thing?

Spurgeon:

- Is air a good thing? Yes, you can't live without it... but noxious air can kill you
- Is food a good thing? Yes, food is essential to life... but decaying meat can kill you
- Is water a good thing? Yes, water sustains our physical existence... but poisoned water from an old well can kill you

So it is with knowledge... knowledge is essential to our lives; but there is a knowledge which, like stagnant or poisoned water, may destroy the soul. *"The tree of the knowledge of good and evil stood in Paradise, mark that —but it ruined Paradise, mark that too!"*

What kind of knowledge should we crave??

C. Knowing God

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

"What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the 'eternal life that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God:

John 17:3 "Now this is eternal life, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment than anything else?
Knowledge of God:

Jeremiah 9:23-24 This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me"

What, of all the states God ever sees man in, gives Him most pleasure? Knowledge of Himself.

Hosea 6:6 "I desire... the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings"

D. Daniel 11

Daniel 11:32-33 "The people who know their God shall be strong and do great things."

1. Their Context:

- a. Gentile kingdoms fighting back and forth over the Promised Land
- b. Jewish people suffering greatly under an Antichrist figure, Antiochus Epiphanes
- c. Jewish heroes who courageously defended their Old Covenant religion

The people who know their God are strong!!! Mighty to stand firm and do mighty deeds, even when their lives are on the line

2. Our Context

- a. strange ideas about God
- b. weakness in the church: we don't stand firm or do great things

Many strange theories abound concerning God... His nature, His purposes, His intentions

How can we be sure we're breathing pure air, eating healthy food, drinking clean water?

Scripture alone gives us true knowledge of God... rightly interpreted through faith in Jesus Christ

E. The God of Daniel

- Sovereign over world empires
- Mighty to rule over all of human history
- Working through the events of human history to establish the Kingdom of Jesus Christ
- Working to deliver His chosen people from one attack after another... whether a fiery furnace or a lion's den

- Working more than anything a perfect atonement for sin through the death of Jesus Christ
- Demonstrating His perfect knowledge & power by describing it all in prophecy hundreds of years before any of it came to pass

THAT is the God of Daniel... a God well-worth knowing; BUT Satan will NOT have us know this God

F. Satan's Fights Back: He HATES the God of the Book of Daniel

II. A Modern Heresy: The "God of the Possible"

- A. Greg Boyd's Thesis: "God has only limited knowledge of the future"
- B. A Terrifying Universe: God Caught by Surprise, Sovereign Enough to Recover
- C. Scripture Rejects This: God Knows ALL Things in Perfect Detail
- D. Stunning Detail is Overwhelming: 135 specific prophecies from vs. 1-35

III. Summary of Chapter: History Written Ahead of Time

NOTE: full effect ONLY when carefully lay Daniel 11 alongside history

Context: Angel Gabriel's message to Daniel

10:14 Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

FOCUS: Israel, the people and the land

1. Persia
 2. Greece
 3. Egypt vs. Syria
 4. Antiochus Epiphanes
 5. The Antichrist
- A. Persia (vs. 2)
 1. Four Persian Kings: from Daniel's time until King Xerxes I
 2. Focal point: Xerxes' expensive and disastrous expedition against Greece
 - B. Greece: Alexander the Great (vs. 3-4)
 1. "MIGHTY KING" rules with great power, does as he pleases (vs. 3)
 2. Empire broken up in a very specific way (vs. 4)

vs. 4 After he has appeared, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others.

Alexander's empire divided amongst his four generals; two key Generals—Ptolemy in Egypt; Seleucus in Babylonia... the Ptolemies were the Kings of the South, the Seleucids ruled in Syria, the Kings of the North

This sets the stage for the other prophecies up to vs. 35... Kings of the North vs. Kings of the South; Greek kingdoms fighting each other for dominance

C. The Struggle of Greek Kings: South (Egypt/Ptolemies) vs. North (Syria/Seleucids) (vs. 5-20)

1. Series of Ptolemaic Kings of Egypt are the Kings of the South
 2. Series of Seleucid Kings of Syria are the Kings of the North
- Amazing detail: daughter given in marriage, later assassinated
 - Kings struggling with each other for supremacy... one era passes into the next
 - The pattern was set... Kings of the North had greater power base and constantly sought to conquer Kings of the South... Antiochus III the Great and Antiochus IV Epiphanes were both Seleucid Kings of the North
 - Startling accuracy about Antiochus III: the most successful military general; initially lost to the Egyptian King, but regained his strength and in the end was victorious over his rival
 - BUT he overreached himself and lost his kingdom. WHY? A new power intervened...ROME
 - Rome started to get involved in Greek affairs... Antiochus III became alarmed at Rome's growing power and decided to take them on by returning to his homeland of Greece... this was a terrible mistake, one based in his arrogance and insolence

vs. 18-19 Then he will turn his attention to the coastlands and will take many of them, but a commander will put an end to his insolence and will turn his insolence back upon him. ¹⁹ After this, he will turn back toward the fortresses of his own country but will stumble and fall, to be seen no more.

D. The Little Antichrist: Antiochus IV Epiphanes (vs. 21-35)

1. The "Little Horn" of Daniel 8: remember what we learned then

Daniel 8:9-12 Daniel 8:23-25

- a. when? “In the latter part of their reign...” The end of Greek domination of the world... Rome is rising to take control
- b. Greek ruler in the “Beautiful Land”... Antiochus IV
- c. war on the Jews... religious persecution... sacrifices stopped, many Jews killed
- d. destroyed but not by human power

2. The Rise and Early Success of Antiochus IV (vs. 21-28)

- a. contemptible person
- b. takes kingdom by intrigue... not given the honor of royalty
- c. when its people feel secure

vs. 21 *He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue.*

The Jews did not know what horrors awaited them under this evil man who was determined to erase forever the Jewish religion

- d. early military successes (vs. 22-24)
 - i) began to attack King of the South, like any good Seleucid ruler would!
 - ii) standard policy: catch opponents off guard by first offering friendship and alliance; then he would attack without warning
 - iii) policy works: Antiochus gains incredible power, wealth; shrewd ruthless politician
 - iv) biggest success described in vss. 25-28... typical of his methods

vs. 25-28 *"With a large army he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him. ²⁶ Those who eat from the king's provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away, and many will fall in battle. ²⁷ The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time. ²⁸ The king of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country."*

3. Rome limits his power (vs. 29-30)

vs. 29-30 *"At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before. ³⁰ Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back*

- a. AMAZING ACCURACY!! Hebrew = "Ships of Kittim" (a city in Cyprus)
- b. Rome sent Popilius Lenas down from Thessalonica with a fleet of ships

Popilius gave Antiochus an ultimatum to leave Egypt immediately; Antiochus asked for some time to think about it; the Roman commander drew a circle in the dirt around his feet and said "You must decide before you leave this circle!!" Antiochus was humiliated but had no choice to leave

4. The Persecution of the Jews (vs. 30-35)

- a. hatred of the holy covenant

Antiochus loved Greek culture, philosophy, and religion; he honored the Pantheon of Greek gods and goddesses, especially Zeus; he wanted Jews to forsake their monotheism and bow the knee to the Greek ways and gods

- b. frustration at being repulsed by the Romans

vs. 30 *Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant.*

- c. violent outpouring of rage on the helpless Jews... some faithless Jews assist him; typical of Antiochus, using political favors to divide opposition

vs. 30 *He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant*

- d. temple desecrated

vs. 31 *"His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.*

It is at this point in history, December, 168 B.C. that Antiochus desecrates the temple and goes down as one of the most demonic rulers in history;

- All valuable gold and silver articles taken out of the temple... including the cups and vessels used for sacrifice
- Daily morning and evening sacrifices abolished (2300 mornings and evenings, Daniel 8)
- "Abomination that causes desolation" erected in the temple: a statue of Zeus Olympius

- Antiochus had a pig sacrificed on the altar as a specific defilement of the Laws of Moses
- The Temple became a center of wickedness, including Temple prostitution
 - e. faithless Jews corrupted and defiled by temptation

vs. 32 *With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant*

f. BUT some Jews stood fast BECAUSE THEY KNEW THEIR GOD!!!

vs. 32-33 *“But the people who know their God will be strong and will act...”*

Critical moment: some Jews will refuse to be corrupted at this key moment because they know their God!!

g. terrible persecutions!! (vs. 33-35)

vs. 33-35 *“Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. ³⁴ When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them. ³⁵ Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.*

- **Maccabean family**, a priest named Mattathias and his five sons, raised a banner of revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes; he lived in Modein near Emmaus
- **Jewish patriots** who risked life and property to preach to their fearful countrymen a message of repentance and obedience to the Laws of Moses
- **Aggressive revolt** against their Greek masters... going from town to town overturning altars of foreign gods and rousing their countrymen to revolution
- **Stunningly courageous victories**: In 168, the Maccabean revolt won series of battles
- **Temple** was recaptured and cleansed... as we said earlier, this is celebrated at Hanukkah
- **Antiochus IV Epiphanes died** in 164 B.C. in fulfillment of the prophecy from Daniel 8:25

Daniel 8:25 Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.

[He went to the village of Nanaea, a wealthy temple in Elymas, to plunder it... he was suddenly struck down with an illness... he had severe abdominal pains that never left him, coupled with intestinal worms and a terrible stench; he died with vain petitions to the God of Israel on his lips to spare his life]

- **Prophecy yet unfulfilled:** His death in this way in 164 makes it plain that the prophecy of Antiochus IV Epiphanes probably ends at Daniel 11:35, but certainly by 11:40.

E. The Final Antichrist (vs. 36-45)

vs. 36 *"The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.*

1. Jews: Antiochus NEVER fulfilled these verses!!!

a. vs. 37 is NOT TRUE of Antiochus

vs. 37 *He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all.*

Antiochus revered the gods of his ancestors, and wanted to make all the Jews revere them too

b. vs. 38-39 NOT TRUE of Antiochus

vs. 38 *Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.*

c. vss. 40-45 NOT TRUE of Antiochus... final battles find NO PARALLEL in history

NO... vs. 36-45 are speaking of an "end-time king" similar to Antiochus, but different... this is, we believe, the Antichrist... the same as the "Little Horn" of Daniel 7, whom Jesus Christ will destroy at His second coming

2. An End-Time King (vs. 36-39)

a. ruling powerfully over nations: vs. 39, 42

b. succeeding until his appointed end... days measured out by God Himself (vs. 36)

3. A False Religion (vs. 36-39)

vs. 36 *He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods.*

vs. 38 *Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.*

4. A Final War (vs. 40-45)

- a. the focal point of world history will again be the Promised Land
- b. final Gentile King will travel along the same coastal roads to the South and the North that Antiochus IV Epiphanes did in 170 B.C.
- c. he will have initial success, conquering these same lands
- d. BUT at the appointed time, his reign will end by the second coming of Christ

IV. Application: “The people who know their God...”

Daniel 11:32 “The people who know their God shall be strong and do great things.”

How can we know God? Through His written word, and through the living Word, Jesus Christ

A. Written word... the Scripture

1. God’s Sovereign Power

Acts 17:26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

- a. lines on the map move from generation to generation
- b. God sovereignly controls where each nation will live and for how long

vs. 27 The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time.

vs. 29 “At the appointed time he will invade the South again...”

- c. God has measured out each King’s lifespan and how much success they will have... even the Antichrist!!

vs. 36 He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.

2. God’s Supernatural Prophecies

- a. meticulously accurate prophecies about minor kingdoms 200 years beforehand
- b. GREG BOYD’S theory of the “openness of God” is wrong... God knows every tiny detail about human history before any of it comes to pass

3. God's Salvation Plan

- a. at the core of the message of Daniel is of a divine Kingdom that will never end
- b. human kingdoms rise from the earth and sink back down into the dust
- c. God's kingdom is eternal, and He is building it now
- d. BUT the Kingdom advances only through strife and tribulation
- e. **FOR THE JEWS: [Daniel's people] much suffering until they finally accept Christ as their national Messiah**

B. God's Living Word: Jesus Christ

- 1. Christ is the King of that Eternal Kingdom
- 2. He came to rescue us from this cycle of rising from the earth and sinking back into the dust
- 3. He came to give us eternal life by dying for us

Scripture testifies to Jesus Christ... but you can diligently study Scripture and never see Christ

You will have MISSED THE WHOLE POINT!!!

John 5:39-40 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Jesus has come to call you back to God... to receive His love through faith in Christ

APPLICATION: Roman commander drew a circle around Antiochus... "You must decide before you leave this circle."

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH CHRIST??