**THE TRUTH OF OUR GOD**

**(Daniel 11:2-12:4)**

 I graduated from high school in 1982. Prior to graduation, I received money from some, savings bonds from others, a nice watch from my dad. The watch eventually broke after many years, and I replaced it with the watch I wear now. I spent the money. I cashed in the savings bonds and spent them too. Corine Patrick, however, gave me gifts that I still have and still use. She gave me books.

 On of the books she gave me is now considered a classic. It is the book *Knowing God* by J.I. Packer. The second chapter of his book is entitled, “The People Who Know Their God.” He drew the title for that chapter from a verse in tonight’s text. It is found in Daniel 11:32, “The people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.”

 There are many great things in this world to learn and to know. Our universities are dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. I submit that the greatest knowledge in this world is the knowledge of God.

 We read in Jeremiah 9:23-24, “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows Me . . .”

 Tonight, we will be looking at Daniel 11:1-12:4. The passage begins with an announcement from an angel to Daniel. Look at how he starts 11:2. What truth will he show Daniel? I believe he was intent on showing Daniel the truth of his God.

 Based on our passage, we will be looking at three truths concerning our God. Our text can be divided into three sections. The first section covers the time period from King Cyrus up to the appearance of a King known to history as Antiochus Epiphanes who reigned form Syria (11:2-19). The second section is concerned with the activities under the reign of Antiochus (11:20-35), The third section is more difficult to determine. Some say the verses just elaborate on Antiochus Epiphanes. Others say, this is a description of what takes place under Roman rule. A third group says, “No, this is a clear depiction of the Antichrist at the end of time.”

 What do I say? I’m like the guy who said, “On this issue, I have some friends who take this stand, and I have friends who take that stand. Where do I stand? I want you to know that I stand with my friends.”

 I honestly don’t know. I will say, I don’t think the third section describes Antiochus. I think it could be a description of both the Roman rulers in the first century as well as a description of an eventual Antichrist. Some believe that Antiochus and the first century emperors point towards a similar figure who will come just prior to Jesus’ return.

 The same problem shows up in how to interpret Matthew 24-25 which is known as the Olivet Discourse. There are differing views as to what Jesus is describing. Some say Jesus is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple which took place in 70 A.D. That view makes sense in light of what Jesus said in Matthew 24:34, “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” Jesus puts the time frame of the fulfillment of these prophecies within the next 40 years from that day.

 But then, you come to Matthew 25:31-46 which talk about Jesus coming in His glory, sitting on His throne, and judging the nations in a final judgment. That seems to be yet future.

 I have heard it said that when you look at a mountain range from a great distance you see several high peaks. Those peaks look very close to one another. But as you get closer, you discover those peaks are at a great distance from one another. They say that is what is happening in prophecies about the end times. There is some fulfillment in the first century and other fulfillment nearing the time of Jesus’ return.

1. **OUR GOD KNOWS HISTORY BEFORE IT HAPPENS.**

 In his commentary on this passage, Boice called it “remarkably detailed.” He pointed out that in John Calvin’s commentary on Daniel, Calvin spent 40 pages showing how that various prophecies of this chapter were clearly fulfilled in history.

 Liberal scholars contend that Daniel was written much later than the time of Daniel. They discount the possibility of predictive prophecy coming true centuries after the prophet wrote. That would have to be a miracle, and they don’t believe that miracles happen.

 I happen to believe the Bible and not the liberal scholars. If Daniel says he wrote Daniel in the pages of Scripture, then I believe that he wrote in the time period in which Daniel would have lived. And that does make this a miraculous book because much of what we find here was fulfilled by 165 BC. Daniel would have passed from the scene in the 530’s. We are looking at about a 370-year time difference.

 I won’t give a detailed explanation of everything, the fourth King of v. 2 would have been Xerxes. The King who arose to do as he wills would have been Alexander who conquered the world in less than a decade.

 Look at v. 4. Alexander could not leave his kingdom to his posterity because his wife and children were assassinated just after Alexander died in his 30’s. His kingdom was divided among four generals.

 One general was given Egypt—Ptolemy. Another was given Syria—Seleucid. The Ptolemies were the kings in the south, and the Seleucids were the kings in the north. They fought against one another.

 Using history, Boice describes the events of 11:5-8. Listen to Boice:

 This woman’s name was Bernice. She was the daughter of Ptolemy II, and she married Antiochus Theos of Syria. It was a political marriage. Antiochus had to divorce his first wife to accomplish it. But there was hatred and friction, as one can imagine. Bernice was poisoned, after which Antiochus remarried his first wife. Then Bernice was avenged by her brother, another Ptolemy, who attacked Syria and looted its temples. Josephus, who related this history, records that Ptolemy III returned to Egypt with 4,000 talents of gold, 40,000 talents of silver, and 2,500 objects that had been in the cities and temples of the northern kingdom. This is what verse 8 describes.

 Each of the details of this first section of Daniel 11 has had a similarly precise fulfillment in history.

 Our God is not confined by time and space. We are. We think the future is unknowable, and to us it is. It, however, is not unknowable to God. He knows history before it happens. He knows the future before it becomes the past.

 I recently came across a news magazine article that gave a scathing critique of the unchecked power and influence of the big four high tech companies in the world: Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google. Describing the supremacy of Google, the author wrote:

 As more and more people become alienated from traditional religion, we look to Google as our immediate, all-knowing oracle of answers from trivial to profound. Google is our modern-day god . . . Think back on every fear, every hope, every desire you’ve confessed to Google’s search box and then ask yourself: Is there any entity you’ve trusted more with your secrets? Does anybody know you better than Google?

 A parody of these beliefs gives 9 evidences that Google is god. It’s not as farfetched as one might think.

 Google is the closest thing to an omniscient entity

 Google is omnipresent.

 Google answers prayers (Do a search for all your questions and problems).

 Google is potentially immortal.

 Google is infinite.

 Google remembers all.

 Google can “do no evil” (omnibenevolent).

 According to Google trends, the term "Google" is searched for more than the terms "God," "Jesus," "Allah," "Buddha," "Christianity," "Islam," "Buddhism," and "Judaism" combined.

 I am here to tell you that Google is not God. Unlike the true God, there was a time when Google was not, and there will be a time when Google will be not.

 Since we have a God who knows history before it happens, it only makes since to go to Him for direction and guidance. He can see what we do not see. He knows what we do not know. Let’s look to Him.

1. **OUR GOD KNOWS HIS OWN AND PROVIDES HIS HELP.**

 Let’s read vv. 20-35. This section centers on a man named Antiochus IV. He was also known as “Antiochus Epiphanes.” He was a Seleucid King who reigned from Syria. He had eyes on extending his rule all the way to Egypt.

 He needed funds to finance his war, so he plundered the goods that were in the Temple in Jerusalem. Antiochus had almost won the fight against the Ptolemies in Egypt when Rome intervened and forced his withdrawal.

 It was rumored in Jerusalem that Antiochus had died in Egypt. Acting on that rumor, steps were taken by resistant Jews to take control of Jerusalem. When Antiochus returned, he was in no mood to place nice. He turned Jerusalem into a military settlement. He prohibited the practice of the Jewish faith. He took control of the Temple, made it a place to worship Zeus and sacrificed swine on the altar (11:31).

 What words of encouragement can we find in this passage? Look at the closing words in 11:24. The people who know their God will stand firm (11:32). I am reminded of Mattathias and his five sons. The oldest was known as Judas Maccabees (the hammer). They waged guerilla warfare and fought on behalf of the Jewish people.

 Look at 11:33-35. It is no secret that believers will face dark days. Some are martyred for their faith. Does God not care? Does He not see? Look at Revelation 6:9-11. God sees. God knows. In His time, God will act.

 According to Open Doors, a ministry here in the US, every day, 8 Christian die for their faith in the top places where persecution of Christians flourish. That doesn’t include places such a jails and detention centers who will keep the deaths of Christians quiet.

 In the midst of such dark places, God’s light still shines. His help can still be experienced.

 Some years ago, the Presbyterian pastor Thomas Tewell wrote of what took place in Iran:

 My friend Dr. Tad Stewart took a church in Teheran, Iran. He and his family were there during revolution and revolt and riot. The government under the ayatollah closed his small, struggling Presbyterian Church. There were very few members, but the government came in and burned all the Bibles and Sunday school curriculum. Then they took a big padlock and locked the door of the church. They wiped their hands and said, “Aha! We have closed Christianity in Iran.”

 Tad Stewart and his wife opened their small home on Sunday mornings for people to come for worship. Nobody dared to say where they were going, and they came early in the morning while it was still dark. But church attendance grew until it doubled, and then tripled.

 People smuggled in Bibles as if they were pure gold. Tad said that when he opened the Bible and read it, you could have heard a pin drop. Suddenly electricity and faith broke out in that church, and soon that church made an impact all over the city of Teheran, all over the nation of Iran, and even over that part of the Middle East.

 God can bring good things out of bad events, even the persecution of the Church. In the NT, God used persecution to get the gospel out of Jerusalem and to the Gentile world.

1. **OUR GOD KNOWS THE FUTURE AND HAS A PLAN.**

. . . OurGod is in charge.

 I heard about a Democratic candidate for President. She is known for having a plan for numerous things. I don’t remember what the topic was, but I heard just a little bit of one of the Democratic debates, and I heard her say, “I’ve got a plan for that, too.” The audience laughed.

 God has a plan, too, but unlike Elizabeth Warren or any other politician, God knows the future. If you don’t know the future, it is quite likely your plan won’t work.

 Boice told about a time he heard a pastor preach on Psalm 11:3 which asks, “When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?” The preacher answered the question by saying, “Why go on being righteous, of course.”

 That’s a good answer. We need to go on being the people of God. Go on getting to know Him, because when you know Him, you will be strong; you will stand firm; you will resist the growing influence of evil. Take your stand, and keep standing till Jesus comes back.