

A G A I N S T T H E F L O W

A S E R I E S I N T H E B O O K O F D A N I E L

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER STUDIES



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Against the Flow

Daniel is a book about living against the flow. Right at the beginning of the book, Daniel and his friends are dragged from their homes in Judah to a foreign land: Babylon. They are God's people living in a foreign city, with a foreign culture, and a foreign religion. What makes their faith remarkable is that they didn't simply continue a private devotion to God, but maintained a public witness amongst a society that became increasingly hostile to their faith. The book is an encouragement to us today--not to lose our nerve and allow the expression of our faith to be diluted and squeezed out of us.

“ Over and over again, Daniel makes sure that we don't miss the central point of the book: that no matter what things might look like, God is in control.

Amidst their bravery and faithfulness, it's easy to think that the lesson of the book is to live like them (which is a part of the encouragement of the book). But over and over again, Daniel makes sure that we don't miss the central point of the book: that no matter what things might look like, God is in control. Every chapter tells a different story, but each one is a story of God's control of history. He is in control of time and history; his kingdom is the only everlasting kingdom, and when all the proud, earthly kings have faded, God will still be ruling on his eternal throne.

The book is divided into two halves: the first half (chapters 1-6) is full of stories of Daniel and his friends dealing with the rulers of Babylon, featuring everything from an invisible hand writing on the wall, to being thrown into a furnace, to being thrown to a lion. These court stories exemplify faithful living in exile and provide models of how God's people should live as strangers and exiles in a foreign world. The second half of the book (chapters 7-12) is a different genre altogether, something called "apocalyptic." This is an ancient genre found in a

few parts of the Bible (especially the Old Testament prophets and Revelation). It's pretty fun, but behind all of the wild imagery and symbolism, its design is to pull back the curtain on history and reassure God's people that in spite of their present persecution and suffering, God is in control and will ultimately be victorious.

In the book of Daniel we see a God who—despite how things might look—is perfectly in control and at work in us and in our world. Our prayer is that God would use this series to encourage you to keep turning towards him, no matter how much our world has turned its back on him.

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) is used in these studies.

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WEEK 1

INTO THE LIONS' DEN

Daniel 6

“

For He is the living God,
and He endures forever;
His kingdom will never be destroyed,
and His dominion has no end.
He rescues and delivers;
He performs signs and wonders
in the heavens and on the earth,
for He has rescued Daniel
from the power of the lions.”



STUDY QUESTIONS

Are there any comments, questions, or concerns you have from this week's sermon?

Read Daniel 6

Daniel and the lion's den is one of the most famous stories in the Bible. What did you know about this story before this week?

Does that fit with what you've just read?

Why do you think the satraps were so jealous of Daniel? (vv. 1-5)

Whose law is more eternal? (v. 5, 8)

The passage says that Daniel prays three times a day towards Jerusalem. Read 1 Kings 8:46-50. What do you think its significance was?

Was Darius or Daniel more comfortable throughout the night? (vv. 17-21)

It seems as though God plays a passive part in the story until Daniel is in trouble... Where does God enter into the story?

Why do you think the king was so glad? (verse 23)

Nebuchadnezzar was made like a beast, while Daniel walked away from the greatest beast. What reasons does God give for treating these two men so differently? (4:31-32, 37; 6:22)

In Acts 2:22-32, God reverses an even worse situation. How is this passage an answer to all hope in Daniel?

When we realise that Jesus is the one who has gone down into the pit, we can know that we are already saved and given eternal life with our God. We have risen from the pit with Christ and are loved and accepted. How does this change your life?



WEEK 2

APOCALYPSE NOW

Daniel 7

“

His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Are there any comments, questions, or concerns you have from this week's sermon?

Three things to remember when reading 'apocalyptic' literature:

- 1 - This is picture language (like poetry) used to speak about spiritual realities
- 2 - Its purpose is to provoke an emotional and spiritual reaction
- 3 - The message is always in the big picture (the main things are the plain things!)

TIP - as you read the passage this week have a few people draw what Daniel sees and label the pictures. This will help the visual thinkers among you!

Read Daniel 7.

What does Daniel see?

Chapters 1–6 were full of "court stories." Do you think it's significant that the imagery of chapter 7 switches to courtroom imagery in verse 9?

Why do you think the kingdoms are represented like this?

Why is this vision so terrifying to Daniel?

Was he calmed at all by the explanation? (verse 28)

Should we be as terrified as Daniel?

Even though the vision is bizarre and frightening, its central message isn't that hard to grasp: Even though it looks as if the world is under the power of human evil, God is in control and God will win.

How does verse 27 change the way you live your life?

Read Mark 13:24-27 and Revelation 1:7–8. How does Jesus fulfil Daniel 7 in these two chapters?



WEEK 3

HOLDING ONTO A PROMISE

Daniel 8-9

“

We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Are there any comments, questions, or concerns you have from this week's sermon?

Three things to remember when reading 'apocalyptic' literature:

- 1 - This is picture language (like poetry) used to speak about spiritual realities
- 2 - Its purpose is to provoke an emotional and spiritual reaction
- 3 - The message is always in the big picture (the main things are the plain things!)

Read Daniel 8:1-14

What three 'creatures' does Daniel see this time?

What are the main characteristics of these creatures?

What does the horn do? (see verse 9-11)

Read Daniel 8:15-27

How does Daniel feel at the end of all this?

The message of this chapter is quite specific to Daniel's generation – what is it?

Read Daniel 9:1-3

What is Daniel reminded of from Jeremiah's prophecy?

How does the vision he has just seen in chapter 8 help him to keep what is soon to happen (the return from Exile) in perspective?

Read Daniel 9:4-19

This is one of the great prayers in the Bible – and it is packed full of material from earlier parts of the Bible. Why is it important to allow the Bible to shape the way we pray?

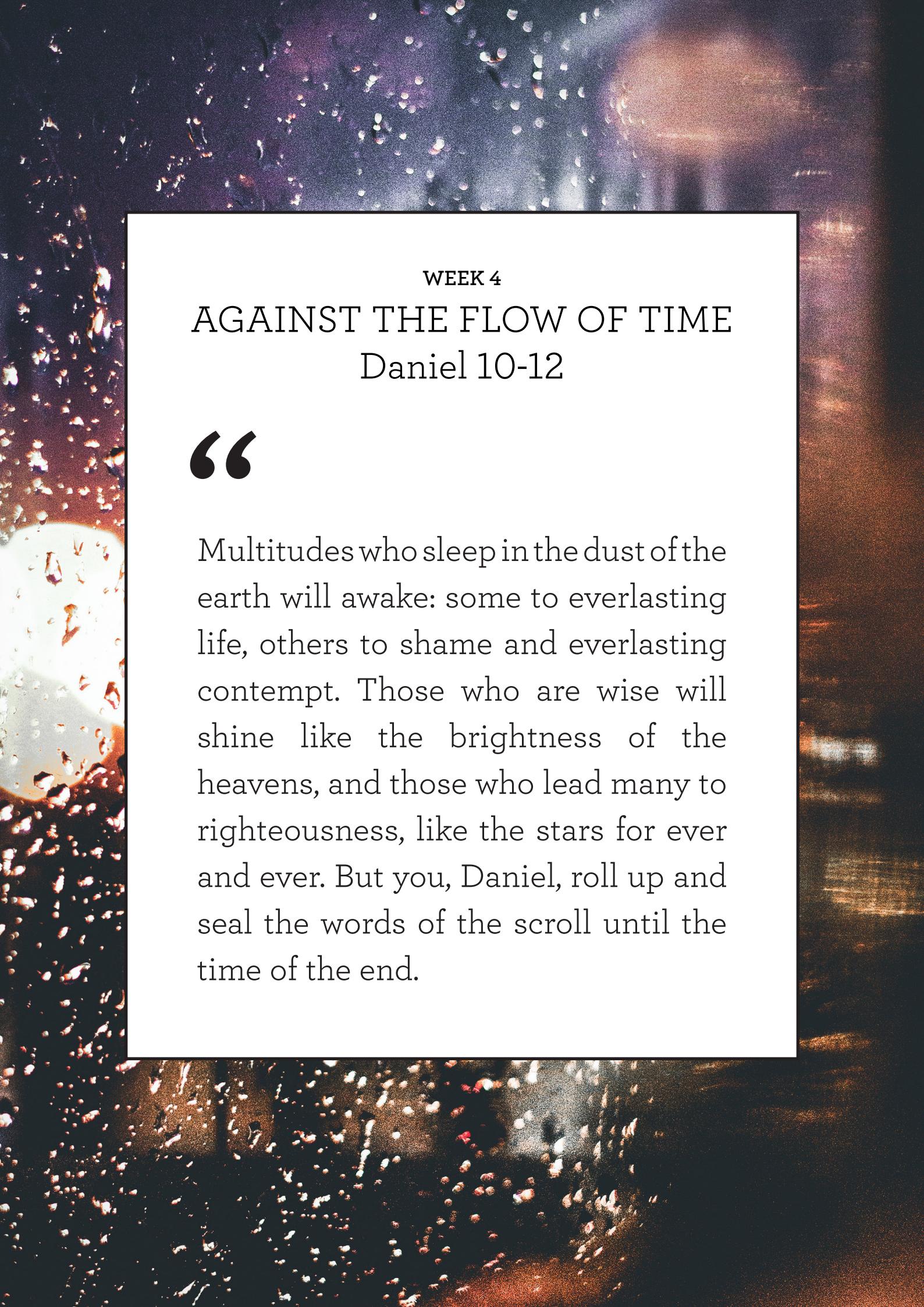
Why does Daniel include himself in his confession?

How does Daniel describe the behaviour of God's people?

Read Daniel 9:20-27

According to Gabriel, the future looks bleak for God's people in the foreseeable future – but what can they look forward to? (see verse 24 – see Hebrews 8:7-13)

So what? We are not in the same place as Daniel – we now relate to God through this 'new covenant'. What can we say that Daniel couldn't? (2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:16-17).



WEEK 4

AGAINST THE FLOW OF TIME

Daniel 10-12

“

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Are there any comments, questions, or concerns you have from this week's sermon?

Read Daniel 10:1-3

Chapters 10-12 make up Daniel's final vision. How would you describe Daniel's mood in verses 2-3?

In the light of chapters 8 & 9, why do you think he is so troubled?

Read Daniel 10:4-9.

How would you describe the mystery man who appears in verses 5-6? What impact does his appearance have on Daniel and his friends?

Read Daniel 10:10-14.

Why has this man come from God?

How does God feel about Daniel?

What sort of conflict is being described here (in verses 13-14; 20-21)?

What is the significance of the angel being delayed "21 days"?

In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul explains what we should 'do' with this truth. If all this is true, how then should we live?

From Daniel 11:2, we hear about king after king coming against God's kingdom and God's people. Kingdoms from the north and south will come against the "Beautiful Land" (verse 16). But none of them will surprise God.

Read Daniel 11:36-39.

How would you describe the final king in the series?

Read Daniel 11:40-45.

It seems that we are no longer dealing with an earthly king, but some kind of supernatural figure of evil. Why do you think he is introduced at this point? What is God telling us by warning us about this anti-Messiah?

All through Daniel, people have been saved from flames and lions, but at the end of chapter 11, we hear that "some of the wise shall fall" (v. 35).

Read Daniel 12:1-4.

How will God win the final battle? How does this help you live against the flow?

What have you learned from the book of Daniel? Take a moment to jot down some of the things God has been teaching you.



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