

Sermon: Kings

Text: Daniel 11

Discussion Questions:

There is a huge difference between astronomy and astrology. The two words sound very much alike—as they both reference a study of the stars and the night sky. But the way that these two practices are applied take a person in two completely different directions!

Astronomy is: *“The study of objects and matter outside the earth's atmosphere and of their physical and chemical properties. It is the branch of science which deals with celestial objects, space, and the physical universe as a whole.”* I have a great deal of respect and appreciation for astronomers. Having visited a number of planetariums through the years, I am fascinated by the various constellations, and the way that the planets of our solar system move about in the night sky.

- How many different constellations can you identify and name?
- How can you tell if the star that you're looking at is actually a planet?
- Speaking of stars, are there any stars that you are able to identify?
- What star does the handle of the “Big Dipper” point to? What's its actual name & why?

Astrology, on the other hand, is something entirely different. It is defined as: *“The study of the movements and relative positions of celestial bodies interpreted as having an influence on human affairs and the natural world. It is the divination of the supposed influences of the stars and planets on human affairs and terrestrial events by their positions and aspects.”* Simply put, astrology is a “dark art.” It is based on the belief that the movements of the planets and night sky have a predictive aspect on the events that take place in our lives.

Astrology is related to horoscopes, and tarot cards, and psychics, and fortune tellers. It has to do with looking in ALL THE WRONG PLACES for some (false!) glimpse of what might happen in the future.

- What would you say and do if a close friend or family member began to be enamored with his or her horoscope and began to spend a lot of money calling or visiting psychics?
- What is it about these attempts to look into the future so popular and so often consulted by millions? What is behind their appeal?
- Do you believe that Satan has his hand in the practice of astrology?
- Read **Deuteronomy 18:10**, and **Revelation 22:15**. What does God tell us in these two verses about this “dark” practice?

This morning we are taking a close look at Daniel chapter 11. As we'll see, this chapter gives a DETAILED look into the future. It is so detailed and precise, in fact, that skeptics of the Bible don't even believe that Daniel actually wrote it in the 6th century BC.

- How is God's revealing of the future to Daniel differ from a person visiting a psychic in order to take a glimpse into the future?
- What does God's KNOWLEDGE of the future tell us about God?
- Does it give you comfort in knowing that God already sees the future?

Examination:

- Read **Daniel 11:1-20**

- How many kings of Persia does verse 2 reference? What are we told regarding the fourth of these kings?
 - Bonus Study: If you want to dig deeper into the identity of these kings, find a study Bible or commentary. The fourth of these kings is believed to be a man named Xerxes (aka: Ahasuerus) who ruled Persia from 486BC to 465BC. What other prominent Biblical person lived during the reign of Xerxes (hint: it was a woman).
- What mighty king is being described in v. 3, who will arise with great power?
- Look up the word “Diadochi”. What does it say? How does this relate to v. 4?
- Verses 5-20 begin a description of various “Kings of the North,” and “Kings of the South.” These verses are a historians delight! They describe in fantastic detail a period of approx. 160 years (322BC-164BC) when the kings of the Seleucid Empire (Syria) battle back and forth with the kings of the Ptolemaic Empire (Egypt). What have to remember is that this ACCURATE history was given to Daniel hundreds of years BEFORE it actually happened. Why is this so important? What do we learn from this? Why do you think Satan was so intent on STOPPING this information from getting to Daniel in Ch. 10?
- Read **Daniel 11:21-35**
 - These next 15 verses focus in on one particular King of the North—a ruler named Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who controlled the Seleucid Empire from 175BC-164BC. According to v. 21, what kind of man was Antiochus?
 - What does Antiochus do in v. 25? What happens when he attacks Egypt?
 - After his defeat at the hands of the Egyptians, Antiochus passes through the land of Israel. What does he do in v. 28? What do you think it means that his “heart will be set against the holy covenant”?
 - Verse 29 describes a second attempt to conquer Egypt. What happens?
 - Where did these “ships of the western coastlands” come from? Following this defeat, what does Antiochus do, once again, to the Israelites (vv. 29-32)?
- Read **Daniel 11:36-45**
 - These ten verses are very tricky to interpret. On one hand, they could still be describing Antiochus in 167BC. However, there are clues that the focus of these verses shifts to another man. What are some clues from these ten verses that the person being described might actually be the Anti-Christ who will rise up to rule the world in the last days?
- Read **Daniel 12:1-4**
 - The scene has now clearly shifted to the end times. What do we see in verses 1-2 that indicate this?
 - What does it mean to have your name “written in the book”? (Rev 20:11-15)

Application:

Daniel 12:3 describes “those who are wise.” What does it mean to be wise? Are you wise?