

The Time of the End

Daniel 12:1-13

Our journey through Daniel ends today. When we began in August, I gave three reasons for studying this book. Having been through the twelve chapters of Daniel, those reasons seem even more relevant today than they did then. I said we should study this book because ...

Daniel's situation parallels our own. Daniel spent his entire adult life as a believer living in a pagan culture. We can gain much insight from the way he handled his challenges.

Daniel's prophecies may soon be fulfilled. Just as many of Daniel's detailed prophecies have already been fulfilled in history, the remainder of them will be fulfilled in the same way. God's word is true—from the big picture of the flow of world kingdoms down to the individual message given to an exiled Jew in Babylon.

Daniel's God is our God too—and He is still on the throne. This may be the most important lesson of the book. We have seen it in every chapter, in every event of Daniel's life and in every prophecy God gives in this book. God is sovereign over heaven and earth. He rules the hosts of heaven and the world of men. He is in charge of nations, families, and individuals. God knows and determines the past, the present, and the future. He is in charge of good times and bad days, of happiness and sorrow, of joy and heartache, of great victories and shocking defeats. He is in charge when a child is born and He is in charge when death knocks at your door. Having studied this book we ought be more confident in the sovereignty of a God who works all things for our good and for His glory.

As we come to the end of this book, Daniel is an old man. He has served God in the courts of pagan kings for over 70 years. Daniel 12 brings us to the end of his career as a prophet.

If you'll remember, this is part of the last vision recorded by Daniel. It began with chapter 10, which gave us the setting. He was standing on the bank of the Tigris River when the Lord appeared to Daniel and an angel spoke with him. Chapter 12 gives us conclusion in a conversation between the angels and with Daniel. And in between, chapter 11 is the message of the great vision that was given to Daniel. There the angel explains the vision giving Daniel some details of human history from Daniel's day during the Persian kingdom forward ending with Antichrist and his defeat at the end of the age.

The first four verses of chapter 12 is the last part of the angel's message to Daniel. We could call it the end of the age. Then verses 5-13 gives us the end of the book.

Listen to the word of God as I read this final chapter of Daniel.

**1 "At that time Michael shall stand up,
The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people;
And there shall be a time of trouble,**

- Such as never was since there was a nation,
Even to that time.
And at that time your people shall be delivered,
Every one who is found written in the book.
- 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,
Some to everlasting life,
Some to shame and everlasting contempt.
- 3 Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.
- 4 "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."
- 5 Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank.
- 6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?"
- 7 Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.
- 8 Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, "My lord, what shall be the end of these things?"
- 9 And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.
- 10 Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.
- 11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.
- 12 Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.
- 13 But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."

1. The End of the Age (12:1-4)

The first four verses are really a continuation of the message of the angel to Daniel from chapter 11. Verse 1 begins, "**At that time.**" What time is he referring to? It is the same time as the end of chapter 11 which described the final world ruler, the antichrist who will persecute the people of God during the last days. Here, the angel tells Daniel three things that will happen at the end of the age.

First, there will be:

A. A time of tribulation and deliverance (12:1)

Verse 1 goes on to say **“there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time.”**

In other words, the angel says there is coming a time like no other time, a time of trouble. The nation of Israel has suffered much. Israel suffered much from the Babylonians, during Daniel’s day. They suffered from the Medo--Persians. They suffered much during the time of the Greeks as we saw in chapter 8 and 11. They suffered greatly under the Romans who destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. They have continued to suffer in history even since the Roman time. They suffered much from the Crusaders. They suffered much in twentieth century Europe. There has been recurring tribulation all throughout the time of the Gentiles. And all of it has been the rod of God. All of it has been the refining process of God for their rebellion and rejection and all of it has been meant to draw them to Him. But the worst is yet to come. There will be a time, a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.

Now, that is a Hebrew expression. It is also used several times in the ninth chapter of Exodus. It means this is the worst ever. It will be an unprecedented time of trouble. It will be both the worst and the last of Israel's times of trouble. Jesus spoke about that time of trouble in Matthew 24:21 using almost the same words, **“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”** If you want a picture of how bad this time of trouble is, read Revelation chapters 6-19. It describes war and famine, disease and death, persecution of believers and demonic oppression. Jesus goes on in verse Matthew 24:22 to say how bad this time of tribulation will be, **“And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.”**

But here is the good news. In the midst of this terrible time of tribulation, God sends help. Daniel 12:1 says, **“At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people.”** Michael the archangel that we met in chapter 11 will come to the aid of God’s people. We find further illumination regarding this in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 12:7-9, John writes that there will be war in heaven: Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon (that is the devil). Michael will be victorious. Satan will be thrown down to the earth where he will continue the war by attacking God's people during this tribulation time at the end of the age, knowing that he has but a short time.

God will help His people supernaturally. Michael will stand up and the result will be that God’s people will be delivered. Verse 1 says, **“And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.”**

The deliverance in view comes at the end of the tribulation period. And who will be delivered or saved by the Lord? Answer: Everyone whose name is written in “the book.” And what book is that? It can be no other book than the Lamb’s Book of Life. This is the “book” God keeps in heaven of the saved of all the ages.

B. A resurrection of the dead (12:2)

Verse 2 says, **“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.”**

This is the resurrection of the dead. Although most biblical scholars generally agree that resurrection is in view in this passage, because of the wording of the prophecy, some differ in their interpretation about the number of resurrections, when they occur and who is included. I’m not going to get into all that today, but I do want to point out some things that Daniel surely teaches us here.

First, this verse pictures for us the resurrection of the body. **“Those who sleep in the dust of the earth”** are those who have died. After we die our bodies turn to dust. Ashes to ashes and dust to dust. Embalming slows it down but it doesn’t stop the process. Cremation speeds it up. And from the dust of the earth God will one day raise the dead. As Christ was raised bodily from the dead, so our bodies will be raised and transformed into incorruptible bodies in which we will live forever.

Second, notice that the resurrection is in two categories: **Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.** Revelation 20 speaks about the resurrection of the saved as “the first resurrection,” (Rev. 20:5). Revelation 20:6 says, **“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”** And it says **“But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.”**

Everyone is eventually raised but not all are going to the same place. Some are raised to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Revelation 20:15 says, **“And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”**

Jesus spoke about these two resurrections in John 5, **“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation,”** (John 5:28-29).

Listen, there are only two possible destinations for all of us: eternal life, or eternal condemnation. Those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will live forever with God in His heavenly kingdom. Those whose names are not written in His book are condemned and cast into the lake of fire.

C. A reward for the righteous (12:3)

In addition to receiving eternal life itself, those who are among the resurrection to everlasting life will be rewarded by glorification. Verse 3 says, **“Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.”**

Who are the wise? They are described as “wise” in that they were able to see through the unbelief and wickedness of their generation and put their faith in our

Lord and His unseen kingdom. They behaved themselves wisely; that is, they were obedient to the gospel of God. They believed **“the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,”** (2 Tim. 2:15). Because they live by faith in Jesus Christ, their reward is that they will shine with the same glory as the heavens and fulfill the same function to **“declare the glory of God”** (Ps 19:1).

And even more so, those **“who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.”** Who are God’s stars? Not the ones the world applauds. God’s stars are those who lead many to righteousness. They point others to Jesus. They will shine like the stars in the heavens.

Who are God’s stars?

The mother who patiently teaches her children about Jesus.

The office worker who answers questions about her faith from her friends.

The son who witnesses to his parents.

The coach who shares Christ with his players.

The friend who tells his buddies about Christ.

The Sunday School teacher who prays for her students to be saved.

The missionary couple who goes to a foreign land to tell those who have never heard about Jesus.

These are God’s heroes, and they will one day shine like the stars.

Then we come to verse 4: **“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”** Daniel is told to seal up the book, to preserve it until the time of the end. This book will grow in significance in the end times. Men will run to and fro seeking answers. They want to know what the future holds. Many things in Daniel and Revelation that seem mysterious will make perfect sense the closer the world comes to the return of Christ.

Then in verses 5-13 we have

2. The End of the Book (12:5-13)

This last section of chapter 12 is really in two parts: the angel’s question and Daniel’s question. The first has to do with the timing and the second has to do with the outcome.

A. The timing of the end (12:5-7)

Daniel did not ask the question. Instead, one of the angels standing on the shore of the Tigris river asked for him, **“How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?”** The answer was given by the One whom Daniel saw in the vision of 10:5-6—our Lord Himself. He raised both hands and swore by the eternal Father who **“lives forever”** that the end of these wonders would come after a time, times, and half a time. This is generally understood to mean a period of

three and one-half years, the second half of Daniel's seventieth week, which is the Great Tribulation.

While Daniel would surely be concerned with the length of time his people would suffer in the Great Tribulation, the emphasis of this paragraph does not seem to fall on the length of Israel's suffering but on its purpose. The suffering will end when its purpose has been fulfilled: **"when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished"** (12:7).

Like all sinners, unbelieving Israel's self-righteousness and self-sufficiency turns this people from God, trusting in themselves for righteousness, strength, and eternal life. In His grace, God brings the nation Israel into the most terrible time of their national existence to press them beyond the limits of their power, wisdom, and strength and to turn them to Himself for salvation.

Here is an illustration of the truth of the gospel: *Before we can be saved, we must be broken.* We must cease to trust in ourselves and cast ourselves upon God. We must recognize our deeds of righteousness as filthy rags and receive the righteousness of God, which God provided in the person of His son, Jesus Christ (see Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:19-26; Titus 3:5-7). Before we can be used of God, we must cease to trust in our own strength and wisdom, and turn to Him in our weakness for the strength He provides (Romans 12:1-8; 2 Corinthians 3:1-8; 4:7-15).

Next, Daniel asks a question about

B. The outcome of the end (12:8-13)

Verse 8, **"Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, 'My lord, what shall be the end of these things?'"**

From Daniel's question in verse 8, it is clear he did not yet understand completely where the prophetic program of God was going, and so he asked, "My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?"

The answer Daniel gets in verse 9 points to those live in those last days, **"And he said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.'"**

What Daniel needs to know is that this time of suffering will have a two-fold effect. Those who are righteous will be purged and purified by their suffering, prepared for the coming of the King and His kingdom (compare 1 Peter 1:6-7) as verse 10 says, **"Many shall be purified, made white, and refined."** And on the other hand, those who are wicked will not understand what God is doing, and they will persist in their sin, awaiting the day of their judgment (compare 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12; Revelation 22:11). Verse 10 continues, **"but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand."**

The righteous will see God's hand at work even during the tribulation while the wicked will continue in their wickedness. Thus does God deal with the moral

choices we make. The tragedy that breaks one heart hardens another. One man cries out to God, another curses Him, and still another ignores Him altogether.

Then verse 11 gives us another detail, **“And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.”** Again this is seen to be about three and a half years and a little more is added at the end. Verse 12 gives the promise, **“Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.”** We don’t know exactly what will happen in those extra days, but we know it will be a great blessing for those who see it. They probably represent the events that will occur after Jesus comes before the commencement of His kingdom reign.

Finally we have the last word for Daniel in verse 13, **“But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.”**

The Lord’s final word to Daniel contains four important messages:

Go your way. You’ve been faithful. Now stay the course. You’ve been through the lion’s den. Keep standing strong and you’ll be all right. Be faithful until God calls you home.

You shall rest. Daniel, you will die. Daniel, you’ve had a long life filled with many struggles. Hang on a little longer and your day of rest will come.

You will rise. This is a promise of bodily resurrection. Though Daniel will die, he will rise again.

You will receive your inheritance. This would have been a precious promise to a man who had lived his whole life in a pagan land. For 70 years he had been far from his homeland. Although other Jews returned, Daniel evidently died in Babylon. He died as an exile in exile. But God promised him that one day he would receive his promised inheritance.

In God’s final revelation to this great prophet, He spelled out the way in which the triumph of evil men, and the suffering of the saints, contributed to the fulfillment of God’s plans and promises. His assurance is that Daniel, along with all mankind, would be raised from the dead to receive either eternal life or eternal contempt.

The certain hope of the resurrection of the dead is the basis for godly living, even in times when godliness brings persecution. Many of our brothers and sisters around the world are experiencing persecution and martyrdom for Jesus’ name today. Knowing that this life is not all there is, that we will be raised to eternal life—that is what gets us going when the going gets tough.

What better truth to end the prophecy of Daniel than that of the resurrection from the dead! For the saint, the doctrine of the resurrection is the basis for our hope. For the sinner, the doctrine of the resurrection is the basis for fear and for repentance.

When you face the reality of death, my friend, will it be with hope or with fear?

Jesus said, **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”** Will that be true of you?