

“The Time of the End” (part 2)

Daniel 12:1-13

Let's turn in our Bibles this morning one last time to Daniel, chapter 12. We've come to the end of our study of this prophetic book of the Old Testament. One of the things that is so amazing to me as we look back on our study of Daniel is the way in which this ancient book speaks with such relevance and authority to where we are today. Now, that is true of God's Word no matter what the chapter and verse may be. But Daniel in particular sheds light on our pathway as we seek to live righteously before God in the midst of our own 'Babylonian' generation.

The Hebrew word 'end' is used at least 10 times in the last two chapters. Daniel is being shown what will happen at the time of the end. The final chapter of Daniel concerns the time of the end, or the end of human history as we know it. History is linear, which means it has a beginning and an end. Time is not at a stand still, but is moving toward something. Just as the rivers make their way to the ocean, so also is the steady stream of time moving history toward a future in which the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of Jesus Christ. And this is the overarching message of Daniel 12, which is all about God's promise of everlasting life for His weary people. No matter how bad things may get, the people of God are to live with the hope of His promise. The eschatological hope of the people of God is what keeps them looking up.

What exactly is involved with the 'time of the end?' I have already pointed out a couple of things from our last time in this passage. To begin with, according to the text, the time of the end will be a time of tribulation. You will notice how verse 1 begins by saying, "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people."

“At That Time” — *means during the time of the end; is a reference to the mid point of the seventieth week*

That is the three and a half year period known as the Great Tribulation. It is the time in which the Antichrist will betray Israel, put an end to sacrifice and offering in the temple, and set himself up as the object of worship. He will then unleash a wave of violence against them that will parallel the evil received at the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes. I want you to pay close attention to what John goes on to say later in Revelation:

Revelation 12:7—“Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back...”

So when Daniel is told about a future time when Michael the archangel stands up on behalf of God’s people, it is this spiritual conflict that is being referred to. The war that rages between the forces of good and evil will reach its peak during the tribulation period. Sometime after Michael arises to do battle against the devil and his angels, notice that verse 1 goes on to say, “And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.” Michael and the angels of heaven will fight against Satan, they will prevail over them, and Revelation 12:9 says the dragon will be cast out of heaven. The result will be an increased conflict on the earth because Satan will know that his time is short.

Daniel learns that the time of the end will involve a great tribulation for the people of God, but those whose names are found in the book will be delivered. So not only will the end be a time of tribulation, but secondly, it will be a time of separation. A distinction is made in verse 2, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Just as time is moving toward an ultimate end, so also is

humanity. We are all headed somewhere. The only question that remains is this one, “Where exactly are you headed?” At the time of the end, many who sleep in the dust of the earth—or those who have physically died—shall awake. Some will awake to everlasting life, while some will awake to shame and everlasting contempt. A misconception that some people have is that this truth of resurrection is only true to the New Testament and not to be found in the Old Testament. While the full revelation of it isn’t seen until the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is there in seed form. It could not have been more clear to Daniel. Other passages include:

Job 19:25-26—“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God.”

Isaiah 26:19—“Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!”

Psalms 16:10-11—“For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let Your Holy One see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forever more.”

Our contemporary culture and its secular worldview would have you believe that there is nothing beyond the grave, or that when your life ends on earth, you cease to exist at that point. However, that is not the truth of the Bible. The Word of God clearly says that the dead are still alive. Everyone who dies is still alive somewhere, because death does not terminate human existence. Yes, the body experiences physical death. But a person is more than a body. You've been created with a soul. You are not a body with a soul—you are a soul with a body.

You will live on somewhere after you die. Death is a change in state, a change in place. Why?

Ecclesiastes 12:5-7—“...because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets, before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

There is a time in the future, at the time of the end, where there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. And there are two entirely different destinies for the righteous and the unrighteous. Those who die in Christ will be raised to endless life, but those who die in their sin will be raised to endless shame and contempt. Isaiah 64:6 says that the very best of my righteousness is like a filthy garment. All have sinned have come short of the glory of God. That's me, that's you, that's everybody. How then can those who are under the curse of sin and sentenced to die be raised to eternal life? This is the question that gets to the heart of the Bible.

Listen—it is only through Christ's death on the cross that the penalty for my sin has been paid. And by His own resurrection from the dead, He has conquered death for all who believe in Him and come to Him in faith. Jesus said:

John 6:40—“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

That's why the believer has no guilt in life and no fear in death! For a believer, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. At the time of the end, when Christ comes, the dead in Christ will rise and receive a glorified

resurrection body. That body will be patterned after His own body. Notice what Daniel is told in verse 3:

“And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

The ‘wise’ are those who trust Christ. The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The wise are those who respond in obedient faith to His Word. The wise are also witnesses in the way that they turn many to righteousness. They will shine for all eternity!

So the time of the end will be a time of tribulation, and it will be a time of separation. Third, notice how it will also be:

3—A time of PRESERVATION (12:4-10)

“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.’ Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, ‘How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?’ And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.”

God’s promises

Daniel is told in verse 4 to shut up the words and ‘seal’ the book until the time of the end. The idea is preservation, not concealment. The words of the prophecy

are not hidden in the sense of some kind of cryptic code that is impossible to decipher. Rather, they are to be sealed in order for them to be preserved and read until the time of the end. The words of the book show how God will preserve and will keep His promise. God is going to keep the message safe, it will not be lost in the sands of time, but will be even more clear to those who are discerning in the last days. The fact that we have been reading and studying the words of this book some 2,600 years after the fact bears witness to its divine preservation. Implicit within the text is the notion that its message will be critical in the last days. It will be reopened and studied all over again.

Notice that Daniel is told how many will run 'to and fro' in the last days, and knowledge will increase. The phrase is descriptive of a frantic search. It is descriptive of how man tries to find answers to his predicament. Man will increase in knowledge, but his knowledge only keeps him running in circles. It speaks of humanity and its continuous search for truth while leaving God out of the equation.

Amos 8:11-12—“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.”

How appropriate it speaks of our generation, with all kinds of knowledge literally at our fingertips, and yet we are no better for it. We are none the wiser when it comes to truth, when it comes to loving God and loving our fellow man. In his lost condition, man has exchanged the truth of God for a lie while running to and fro and looking for what only God can give. Those who do not find rest and

contentment and satisfaction in what God has provided, they will go looking for it somewhere. It will be an empty pursuit, however.

God's people

Notice in verse 5 how Daniel sees what he describes as two others who stood on each bank of the river. If we go back to chapter 10 and the beginning of this vision, you will notice that he is at the Tigris River. One of these angels asks a question of the Man clothed in linen, whom we have identified as a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. And the question is in verse 6, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" In other words, how long will be it be until all of this is fulfilled and the end comes? I find it interesting that the question is asked by an angel. Some professing believers aren't interested in prophecy because they find it controversial and hard to understand. But they dismiss its overall importance to their lives. The intrigue of the angels ought to serve as a rebuke to that kind of attitude. If the angels are interested in these things, don't you think that they ought to be the concern of the member's of Adam's race? This is Peter's point when he refers to:

1 Peter 1:12— "...the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

The fact that an angel asks the Man in linen how long it will be until the end is reason enough for us to recognize the importance of it all. The response to the question comes in verse 7 as Daniel says, "I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes

to an end all these things would be finished.” Alistair Begg says this speaks of three things:

- The gravity of what has been revealed; the Man in linen lifts both hands in an oath to the One who lives forever
- The mystery of what has been revealed; the reference is to a time, times, and half a time (Dan. 7:25)
- The certainty of what has been revealed; it is when the shattering of the power of God’s people comes to an end that all these things will be finished

“Shattering” — *to break; to dash to pieces*

Daniel 7:25—“He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into His hand for a time, times, and half a time.”

Things do not get better for the people of God here in this present world system. God’s people can expect suffering at the hands of a blind and unbelieving world. There is a sense in which this ‘shattering’ of our strength as believers is the very means by which God advances His church.

David Jeremiah — *“When we think of persecution, we often think of the Roman Empire and the brutal assaults on Christians by emperors like Nero who were determined to eradicate the church. But the most intense period of persecution in the history of the church is occurring around the world today. In 2017, the organization Open Doors, which monitors global persecution, released a report highlighting the top fifty nations where Christians face the most severe persecution. The bottom line: 100 percent of Christians in 21 countries around*

the world experience persecution for their faith in Christ, and more than 215 million Christians face 'high levels' of persecution. Nearly one in every 12 Christians today lives in an area or culture in which Christianity is illegal, forbidden, or punished."

There was another report that pointed out three countries where religious discrimination has reached a threshold of concern—Mexico, Russia, and the United States. The report stated, "While conditions in the U.S. are in no way comparable to other countries, a certain segment of the culture and the courts seem to be intent on driving faith out of the public square." Are we surprised by this?

2 Timothy 3:12—“All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

John 16:33—“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Why is it that so many within certain circles of the Christian church think that by cozying up to the world and adopting the world's value system we will somehow be liked by the world? Reaching the world for Christ is not a matter of us gaining acceptance by the world. It is an issue of whether or not we will lay down our lives in Jesus' name. Christian history reveals that those who have been the most unlike the world, even to the degree of being hated by the world, have been the very same ones who have done the most for the kingdom of God. The 'shattering' of our power may be the thing that God most uses to advance His cause.

That's true for the church, and I think it is also true for an individual Christian. It is only as our power is 'shattered' that we will ever come to seek His. During those times in which we hurt, the valleys and the disappointments and the setbacks, this is when God does His greatest work in our lives. I do think that is a very important lesson for us to keep in mind, especially when our lives take an unexpected turn. Some of you are there now.

So even though the future would involve a time of terrible persecution and suffering for the people of God, Daniel is told that God's people will be preserved through it all.

Jesus told His disciples the same thing:

Matthew 24:21-22—“Then there will be great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”

God's purposes

God will preserve His promises that have been revealed to Daniel, as well as His people. Ultimately, He will keep His purposes. Look at what Daniel says in verse 8:

“I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, ‘O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?’ He said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.”

If we wrestle with the things we've read in Daniel, that is okay because Daniel wrestled with them too. It is Daniel's way of admitting his weakness.

Sometimes, we think that we need to have it all figured out. We expect to have

all of our questions answered because we are so uncomfortable with living in the tension of it. We forget that the life of faith is lived out in the realm of unanswered questions. It would not require faith if we knew it all. Daniel asks his question, but notice the response that he receives:

“Go your way, Daniel, for the words are sealed.”

In other words, he had already been given what he needed to know. He had written it down so it could be preserved for future generations. And the Lord says, “Go your way.” Live your life. Go to work. Provide for your family. Get involved in your church. God has given each one of us a measure of responsibility, and we are to get to it. Daniel is to get busy with his responsibility. Meanwhile, the Man in linen tells him in verse 10 that God’s purposes will prevail all the way up until the end:

“Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.”

There is a distinction made between the wicked and the wise. The wise are those who ‘purify’ themselves and are refined. They belong to God and submit to His purpose for their lives. What is that purpose? Paul tells us:

Romans 8:28-29—“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

The ultimate purpose that God has in mind for your life as a believer is to conform you to the image of His Son. It is likeness to Jesus Christ that God is looking for in mine and your life. He will stop at nothing to see Christ's image in us even to the extent of bringing us into seasons of suffering. His refiner's fire always serves His ultimate purpose. He keeps us in the fire until He sees the character qualities in our lives that He is looking for.

4—A time of CONSOLATION (12:11-13)

“And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.”

One final thing that we see here at the close of the book is that the time of the end involves a time of consolation for the people of God. And what I mean by that is the ultimate hope that is ours in Christ, and nothing can take that away. The last three and half years of the tribulation period will be marked by great suffering for the people of God who are on earth at the time. It will seem as if the powers of darkness have won the day. But the night is always the darkest just before the sunrise. It would be useless for us to debate the meaning of the exact numbers mentioned here. We know that the final period of the tribulation is 1,260 days which is three and half years. But why the extra 30 days, followed by 45 more? I don't know. Some have suggested that it will allow for the cleanup time, and the time it involves for the Lord Jesus to usher in His new administration of the earth as He sets up His kingdom. The point to be taken is that the days are determined, and evil will not last one day longer than that which has been determined by the Lord. Those who arrive at the 1,335 days will experience great blessing as they look upon the King in all of His beauty.

Look at the practical admonition given to Daniel in the very last verse of the book —“But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.” Daniel is consoled in view of his:

Present Responsibility

Verse 13 says, “Go your way till the end.” Again, those are words that emphasize the importance of Daniel’s present responsibilities in life. Of all that we have seen about him, one thing that stands out to me is his faithfulness. The pressures of Babylon had not been too much for his life, but had been used by God to shape him into the man that he was.

Warren Wiersbe — *“The Babylonians changed Daniel’s address, his name, and his education, and they tried to change his standards, but they couldn’t change his theology.”*

He was a faithful man, a man whose integrity is on display, a man who received a vast stewardship of trust. One last time, he is told to be faithful to carry out his responsibilities until the end of his days. While you and I see the world around us galloping toward the day of judgment, we must not lose sight of our present responsibilities as the people of God. Rather than being stargazers, the Lord tells us to be soul-winners. Paul admonished the Thessalonians in this way:

2 Thessalonians 3:11-13—“For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly...do not grow weary in doing good.”

How are you doing in your present responsibilities? This truth of a coming kingdom ought to motivate you to work, to serve, and to live your life with a sense

of accountability. When the Lord Jesus returns for His church at the time of the end, the time for gospel work will be over. Now is the time for us to engage in mission endeavors. Now is the time for us to invest in our children. Now is the time for us to take seriously the responsibility of discipleship.

Hebrews 10:24-25—“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

2 Peter 3:10-12—“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief, and the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming day of God.”

1 John 3:2-3—“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purified himself as He is pure.”

Future Resurrection

Verse 13 says, “Go your way till the end, Daniel. You will rest and stand at your allotted place.” The language is that of promise. God is making the promise to Daniel that he will be resurrected in the last days. Rest, then resurrection! No devil, no Antichrist, not even a terrible time of tribulation can destroy the certainty of the resurrection. Do you know what you have to look forward to as a believer? Rest and resurrection! And then:

Eternal Reward

Notice that Daniel is told that he will one day stand in his 'allotted place.' The word means an assigned portion, as in that of an inheritance. It is the same Hebrew word used in the book of Joshua to describe the division of the promised land among each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Daniel is told to go his way till the end of his life on earth. After that, he will rest and be raised to stand in his own allotted place of eternal reward. One of these days, when it is all said and done, faithful believers from every generation will be resurrected and will rule with Jesus Christ in the coming kingdom. O, how I long for His return! In His first coming, He came to atone for sins and to die on the cross as the substitute for sinners. Phillip Bliss said it well:

*“Man of Sorrows,” what a name
For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! what a Savior!
Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah! what a Savior!
Guilty, vile, and helpless, we,
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
Full redemption—can it be?
Hallelujah! what a Savior!
Lifted up was He to die,
“It is finished!” was His cry;
Now in heaven exalted high;*

Hallelujah! what a Savior!
When He comes, our glorious King,
To His kingdom us to bring,
Then anew this song we'll sing
Hallelujah! what a Savior!

My friend, there is coming a time in the future, at the time of the end, when pain and sorrow will be no more. Death and dying will be no more. Sin will be banished, the world will be made new, and the Lord Himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes. And one of these days, as I am taking a stroll in my new body through the streets of New Jerusalem, I imagine I will bump into Daniel. And I'll tell him, "I read your book! I even took a year to preach my way through it." Then we'll sit down at the table with all of God's saints from every age and sing to Him who is seated on the throne, "Worthy is the Lamb!"