

The End of Days

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Date: 20 November 2016

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[0 : 01] We're going to talk about how God is in control and the king has appointed all things. And so what is he trying to teach? What is he trying to teach me in all of this? To trust him, obviously.

Yes, I'm glad you're here with me here at the end of all things. In the book of Daniel. Since September, we have lived in this book.

And now we find ourselves at the last vision that Daniel records. There's three other visions he records. They're in chapters 2, 7, and 8. This vision lasts for three whole chapters.

And I'll make reference to all three chapters. But we'll be looking most closely at the first four verses of chapter 12. As Tommy and I have mentioned a couple times over these last couple weeks, there are many different genres in the Bible.

This genre is called apocalyptic, which means to reveal. But we're not going to see anything here unless the Lord helps us. And so we start in prayer and ask him for help.

[1 : 11] So let's do that now. All right, Father. We need your help. There's been plenty of distractions.

But you've been here this whole time. More present than we have been. More focused than we have been. Focused on us. Because you love us so dearly.

How could we have missed it? How could we have missed you? Here you are. And now we're about to hear your voice. We need you to speak to us.

We need you to speak to us to help us understand. Now we can't tackle anything in the Bible, much less the book of Daniel without your help. So intervene and help us.

Help us understand. We ask you humbly in the name of Jesus, our King. Amen. All right. By the time we get to chapter 10.

[2 : 16] Now we ended last week on chapter 9. By the time we get to chapter 10, Daniel, the prophet, has witnessed more political upheaval in one lifetime than most people have the misfortune of witnessing.

And he's been at the very center of it all. He's been in the city of Babylon. Babylon, the capital of the Babylonian Empire. Babylon was responsible for wiping out his homeland, Israel.

Babylon would become the capital of the Persian Empire once Persia overthrew Babylon. Not only was Daniel in this great city, but he was often near the very center of power. He was near the throne.

He was an advisor to Nebuchadnezzar. He spoke to Belshazzar, predicting his overthrow. The night that Belshazzar was murdered. And then Daniel eventually became one of the highest ranking officials in the Persian Empire.

For much of his life, Daniel would have wondered what the future held in store for him and for his people. And now he's 90 years old. 90 years old.

- [3 : 23] Just two years before this, when Daniel was 88, the first wave of Israelites was finally allowed to leave Babylon and go back to their homeland in Israel to start rebuilding.
- But for whatever reason, maybe because of his age, Daniel didn't go with them. He would die in exile. But now at age 90, after a lifetime of prayer, God has decided to give Daniel a very detailed account of what the future holds for Daniel's people.
- I have to imagine it was immense comfort to receive these words. And we too may be comforted by them. This is for us too. Much of it applies to us.
- So you could call this last vision in chapters 10 through 12, a field guide for facing the future. Now we're going to discuss five important keys to facing the future from these three chapters.
- Five, not three, five. I figured that there's three chapters. I should get three points per chapter. That would make nine keys. But I'm just going to do five.
- [4 : 30] It's a good deal. A very good deal for you. It's tremendous. The first, the first key for facing the future is to know that all things are appointed.
- Chapter 12, verse 1 reads, at that time. And we find that phrase, this formula throughout chapters 11 and 12. The end is yet to be at the time appointed, at the time appointed, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time, at the time of the end, etc., etc.
- When we read the Bible, when we see something repeated over and over, we know that's very important. So what does it say? God is in control. It is he who orders history. To demonstrate God's knowledge and control of world history, Daniel is given a very detailed prediction of what is to befall the various kingdoms of the world for the next 500 years after his vision.
- Chapters 10 and 12, chapters 10 through 12 give us a lot of details. It's too much to cover now. Lots of dates. Lots of names.
- Lots of events. I can just summarize by saying that it predicts Xerxes of Persia, Alexander the Great, the distribution of his empire soon after his death to his generals, the struggle between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires, and Israel being caught in the crossfire between these northern and southern kingdoms.
- [5 : 52] And then eventually Antiochus, Epiphanes, and this desecrating of the temple of Jerusalem by rededicating it to the worship of Zeus. Now, if you want to do further research on this, the commentaries actually suggest looking at the ESV study Bible.
- So if you have that, you're in luck. If not, you can borrow mine or find one, but it has like great charts and timelines of all the predictions that chapters 10, 11, and 12 make, and it's startling how accurate it is.
- What's important for us right now is that these descriptions of future events, a future from Daniel's perspective, these descriptions let us know who is in charge.
- It is God who orders history, not kings, not kingdoms, not random chants, not microphones accidentally muted when they shouldn't be, etc., etc.
- God orders history. If this is hard to wrap your head around, that makes sense. This is world history, impersonal events, and kingdoms.
- [6 : 59] So the Bible helps us wrap our heads more easily around this kind of thing by showing us a person. It shows us Jesus. If we look at the book of Mark, chapter 4, we find Jesus and the disciples in their boat, a fishing boat.
- And Jesus is sleeping below decks, and there's a storm raging. And the disciples are freaking out. They think they're going to capsizes and drown.
- And so they run down below, wake up Jesus, and say, don't you care if we drown? So Jesus calmly gets up. He goes above, and he calms the storm.

Flat water, just like that. And the disciples are terrified. Why would they be terrified? Well, yeah, Jesus is displaying extraordinary supernatural power.

They're terrified because the one who controls the waves, they understood as the one who created the waves. The creator of the universe was standing on the deck of their boat.

[8 : 12] If he had the power over the waves, if he created the waves, then he ordained the waves. That's what they got.

So if you feel knocked about by the waves, know that there is one who created the waves, has appointed them, and has power over them. I was reminded of this truth last Sunday.

I had a conversation with one of the trustees of Canaan Baptist Church. There are two of them sitting over here. I talked to one named Andrea. And I asked her, so, how are you doing this week?

She said, not great. Not great. But God is in control. God is in control. There was such a depth of meaning and experience to what she said because it was said from a perspective I'll never fully comprehend.

But that has kept me going through this week. Through meandering through the perpetual outrage that is now our culture. God is in control.

[9 : 19] That's the first key in our field guide to the future. Know that the times are appointed. The second is this. Know that there is more behind the veil. The second is this.

Know that there's more behind the veil. In chapter 12, verse 1, it says, At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who is in charge of your people. Now we don't know much about this Michael.

But we do know that he's an angel. He's a prince of angels. He's an archangel. And he makes war against other spiritual beings. Two of which are mentioned in chapter 10. The prince of Persia and the prince of Greece.

Those aren't human beings. God is lifting the veil for us here. Letting us see the unseen forces that are at work in the course of history and of world events.

We might not understand what it is we're seeing here behind the veil in these chapters of Daniel. But it's so very real.

[10 : 21] There is a world behind the veil. That is so real. If you're a Christian long enough. You might get to know other Christians of deep faith that either come from other parts of the world.

Namely non-Western parts of the world. Or those who have labored there. And they will share with you stories of spiritual encounters. Spiritual resistance.

The demonic. Places where the gospel is making gains and victories. And it's facing spiritual pushback. Now I don't feel I have the deep faith of these particular individuals.

I come from a western viewpoint. But if you and I are enjoying a conversation over a beer sometime. Ask me about this.

And I'll tell you a story too. Because I have seen. And I know. But this is real. It's so real. And it's important to know this. Why? Why is it important to know that there is a world behind the veil that is real?

[11 : 30] For two reasons. First, it's not to frighten us. It's to encourage us. God is for us. So much for us.

That there are forces at work that we can't see. That are coming to the defense of God's people and protecting us. To Daniel, he said, There is a great prince who contends for the people of Israel. To us, he says, In Psalm 91.

For he will command his angels concerning you. To guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up. Lest you strike your foot against a stone.

The second reason it's important to know this. Is that it affects the way we pray. Our prayers can become pretty banal. Don't get me wrong.

God would rather have us pray for the perfect parking space. Than to not be praying at all. Okay. I pray for parking all the time. But.

[12 : 29] When we realize. What does that play? We should be praying in such a way that. If our prayers were answered. The world would take notice.

We should pray in such a way that. If our prayers were answered. The world would take notice. So we keep praying for Syria. We pray for Christians who are being persecuted around the world for their faith.

We keep praying for the children of Washington, D.C. And the renewal of their schools. We keep praying for our nation and our government. And for peace to rule instead of this perpetual outrage.

Keep praying. For this coming Thursday. For your family gathering. Pray because there are those whom we cannot see. Who are in the service of our king.

Who contend for us. The third key in our field guide. Does that just sound cheesy? As soon as I wrote it, I thought this is cheesy.

[13 : 30] They're not going to buy it. It's a deal with me. Field guide for facing the future. There's three F's. So it's okay. I think it's nice. The third key in our field guide to facing the future.

Is this. Know the unshakable hope that is the resurrection. Chapter 12 continues. And there shall be a time of trouble.

Such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time, your people shall be delivered. Everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. 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. One of my favorite moments in scripture. In all of scripture. Is the last verse of Daniel 12.

It's a favorite moment of mine. Because of a purely speculative idea I have about Daniel. And I can't back this up with any evidence at all. But.

[14 : 31] Man. I've wondered. Like where is Daniel in chapter 3. Did you notice that? So. Nebuchadnezzar gathers like. Everybody. Who is. Anybody. From the whole kingdom.

And he erects this golden statue. And tells them. Governors. Satraps. Prefects. To bow before the statue. Shadrach.

Meshach. And Abednego. Are there. But Daniel is not. His three friends. They don't bow. And as they expected. They're arrested. After having not bowed.

And they're sentenced to death. And they're thrown into a blazing furnace. We know that they're rescued. It's a. Happy ending. But. If Daniel had somehow.

Pulled some strings. To excuse himself from this event. I don't know. If he called in sick. Or whatever. What kind of shame. Do you think he felt. Every time he.

[15 : 30] Encountered his friends. After that. What kind of guilt. Do you think. He carried around. After not having been present. By their side. In the greatest trial.

Of their young lives. Again. It's all speculative. But. How much. Would Daniel. Have needed to hear.

In chapter nine. As we heard last week. Daniel. You are greatly loved. And then again. When he's 90 years old.

In chapter 10. Verse 11. Oh. Daniel. Meh. Greatly loved. Two years before this. Israelites. Begin.

Returning to their homeland. But Daniel. Must remain. In exile. In Babylon. And perhaps. He thought. I might be loved. But I cannot get home. I suppose.

[16 : 24] I'm unworthy. And then he's given. This vision. And he's promised. A greater inheritance. A greater rest.

In verse 13. Daniel. You shall rest. And shall stand. In your allotted place. At the end of days. Do you carry around shame?

Are you haunted by guilt? Then this book. Is for you. This chapter. This verse. Is for you. Maybe it's loneliness. You carry around. Or anxiety.

Or fear. Or insecurity. Or regret. Or weariness. Oh man. You are greatly loved. A woman.

You are greatly loved. You have a glorious inheritance. Awaiting you. At the end of days. You. Will rest. And stand in your allotted place.

[17 : 26] Where you will shine like the brightness of the sky above. And like the stars. Forever and ever. Because of the death.

And resurrection of Jesus. This life. And the misery it can bring. It's not your final chapter. Now I hold on to this promise. Every time I think of my dad.

It's been two years since he's passed away. And I still miss him. And I will especially miss him. This coming Thursday. And. The particular words I cling to. Concerning this promise.

Actually come from my son. Calvin. We were reading the Jesus storybook Bible. At bedtime. We were reading the story of how Jesus raised.

Jairus' child. From the dead. His daughter. And Calvin said. Not Calvin. Not John Calvin. My Calvin. Who's not named after John Calvin for what it's worth.

[18 : 23] My Calvin said. Though he's cool too. My Calvin said. Let's pray to Jesus. That he'll bring back grandpa from the dead. The fabulous truth about the resurrection is that God has already answered Calvin's prayer.

The Bible refers to the resurrection as one event. Just one. And it refers to Jesus' resurrection as the first fruits.

Well our resurrection is yet to happen. So what does this mean? That our resurrection is just as certain as Jesus' resurrection. It's all one event.

And that's what we're waiting for. And so I will stand along with my father. And we will stand along with the saints and all we've ever loved who have been in Christ.

We will shine like stars in the universe. Until that day. God says to Daniel and he says to us. Go your way. Go your way knowing that I have the end all wrapped up.

[19 : 30] It's decided. So what are we to be until then? Well we're to be wise. That's the next key. The fourth. Be wise.

Chapter 12 verse 4 says. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above. This is in contrast to those in verse 5. Who it says run to and fro looking for knowledge.

I think Daniel in saying this running to and fro looking for knowledge. I think he's referring to something else that a previous prophet had said. Prophet Amos. In chapter 8 verses 11 to 12 of Amos.

Prophet Amos records the words of the Lord. Behold the days are coming declares the Lord. 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.

- [20 : 30] The wise. Find their wisdom. In scripture. They don't run to and fro. It's there. They see the Bible as the word of God. As the prime authority for all matters of life and faith.
- Our lives are to be organized. Around this book. And this book ultimately points to what? No. Points to who? Points to Jesus.
- Jesus the son of God. Points to the person of Jesus the king. That's the final point. We're to keep our eyes fixed on King Jesus.
- Daniel sees in verse 6. A man clothed in linen. Who was above the waters of the stream. The waters of the river.
- Who is this? Well had we read chapters 10 through 12. We would still be reading chapters 10 through 12. But we would have met this person in chapter 10.
- [21 : 29] At the beginning of this vision. This one in linen. In chapter 10 it said this. Daniel writes. Does that sound familiar?
- Well it sounds a lot like what Ryan read for us from the book of Revelation. About the exalted, resurrected person of Jesus that John encountered.
- So. I think Daniel had a vision. Of the pre-incarnate son of God. Of Jesus. Before he was incarnated in Bethlehem.
- And notice in chapter 12 where he's positioned. Above the waters of the stream. I missed that detail. After having read it a bunch of times. And I just recently noticed.
- He's above the waters of the stream. Why? Because King Jesus remains still. Above the moving waters of time. Of history. Of world events. Of wars. Of kings. Of kingdoms.
- [22 : 48] So this past election. This present perpetual outrage. That we're immersed in. That will all flow downstream. But the king and his beauty and majesty. And his faithfulness to his church.
- Will remain. We titled this sermon series. Daniel and the Faithfulness of God. Because it's easy to think about this book. As about the faithfulness of Daniel. It's not.
- It's about this king. This king robed in linen. Girded with a belt of gold. With a face like lightning. With eyes like torches. With arms and legs like bronze. With a voice like the sound of a waterfall.
- It's this king who is the faithful one. Not Daniel. Well Daniel's faithful. But it's about the king. When the times seem uncertain and unjust.
- We know that he has appointed the times. And he is faithful. When things seem grim. We know that it's God's faithfulness. That is at work behind the veil. Working all things for the good of those who love him.
- [23 : 43] When we doubt because of our faithlessness. He reminds us of his faithfulness to us. By pointing to his life. His death. And his resurrection. To our redemption.
- To our own certain resurrection. In his righteousness we will triumph. In his wisdom we will be wise. In his robes we are perfect beauty.
- In his power we will arise. In the name of the Father and of the Son. And of the Holy Spirit. Let's pray. Let's pray.