

Daniel: Almost Home

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[0 : 00] And it's a very exciting end, an encouraging end. So we're going to look at that this morning, but before we do, Nick is going to come and read for us Daniel chapter 12. Thanks, Nick.

Daniel chapter 12, and this is on page 898 of the Red Church Bible. You have that. At that time, Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arrive.

There will be a time of distress, such as not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time, your people, everyone whose name is found written in the book, will be delivered.

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, forever and ever. But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end.

[1 : 22] Many will go here, and there will be no increased knowledge. Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank.

One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, how long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?

The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward the heaven. And I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, It will be for a time, times, and time and a half.

When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed. I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, My Lord, what will the outcome of all this be?

He replied, Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked.

[2 : 39] None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days. As for you, go your way till the end.

You will rest, and then, at the end of the days, you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance. Thanks very much, Nick.

Well, verse 8 is always encouraging, isn't it?

I heard, but I didn't understand. If Daniel didn't understand, then I don't think perhaps we understand either. So maybe we need to ask for God's help of the Holy Spirit to help us understand.

[3 : 58] Let's pray together. Our Father God, we do come to your word as people who struggle at times to understand everything that you say.

It's hard to work out, and it's hard for us to see how it applies to our life. So we come and ask that by the power of your Holy Spirit, you would give us not just an understanding with our minds, but that by your Spirit you would open up our hearts, that we might see you and understand clearly what you are saying to us, that it may change us and transform us, and help us to be a people who look forward in great hope and great anticipation.

So please help us through this morning, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. The car is packed.

The children are sitting comfortably. Mom has a supply of snacks and drinks, but only five minutes down the road, there is a little cry from the back.

Are we there yet? Ever heard that before? Maybe you've said it. There's this longing and a hoping for the journey to be over.

[5 : 34] They just want to be home. How long is it going to go on for? How long must we wait? Now that's the cry of every Christian who lives in this world.

Look at verse 6. One of them, this is one of the people he sees in the vision, said to the man clothed in linen, who is above the waters of the river, how long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?

You remember back in chapter 11, Daniel has just been given a terrifying and frightening vision of the future. There he was told instead of things getting better, things are going to get a whole lot worse.

Chapter 11 was there to prepare God's people that they are going to face terrible persecution and opposition.

And so the cry goes up to God. End of verse 6. How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?

[6 : 53] How long must we wait until all the struggles and all the hardships are over? Now isn't that the cry of your heart as well?

You perhaps go to college. You face the loneliness of being the only Christian in your class. You head out to work on a Monday morning.

You face the rejection of colleagues because of what you believe. You read stories of Christians around the world who are beaten, imprisoned and die for their faith.

Like the two pastors in Bangladesh who were attacked and imprisoned because they had a baptism at their church. Or the six families and their young children from Laos who were kicked out of their homes and their village with nowhere to go simply because they became followers of Jesus.

Could you imagine being kicked out of Karigaline and out of your house because you follow Jesus? Or the two women who were beheaded in Somalia and their two girls age 8 and 15 being forced to watch.

[8 : 14] And you cry out in the midst of all of this suffering how long must we wait?

How long till all the pain is over? How long till all the suffering ends for God's people? Well in Daniel chapter 12 we have three answers to that question.

How long till it's all over? Here's the first answer. The first answer is this. Suffering now. Salvation later.

God's people are to expect suffering through this life but are assured of salvation to come. Look at verse 1 of chapter 12.

At that time Michael the great prince who protects your people will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.

- [9 : 27] He's reminding us that there's going to be an intense time of distress. This distress is opposition and persecution.
- And it's real. And it's happening to many believers today across the world. And what is the experience of many people across the world today is going to happen to all believers at one stage.
- If you think that is what is happening now is bad he says it's actually only going to get worse. A time is coming he says.
- We don't know when it is. But in the future there will be severe and widespread hostility. Look at that little phrase in verse 1.
- As has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. Yes it's bad now. But it will get worse.
- [10 : 29] And if you are a Christian the promise of God today is suffering now. It's not going to be easy to be a Christian.
- But we must take comfort and encouragement. Because in the midst of all of this God promises salvation. Look at the rest of verse 1.
- But at that time in this time of distress your people everyone whose name is found written in the book will be delivered.
- So we're told here there's a book and this book is God's citizen list. It records all the names of all those who belong to God's eternal kingdom.
- All those people throughout history like Daniel who loved and trusted God have their names written in permanent ink never to be erased.
- [11 : 30] And it's in this book. So if you today are a follower of Jesus your name is written in that book too.
- And you are guaranteed and assured that God will deliver you and save you. But when is all that going to happen?
- Well look at verse 2. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake some to everlasting life others to shame and everlasting contempt.
- It's reminding us that just as everybody who has lived in history has died so one day you and I are going to die. And over the course of time when we die our physical bodies will decompose and they will eventually turn to dust.
- That's what it says here. But look how that dust time is actually described in verse 2. He says multitudes will sleep in the dust.
- [12 : 45] It's as if when we die we're actually just all asleep. Like when you go to bed tonight and you fall asleep that's what it will be like. It's like we're just asleep because one day look at what it says in verse 2 they will awake.
- One day God is going to come and wake us all up and those whose names are in the book will live forever as citizens of God's kingdom.
- You will be woken up and you will live as citizens of God's eternal kingdom. But please note the rest of verse 2 because not everybody is going to enjoy this rising up to everlasting life.
- Look at the rest of verse 2. Some will be woken up to everlasting life others to shame and everlasting contempt.
- That is all those who've stood opposed to God all people who have rejected God and ignored him and pushed him out of their lives all those who've persecuted and opposed God's people will be shut out of God's kingdom forever.
- [14 : 11] Everlasting contempt. It's what the Bible calls hell. Their names will not be in the book.

But for those who trust God their names are there and they can look forward to everlasting life. Now if you're a Christian facing hostility today if you lived in a country where losing your life because you followed Jesus is a reality then you need to know that however you die or whatever situation you may come up against you need to know that one day you will be woken up your name will be called from the book and you will rise to everlasting life.

But all of us need to know that whichever country we live in that one day we will be woken up as it were our names called from the book and we will rise to everlasting life.

God will not forget his people who follow him and who trust him. Yes we may go through all kinds of hardships and struggles but one day look at verse 3 those who are wise or those who impart wisdom will shine like the brightness of the heavens and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars forever and forever.

This is a wonderful picture of what it will be like for God's people in the future. Have you ever looked up at the dark sky at night on a clear night where there's no clouds and all you can see are hundreds and thousands of stars shining brightly?

[16 : 06] Each one is so brilliant and magnificent and their brightness is never fading even when there are clouds there even when the sun comes out they're still there they're still lighting it never fades away.

Well that says God is what my people are like. Yes they may die for their faith yes they may struggle in hard times and difficult times but I will ensure that they will shine on forever and ever like the stars in the sky.

But perhaps you're thinking well I don't live in a country where people face all kinds of opposition and persecution and if ever I did live in a country like that I don't think that I would be able to keep going as a Christian.

Like imagine if you or I today lived in a country like Iraq or Sudan or Pakistan where it would be illegal for us to meet as we're meeting today.

Where if you had a Bible in your possession or whether your family knew that you were a follower of Jesus and you knew that you could lose your job or worse how would you stand in that situation?

[17 : 30] Could you do it? Well I don't think I would be loyal or faithful. I don't think I could stand up to that pressure. And I think the truth is there's none of us who would be able to stand up to that unless God enabled us and gave us strength.

Go back to verse 1. I wasn't missing it out but this is just where it comes helpfully. Chapter 12 verse 1. At that time, so in this time of distress and difficulty, Michael, the great prince who protects your people will arise.

Michael, you remember, from chapter 10, was a chief angel. His role here we're told is to protect and watch over God's people.

We can't see him, we can't hear him, he doesn't talk to us or communicate to us, but God assures us that his angels will be there keeping us, strengthening us and protecting us in the faith.

You see, whenever we face hostility, whenever we face struggles as Christians, God is saying, I have my angels who are there fighting for you so that you will stand strong in your faith.

[18 : 58] So no matter what you come up against, you will be faithful and loyal even in death. Daniel had been promised that there would be terrible things to come, but God says there will be eternal salvation and until that time, my angels will be there for you, to strengthen you and protect you in your faith.

Even if you should lose your life, your faith will still be real. And you are guaranteed that salvation is to come.

So that's the first answer. There will be suffering now, but salvation later. The second answer to the how long is this. Faithfulness now, fulfillment later.

God's people are called to be faithful now, but be assured, the end will come. Look at verse 6. One of them, this is one of the angels who came to him in the vision, said to the man clothed in linen, now I know this may be a little bit hard to get around, but the man clothed in linen, we met him back in chapter 10.

He was one who came from God. They're having a conversation with each other, and this is what they ask. How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?

[20 : 30] How long till all this suffering and all this trouble for God's people is over? How long do we have to wait? The answer comes at the end of verse 7. He tells us there, it will be for a time, times, and half a time.

Now we're going to come back to that in a minute. It will be for a time, times, and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.

Now I don't want to be sensational here, but I do want us to take seriously what the Bible is saying to us, what God is saying to us. He tells us a time is coming, verse 7, when, look at that phrase, when the power of the holy people has been finally broken.

That's scary, because it's telling us that hostility towards God's people will become so great that it will appear that the church, God's people, have been finally defeated and destroyed.

Now, we might find ourselves hard to get our minds around that, but you think of some of the countries today where every Christian is shut away, where it's illegal to meet together, we've got a little taste or an insight as to what that day will be like.

[22 : 05] It'll be like that for every Christian in Ireland, America, wouldn't matter where you lived. this is what the future will be like.

This is what God's people are to be prepared for. Maybe not for you, but maybe for your children. If not your children, maybe their grandchildren. It will happen.

So, what are we to do? Be faithful. Be faithful. Go back to verse three again. it says there, those who are wise or those who impart wisdom will shine like the brightness of the heavens and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

He's telling there that God's people are to remain faithful. They are to be those who prepare others for what is to come. They're to impart wisdom.

them. They're to lead them in the way of righteousness. They are to get alongside those who are struggling in the faith and to encourage them to keep on going and not to give up.

[23 : 24] Yes, they're suffering now. Yes, it will be hard, but eternal salvation will follow. Don't give up. Keep going. God's love.

Now, of course, we don't need to live in a hostile country to need this kind of support. I need that support. You need that support. We need encouragement to be faithful to God.

We face pressures of life. We have our own sinfulness to deal with. The temptations that the enemy brings can cause us to wander and to drift away from God.

All kinds of difficulties we face and we wander away. That's why we need each other. That's why we meet together on a Sunday. That's why we meet on a Wednesday to encourage each other and strengthen each other in the faith, to impart wisdom, to lead each other in righteousness, to read the Bible with them, to pray for each other, to say be faithful, keep on going.

But we know that this will not go on forever. It will not be like this forever. Look at verse 7 again. He says this is going to be, or it will last, for a time, times, and half a time.

[24 : 46] So if you got your calculators out, are you ready? How long is a time, times, half a time? Here's the answer. It's a time, times, and half a time.

time. In other words, we don't know how long this time is, but we do know that the troubles that we will face will only last for a limited time.

It's specific. Look at the end of verse 7. It will be for a time when all these things will be completed or fulfilled.

We might not know how long we have to wait, but God knows the number of days. The distress God's people will have to face is restricted. It will not go on forever.

It will come to an end. It will be completed. It will be fulfilled. When I was a teenager, I did a sponsored walk from Waterford to Dublin.

[25 : 50] It took me three days, and the closer I got to my destination, the harder it got. I longed for the finish.

In my mind, it was just never going to end. It didn't matter how far I walked. I didn't seem I got anywhere closer. My support team, which consisted of my sister, cycled alongside, drove alongside.

Yes, you were there as well, mother, but that was at the very beginning, not at the end. Don't worry. Keep on going, she said. It's not much further.

You're almost there. Keep on going. And if it weren't for the support, you'd stop. But there was an end, and it did finish.

And that's what I want us to grasp, that in the Christian life, we will face all kinds of obstacles and struggles, and we need to get alongside each other, to encourage each other, and say, keep on going.

[26 : 50] we mightn't see an end to it. We mightn't think that it's going to finish, but here he's telling us it will last for a specific time, and all these things will be fulfilled and completed.

It will come to an end. So be faithful now. Support and encourage each other in your walk with God.

That's the second answer. The third answer is this. Refined now, resurrection later.

God's people, as we wait for that time at the end, we are going to go through a time of refining, but resurrection awaits.

Look at verse 8. I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, my Lord, what will the outcome of all this be?

[27 : 49] What's it going to be like as we're waiting for the end? What can I expect? What's going to go on? Well, the answer comes in verse 10. He says, many will be purified, many made spotless, many refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked.

So God is very clear, isn't he? He's not going to remove wickedness. He's not going to remove suffering, but he's going to use it for our good.

He's not going to remove it, but he will use it for our good. Just as a metal worker uses fire to refine and strengthen steel, so God uses the fire of suffering to refine us and strengthen us in our faith.

The apostle Peter said something similar. It's quoted there. Peter, you remember, wrote to scattered Christians at the time of Nero, the Roman Empire, who persecuted, crucified Christians, did all kinds of terrible people.

He was out. What I will remember, the attained■■■■ dislikes, is not sort of an invitation before setting a