

Daniel 12

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[0 : 00] At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people, and there shall be a time of trouble such as has never been since there was a nation until this 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.

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. But you, Daniel, shut up the words of the book 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.

[1 : 06] He raised his right hand and his left hand 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.

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.

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.

And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be twelve hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who awaits and arrives at the thirteen hundred and thirty-five 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. This is the word of the Lord.

[2 : 15] Thanks be to God. Well, today we arrive at the conclusion of the book of Daniel, and the narrative itself brings us to the end of his own days.

Twelve weeks this fall in Daniel. One thing's apparent. Daniel did not have an easy life.

One of the takeaways as we enter into Advent. I don't think that any of us can be mistaken on this point, that life did not play out the way he might have anticipated when he was young.

Reared in Jerusalem, under the reign of King Josiah, and its great reforms, where as a member of the court, he had been taught in the ways of wisdom, things that would enable him to lead God's people and be an overseer in the kingdom.

And all of it came crashing down during what we would today call his high school years. That idealistic picture of kingdom usefulness shifted.

[3 : 58] Nebuchadnezzar entered. The life movement of productive service in God's kingdom was taken away.

In one sense, he was removed, displaced, left without family or friends, or very few friends at that, into a foreign land.

The book has revealed that he came to grips with two things regarding his own life and its usefulness to God and the kingdom.

First, the first six chapters, he learned to be at home in Babylon. And hopefully we're learning the same.

For the Jew in Daniel's day and the Christian in ours, that sense of displacement is real. That youthful sense of how things would play out has vanished.

[5 : 00] And yet, we're learning to be at home in Babylon. That he had a missional existence and usefulness that probably surprised him.

Chapters 1 to 6, I'm guessing, were some of your favorite chapters. Chapters 7 to 12, we began to see a different understanding.

If he was learning to be at home in Babylon, he also learned this. That getting home from Babylon was going to be a long pull indeed.

Chapter 7, we saw that the evil one would arise and make war against the saints. In chapter 8, he would succeed and he would destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints.

In chapter 9, that the prince who would come would destroy the city and the sanctuary. In chapter 10, the vision with which chapter 12 is still intricately connected.

[6 : 17] It's termed a great conflict. Yes, now over the decades, he had a fuller understanding of kingdom usefulness. This exilic-like existence that was learning to be at home in the world, but equally aware that getting home from this world was a long, slow, arduous, difficult, confusing state indeed.

The book ends with a word on the resurrection that would comfort and encourage him.

Verses 1 to 4. A resurrection, Daniel, awaits us. At that time, that is the time of verse 40 above in 11, the time of the end.

At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who is in charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble such as never been since there was a nation till that time.

But at that time your people shall be delivered. And everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of earth shall awake.

[7 : 41] Some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 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. 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. A resurrection awaits us as we learn to be at home in Babylon and confusingly walk our way to getting home from Babylon.

This is the clearest expression in the Hebrew scriptures of the resurrection of the dead. Begin at Genesis 1-1 and read through Malachi 4.

And you will not find anything more clearly asserted about the resurrection from the dead as the comfort of God's people than you will find right here in verses 2 and 3.

[9 : 01] A belief that a resurrection awaits you. We find other expressions in the Hebrew scriptures.

Isaiah 26-19 The dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy. Israel itself is depicted in a resurrected state in that vision in Ezekiel 37 where the dry bones take on flesh.

But nothing. Even Hosea 6-2 where the third day we rise. Nothing is as clear as it is here.

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. Some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. O then to have your name written in the book of life.

O then to have your name written in the book of God. O then to have your name written in the book of God. Don't leave Daniel without that knowledge. Everything in this life will one day be looked upon as momentary and fleeting.

[10 : 17] For according to the scriptures, you are an everlasting creature. Begun in time. But moving to an everlasting state.

And for those whose names are written in the book, that is the book of life. Well, rewards await.

The hymn, the contemporary song, O to see my name. Written in the wounds. Or the song we sang this morning.

Jesus lives and reigns supreme. And his kingdom still remaining. I shall also be with him. Ever living.

Ever reigning. He shall raise me from the dust. Jesus is my hope and trust. He alone. My joy.

[11 : 25] My pride. Jesus lives. And so shall I. The book closes on a commitment that a resurrection awaits us.

Look at what would happen. Don't you love those phrases? That those who rise, look at the way it describes them. They will be like the brightness of the sky above.

And if they are turning others to the same way, they shine like the stars forever and ever. One of our family's favorite hymns is For All the Saints.

Because we sing it, my wife and I, with a clear recognition, of those that we love dearly that have already died and now wait for the resurrection.

And the hymn is this attestation to their their life for all the saints who from their labors rest.

[12:40] Who thee by faith before the world confessed. thy name, O Jesus, be forever blessed. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Those phrases, we feebly struggle, they in glory shine.

The shining of Daniel 12 is there. Or the verse, but lo, there breaks a yet more glorious day.

the saints triumphant rise in bright array. The king of glory passes on his way. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. That is the comfort of the resurrection for those whose names are written in the book.

So Daniel closes on a word that says take hope, take heart. Your life playing its way out in very unexpected ways lives in anticipation of an eternal resurrected glory.

[13:56] I'm aware that today that's largely disbelieved. that death is the end for most, perhaps some, even here this morning, that there's nothing beyond.

It's what Stephen Hawkins said at a premiere prior to the documentary celebrating his life. He said, quote, I think the conventional afterlife is a fairy tale for people afraid of the dark.

Daniel 12, verse 2, would beg to differ. And you'll have to make your own decision on that. John Updike, in his book, Pigeon Feathers, presented a far more jarring description than Hawkins did. the view as he held it rooted in naturalism's belief that human history is accidental by nature and therefore without purpose, direction, or any ultimate goal.

He puts it this way in the narrative. Without warning, David, a character in his book, was visited by an exact vision of death. Here's the flip side if you don't hold Daniel.

[15:19] A long hole in the ground, no wider than your body, down which you were drawn while the white faces recede. You try to reach them, but your arms are pinned.

Shovels pour dirt in your face. There you will be forever, in an upright position, blind and silent, and in time no one will remember you, and you will never be called.

A strata of rock shift, your fingers elongate, your teeth are distended sideways, and a great underground grimace indistinguishable from a strip of chalk, and the earth tumbles on, and the sun expires, and an unaltering darkness reigns, where once there were stars.

two views. One, that there is a resurrection that is the culminating movement of all human history, in which those who are the righteous, and whose names are written in the book, will be raised bodily to an everlasting resurrection, in which they will shine like the brightness of day, and the brightest of stars, and the other in which it all passes away, into nothingness.

Which belief do you carry from this book? Jesus spoke of the same, the rising of all, the separation into two groups.

[17:10] Paul, the apostle, claimed in Acts 23 to be on trial for a belief in the resurrection. For the Sadducees, the learned of his day who oversaw the cultural affairs, did not believe in a resurrection, while the Pharisees did.

I stand as a pastor over the decades now at grave sites, and that fundamental question is there, and it will be there for you, for you will stand at a grave, and one day it will be your own.

And the question is, is this resurrection ground or not? Will this soil give way? Is there a day when God brings history to its climactic finish in which all are raised to appear before the judgment seat of Christ?

As I stand at grave sites and I've stood at them before infants of two days and before those who are nearly a hundred years in age, I look at the soil and I look to the family and according to my own belief, which is rooted in the scriptures, I say this is resurrection ground.

That the soil that is placed in the hole will one day give way, not only for the righteous, but for all. it's interesting, isn't it?

[19:02] There's a double resurrection there in Daniel 12 2. Everyone, some do everlasting life, some do everlasting contempt.

Wow. The theme of the chapter, of course, then is laid out. The resurrection awaits us, which then leads to the two scenes which conclude the chapter, framed by those questions, the first of which is, when does this take place?

I mean, not only would Daniel have been wondering that, it looks like there were a couple of angels across the way, when this vision took place, and they had their own conversation when the weight of those verses fell upon them.

Take a look at verses 5-8, Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream, and one on the 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 a man clothed in linen who was above the waters of the stream, he raised his right hand and his left hand 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.

[20 : 41] I heard, I heard, but I did not understand. A resurrection awaits us, one through four, five through eight, understanding when, well, that escapes us.

Even Daniel lacked understanding. What a vision. I love the fact that when the question comes out, the one clothed in linen raises his left hand, which is kind of like taking an oath, and then raises both hands, you know, oath upon oath, and then he swears upon the name of God.

You want to know when? Time, times, and half a time. Well, that throws us back a little bit.

This kind of enigmatic way of apocalyptic literature is a bit where it's unsatisfied. How are we to take it? Well, one thing we can be sure of now that we've arrived at chapter 12, this time, times, and half a time, we've seen this kind of formulation before.

Chapter 7, verse 25. In kind of an altered way, you're going to see it down in verses 11 and 12, if you take time to be, in a sense, a season or a year, this 1290 or 1335, these are approximations of what would be three and a half years, or time and times, and then half a time.

[22 : 25] Certainly, there's some approximation of this at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and Judas Maccabees, where the temple is restored and recovered after the desolation came.

But Jesus picks up on this very imagery and almost seems to throw it in a trans-historical fulfillment way forward in his own day. John, in the Apocalypse and Revelation chapter 13, picks up on it and actually throws it forward beyond his day, although he lists it as 42 months.

all these symbols which approximate this definite period when it will end. But for me, it's all a bit confusing, although I'm glad to know that Daniel himself heard but did not understand.

It reminds me of the way I felt when I was sitting in Algebra Trig. I suppose almost any class in high school but we'll pick on this one. A bit confused, I'd raise my hand after she laid out this very important idea.

And I would tell her that I didn't quite, I want to know exactly how to go about this and the teacher would kindly field my question and provide a step-by-step visual aid on the chalk board.

[23 : 47] We had chalk boards in my day. And when she was done, I would feel no better off for her explanation than before I had raised my hand and answered the question.

I would exit the class the way I entered the class without understanding. I know that's not true for all of you but it certainly was true for me. My goal in school was 1.9 GPA because then you could play ball on Friday.

For Daniel, this is kind of code speech. Yes, a resurrection awaits us.

Yes, the precise indication of time is going to escape us. Which leads then to his next question.

Oh Lord, verse 8, what shall be the outcome of these things? Or namely, when it comes, what can we expect after?

[24 : 57] Alright, if I don't know when the resurrection is coming, what's it going to be like on the back side? To which he isn't really told, but he is instructed on what to do on the front side.

So his mind wants to peer beyond the resurrection and look at 9 through 13. there's a command to go on your way which instructs us.

He said, go on your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. In other words, I'm not going to tell you what life's going to look like on the back side.

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.

And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1290 days. Blessed is he who waits and arrives at 1335 days, but go on your way till the end and you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of days.

[26 : 16] The book ends of 9 to 13, but you, Daniel, go on your way. You shall rest. The closing word, you shall have a share in the resurrection.

And until then, the wicked are going to keep doing wicked. The righteous are going to keep doing righteous. And those who are wise will purify themselves in anticipation.

You know, there's a common phrase in some circles today that goes like this. You've got to preach the gospel to yourself. Have you heard this phrase? It's not a bad phrase.

It's quite good, actually. But normally when it's applied, it goes like this. Since you're struggling all the time and always stumbling and always falling and always failing, preach the gospel to yourself. That is, remember that God is gracious, God is kind, that he accepts you in Christ. Go on your way in the grace of the gospel. Preach the gospel to yourself. I don't disagree with any of that.

[27 : 27] But sometimes I wonder, how often do we preach the other end of the gospel to ourself? That we will stand before a living God and give full account for all the deeds we do in the flesh?

If I preach that gospel to myself, a resurrection of accountability, maybe my obedience would be a little more firmly rooted.

I would go on my way and live in a purifying way here as well as I knew how. If you knew every moment of the day that you would stand before him on that day and give an account for all the things you've done in the day.

And if that was your gospel, well, we would live highly intentional lives that are filled with the joy of grace and committed to walking in godly ways.

That we wouldn't continue to merely be thankful for all things without ever actually rigorously applying ourself to what we already know to be true.

[28 : 48] So verse 10, many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined. A resurrection awaits us.

The time at which it comes escapes us. And when we wonder what it will be like on the backside of it, we are instructed in life now for us.

Yesterday would have marked my Grandma Helms 110th birthday. Next year, you know, that's the age of Bilbo when things got underway, right?

Yesterday would have marked Grandma Helms 110th birthday. She didn't live that long. She passed away in the spring of 1994, 1999, the age of about 94.

She was kind of like Daniel in the sense that she was faithful to the end. She was a central Illinois farm girl beginning to end. They lived about 20 miles south of Champaign.

[30 : 06] They had a couple of small farms that they farmed. The last audible response my grandma made in this life came after her fields had been planted.

It was the spring and my dad leaned into her ear and said, Hey Mom, I've just spoken with Doug McCumber. He's the man that ran our farms.

And he told me, all your crops are in. And according to my dad, my grandma smiled. And this is her final response in earth.

Go your way, Daniel. You shall rest.

And you shall stand. Work is done. Your rest is won. Your seed is in the ground.

[31 : 13] You yourself will follow it shortly. Into everlasting life. I don't know about you, but I can't wait to rest from my labor.

But until then, believe me, I will labor for my rest. And may that be so for you. As you are learning to be at home in Babylon.

Babylon. And you are learning how difficult it is to get home from Babylon. Long for that rest.

But go your way. And labor for it. Until he gives it to you. Richard Baxter wrote, Up!

And be doing! Run! And strive! And fight! And hold on! For thou hast a glorious prize before thee.

[32 : 25] God will not mock thee. Do not mock thyself. Our Heavenly Father, we commit this book to our memory in hopes that our lives would be lived in kingdom usefulness and yet constant waiting for the kingdom.

We thank you for the doctrine of the resurrection. And we pray, Lord, that when we consider the seed of Christ laid down and entombed that the full power of what took place on the cross and death would be connected to that which bursts forth!

And we pray in glorious day. We commit ourselves to you in a fresh way this morning. In Christ's name. Amen.

God