

Daniel Chap 12

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 December 2012

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in the prophecy of Daniel, chapter 12. Particularly 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.

Now, without a doubt, one of the greatest saints that the Bible holds up before us is this man, Daniel. He seemed to have been a man who was completely consecrated to the Lord.

There was a humility and a devotion and a selflessness about him. It seemed to characterize his life. God-centered man, and as the Bible describes him, a man greatly beloved of the Lord.

It's an amazing description. That's a man who was greatly beloved of the Lord. Daniel, who lived his life so close to the Lord, is a man who was given the most extraordinary visions, and given to see so much of the future.

[1 : 1 1] And as Daniel himself had to confess, verse 8, I heard, but I did not understand. And it's quite obvious that although Daniel was given these great visions, and although they were written down, yet there was an awful lot about it he couldn't understand.

And rightly so. In the same way as there's so much we cannot understand. However, having said that, there is, it's an amazing thing how the Lord gives a persuasion of the reality of things.

So that even things that we cannot understand, we fully believe and we accept and we know that it's true, and we enter into it. In the very same way as even it is said of Jesus, the Son of God.

And we're told that it's a great mystery, Christ manifest in the flesh. And once you explain a mystery, and completely understand a mystery, it's no longer a mystery.

But the Bible holds out before it. It is a mystery. It's mysterious to us. Yet we believe it. We believe it so strongly that our whole life is lived upon this truth.

[2 : 5 0] It's as if we understood it completely. Because it's real faithless. Hold upon it, we grasp it. It's part of our makeup. It's part of our life.

It is our life. And so it's the same when it comes to some of the revelation that we have in Scripture. We say, well, I don't understand. But I believe and the Lord has worked some of it out already.

And no doubt there's some still to come. I believe it, but I cannot figure it all out. Well, Daniel himself says, I do not understand. But it's very interesting that here is Daniel, this man, and he lived so close to the Lord that the Lord has taken him to be the man he's going to reveal so much of the future to.

And we think of another man in the New Testament. Think of the disciple. He was termed the disciple whom Jesus loved. Now, Jesus loved all his disciples. And there's no doubt that the inner three were in his humanity were the three that were closest to him, Peter, James, and John.

But even out of the three, there was one who was even closer than the other two. And that would appear to have been John. And it tells of how John lay his head upon the chest of Jesus at the table.

[4 : 08] It was so close, so intimate, his love. And he is the other person who was given great revelation. The book of Revelation is John. It's John that was given the revelation.

So here you have two men who have lived so close. You could almost say in the bosom of the Lord. Men whose lives were so close to the Lord.

And it is to them that the Lord has opened up so much. And indeed, the Word of God tells us this. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.

Now, I don't believe that the Lord is going to reveal everything regarding the future to his people even close. But even if the Lord, and he does, through his Word, give us, you know how sometimes the Word is brought to bear.

And there's no question whatever, even within our own highland and island church history and culture, that the secret of the Lord has been with some of God's people.

[5 : 19] You read, for instance, the life of Taramudson and people like that. There is no question that the Lord revealed things to him. But it was always in keeping with the Word, and it was always through the Word, and never in contradiction to the Word.

So we always have to be careful with these sort of things. But the fact is, the closer you live to the Lord, the more the Lord will reveal of himself to you.

And that is part of the secret things as well. Because although the Lord has revealed in general revelation, and the Lord has revealed in special revelation, there is no question whatever but that the closer you live to the Lord and with the Lord, the more you will come to understand, and to lay hold, and to grasp, and to become part of.

So that is where we see the secret of the Lord is revealed to, the secret of the Lord is with him, that fear him. Now, as the book of Daniel shows us, there are going to be terrible times, and there have been, the history of the world has been filled with terrible times.

Times of fearful carnage and cruelty, and I think if you, anybody who picks up a book, any book that is sort of doing a survey of the history of the world, you will realize that this world really has flown with rivers of blood.

[6 : 46] It's quite extraordinary when you think of just the fearful carnage that has existed down throughout the years in this world. And the great thing is that the, well, certainly it's a great thing as far as the people of God are concerned, is that the Lord who made this world beautiful is going to destroy this world, it's going to burn it up, but he's going to make a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

And it's almost as if the Lord is saying, this world has become so polluted. This world has been the home to so much bloodshed and so much hatred and so much violence.

Remember how the Lord, Genesis chapter 6, the world was hardly in existence and man had fallen. And you see how man had catapulted, like a wall had just gone down. It was just evil. Evil was rampant.

In fact, the Lord looks down and he makes that extraordinary declaration that it repented the Lord that he had made the world. Brought humanity into being. And out of this whole world he looked and he saw Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

One home, one family. Extraordinary. And that's evil. Evil on the rampage. And the Lord, by a flood, destroyed the world. Well, this time he's going to destroy the world by fire.

[8 : 17] But he's going to make a new heaven and a new earth. And that's just such a wonderful thought for us. And there'll be no bloodshed, no violence, no hatred, no malice.

It's going to be a world of peace and tranquility and righteousness, purity, love. And it's into that environment that the people of God will spend eternity.

So it's little wonder that the Christian is somebody who has so much hope in their heart. But we also, from the Bible, understand that that time will come very quickly.

It's going to come suddenly. Jesus said that. Very often he would say that it's just like in the days of Noah. In the days of the flood. In the days of Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah.

Everybody's going about their things just as normal and bang. The flood. The fire and brimstone. So it will be in the days of the Lord. So it will be when Jesus returns.

[9 : 19] And it's going to be quite an extraordinary time. What will be the greatest source of joy to every believer who is still living at that time will be the most fearful moment of anguish of heart for those who do not believe.

And the deliverance of the Lord's people is going to be wonderful because they're going to be delivered from a time of trouble. And we find out who are those who are going to be saved and it tells us that those whose names are written in the book of life.

Now we know that that is the Lamb's book of life. And the most important thing for any person is to know that their name is written in the Lamb's book of life.

In other words, that your name is in heaven. Because if your name is there in the Lamb's book of life, your name is in heaven. Your place is reserved. You know how Peter says that we have an inheritance that is incorruptible and it is undefiled and it is reserved in heaven for you.

Why is it reserved? Because your name is there. There's your place. And the Lord has won that place for you through his death. It's yours.

[10 : 32] Your name is there. And if today you are a believer, somebody who has come to accept Jesus as Savior, somebody who is able to say, my Lord and my God.

Even although you might be a shaky believer, you might be somebody and you're saying to yourself, you know, I'm probably the poorest Christian in this church. I look around and all these other people, they seem so strong in the faith.

My faith is crumbling. It's weak. But I'm hanging on. All I can do is look to Jesus. All I can do is, my whole desire is for Jesus.

I want to be like him, but oh, it's difficult. Well, if you're somebody who has that desire, that longing, that longing to be with him, you want to spend eternity in his presence.

Your idea of heaven is not some airy-fairy, woolly place where you just feel good and you don't know what goes on. Your idea of heaven is to be in the presence of Christ.

[11 : 35] And where all the things that you haven't been able to lay hold upon here, the desire has been there. But that fulfillment of love that you want isn't there, but you want it.

You're craving for it. But you long to be where you will see him clearly, lay hold upon him fully, live with him forever. That's your desire.

Well, my friend, nobody but one who has come to embrace Christ can think like that. The natural person does not have that desire or longing within their heart.

And if that is your desire, if that is your longing, then I would say to you, your name is written in the book of life. So our responsibility is to seek.

Of course, it is the Lord who draws. And may I say to you today, if you have not come to faith in Jesus Christ, ask the Lord today to draw you. Ask him to break down whatever is holding you back so that you will throw in your lot.

[12 : 41] That they'll come to this place and point where you say, Lord, it is enough. I really need to get this sorted out once and for all. I need to come to put my life, my all, my trust in you.

And so we find that those are the ones who are going to be taken. Now, the verse 2 talks about a time, and really, basically what is happening here is at the resurrection. And this is when the graves will open.

And again, there's going to be a division. Because we find that both the believer and the unbeliever, their bodies will rise. It's an amazing thought that both will rise.

But we notice that there will be a difference in everything. Because it's some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

And I find that a fearful prospect or fearful thought. Shame and everlasting contempt. I'm sure we've all at one time or another in our lives felt shame.

[13 : 51] But we've been really embarrassed and ashamed about what we are or what we've done. And shame is an awful thing where you really feel ashamed.

Well, it would indicate that that is part of what hell, the environment of hell is to be. A place of shame and contempt.

You know, if you hold something in contempt, there's going to be contempt in hell. I believe that one person is going to hold the other person in contempt.

I find that these descriptions quite appalling. And yet that's what the Word is telling us. That's how it's going to be. But for those on the other side, it's going to be altogether glorious.

And I believe even today that the souls in glory, the unclothed souls in glory, are exercising hope for the day. When their body, when they would be reunited with their body.

[14 : 58] Of course, the hope there is a firm persuasion. It is an absolute guarantee. But they long for it, not with any sense of pain or any disturbance within them.

But there is that longing. Paul, remember, as he looked forward to the future, he used to say, well, I'm really looking forward to being with Christ.

But I'm not looking forward to being unclothed. In other words, where we leave our body aside. Because our bodies, this is how we move about. And we find it so difficult to, and I certainly do find it very difficult to try to figure out how it's going to be.

How we're going to relate to everything in that period between us leaving this world without our body and the time of the resurrection.

But we know that we will be fully conscious, fully interactive, fully relationship, entering into everything. As Jesus said to the thief on the cross, today you will be with me in paradise.

[16 : 07] So, that is, we're fully aware of the souls in glory and of the, just the, this church triumphant. And yet I believe the church in glory are looking forward to the day when they will be clothed again.

So that's what's going to happen at the resurrection. It's going to be a wonderful moment. And again, people say, do you mean to say, I was talking about that at the grave yesterday. And I'm sure we've mentioned it on other occasions.

You know, I would say in the Catechism that the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness. And do immediately pass into glory. And their bodies being still united to Christ to rest in the grave till the resurrection.

But as we know, the body disintegrates into dust. And people say, do you mean to say that out of the grave where the earth has been rolled over and the earth filled in and the turf, that the body is going to rise?

Yes. It's going to be an amazing moment before this world is burnt up. In fact, before, this is quite amazing, that it's going to occur.

[17 : 16] There's going to be, I would almost imagine, a kind of simultaneous thing at the very end. Because remember, we were looking at this in Thessalonians. Christ is going to return.

And the believers are going to return with him. And those who are alive are going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and to meet those who have already gone.

And the graves are going to open. And the bodies of those who have died are going to rise. And that's why people say, hey, come on.

Do you honestly mean yes? And people say, how is that going to happen? Well, like Daniel said, I don't understand. But I know it to be true.

And is it an impossibility for the God who at the very beginning, as he brought everything into being, and brought the dust to the ground into being, and all the minerals and all the chemicals and everything that makes up this world as we know it, took of the dust to the ground and made man.

[18 : 19] And from man took a rib and made woman. Built and created. Brought together. Is it inconceivable that the God who did that cannot do it again?

Take from the dust that was a person and is still the dust of that particular body. The soul is gone. The identity.

Everything. But there is a body. It's gone to dust. The Lord is going to lift that up and make it, and I believe it, make it even more beautiful. The same body.

It won't be somebody else's. The same body. But it will be glorified. Be spiritual. It will be wonderful. And forever and ever living in glory in this way.

And that is why we're able to look at death, however painful and difficult and heart-rending death can be.

[19 : 22] You know, when we're looking at things in Christ and through Christ, oh, it's so difficult. So different, I should say.

So totally, totally different. And so we have this great future. But then, I've taken far too long here. Then Daniel goes on to say, 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.

You know, it would appear that in the great glory that the soul winner, we use that expression, the winner of souls, is going to have a place that is really quite extraordinary.

But I also believe that all Christians are soul owners. We tend to think maybe of a soul winner as somebody who is, that is, say, in a full-time ministry or whatever.

But I believe that every Christian is a soul winner. And that every Christian, we're talking about that, was it last week or the week before, recently anyway, we're all part of a chain.

[20 : 37] We're all part of a link in God's purposes. And one person is used in this way, and another person is used in that way. And God is using it all together to bring people to the Lord.

But it's the most wonderful thing. What's the greatest work in the world? Well, I think the Bible makes that clear to us. The greatest work in the world is being used by the Lord to bring somebody to faith in Jesus Christ.

What's the most precious thing in the whole world that we have? Our soul. Jesus asked that question. What will a person give in exchange for a soul?

And he answers it. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

In the whole scheme of profit and loss, you put the whole world, you think of all its wealth and all its riches and all its resources and all the capital and the gold and all the, you think of all the coal and the, the, the, the, just all the natural resources that exist within this world and in the depths of the earth and pull it all together and think of all the wealth that exists.

[21 : 57] You think of all the billionaires in this world piling all that money together and you go into the vaults with all the gold, the, the, the billions of bars of gold and you, you were to pull it all together and you were to try if there was a calculator somewhere that could work out the value and the cost of everything in this world.

Put that on the one side and your soul on the other. Jesus says there's no comparison. The world, you cannot even begin to compare it to the value of a person's soul.

And when we think about it like that and if that is our focus and if that is the way we reflect and if that, which is a biblical perception, biblical perspective, then we see how important it is to be a soul winner.

What shall a person give in exchange for a soul? You cannot do anything greater than be the person, the instrument that leads another person to Christ.

We don't often read about rejoicing in heaven, but you know, do you know what brings rejoicing in heaven? Every sinner that comes in repentance.

[23 : 24] There is rejoicing in heaven. There's even rejoicing amongst the angels. We're told that when a sinner comes in repentance. We cannot, cannot be involved in a greater work.

And that's what it's going to be. That's going to be the lot for those who are involved. And I would like to think that the Christian, and you know, when a person becomes a Christian, we do not automatically think, well, that's it.

I must give up my work and go and serve the Lord full time. There are times when the Lord will definitely call somebody into full time work in whatever way or capacity that is.

But for the most, you are where you are and the Lord has converted you and left you in that particular place because you have a ministry there. And it is a ministry where you bring and you share the word with others.

And maybe it would be a wee word here and a wee word there. You know the word where it says, it says in Proverbs, he that winneth souls is wise.

[24 : 34] I think that's where we get the word the soul winner from. He who captures souls. But I think the translation win souls is, there's something more beautiful about it.

And I think that that very word indicates how a soul winner should be. It's to win. In other words, the Christian should have a winning way about him. I don't think we have a chance of winning souls.

If we're judgmental and critical and putting down on people, people are going to say, I'm not going to listen to that. If we live lives that are non-Christlike, un-Christlike lives, and if other people see us squabbling and fighting and bitter and things like that, they're going to say, and then we go and try and tell people about the love of Jesus, going to say, sorry, I'm not listening to you because your life, your life is not a life of love.

All I see in your life is anger and hatred, judgment. How can you tell me about the love of Jesus? I'm not seeing very much in your life. That's what people will say. So you see how important it is that we live, that our life is like the Lord.

There's a Christ-likeness. And I'm sure as you look back over your own lives, the people who have had the greatest impact on your life have been those who have lived closest to the Lord.

[26 : 05] There's been something about the Lord about them. You've seen something of Christ in them. Christ in you, the hope of glory. People see that and it has an impact.

It affects people for good. And so we see that this, these are the ones who will shine, to shine throughout all eternity.

You know, when Moses came down from the mountain after being 40 days with the Lord, his face shone so brightly that the people couldn't look on him. They asked that he would put a veil over his face so that in order, when he was speaking to them.

Well, I think we will shine far, far brighter than that. We won't shine with the glory that belongs to Christ in his divinity.

He has two natures. But with regard to his humanity, with regard to his work as mediator, the mediatorial glory is the glory that God gave him as mediator.

[27 : 12] And this is his work regarding the church. And I think that it is into this that we will share. And we're told we shall be like him, shining with some of his glory, with our knowledge and with our light, with an understanding, forever and ever and ever.

I can't think of any greater prospect. And that's what's held out before us. And of course, to win souls, to be wise, the word wise here, of course, is not speaking about human wisdom, those who are wise.

That is the wisdom, God's wisdom. And as we sang about that at the beginning, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. And in order to win souls, you and I know that ultimately we are not the ones who will ever win the soul.

But we are used in order to win. God uses us. At the end of the day, it's the Lord who saves. But all the preparatory work, praying for people, my friend, when you think about it, it's sharing a word.

It is speaking. The Bible talks about speaking a word in season. It's using the time wisely. It's to grab the correct opportunities. It's not grabbing people and trying to ram the gospel down their throat.

[28 : 41] That doesn't work. But it is seizing the opportunities when God opens the door for them. I often think of Peter, James, and John. Remember when Peter and John were going to the temple and there was a man there with a bad leg.

He was the lame man. Well, it tells us that man was there every day. It doesn't tell us that Peter and John who went to the temple every day, it doesn't tell us that they engaged with him on any other occasion.

But on this particular day, the man spoke to them. And that's when they took the opportunity. And that's what we've got to do. We've got to be asking the Lord, Lord, give me the opportunity because some days it doesn't work, other days it will.

And so we've got to seize the opportunity. We've got to pray for people. And you know, there's nothing greater that we can do. I think I might have said that very recently.

But we don't know, even in this church, who has been praying for us. And maybe every Lord's Day over the years, somebody you don't know particularly well has been praying and praying as you walked into the church.

[29 : 54] Has been praying for you. And it's all part of what's taken you to where you are. We don't know. Only the great glory will reveal to us. It's going to be part of the thrill, the understanding.

You know, we're going to go there and Jesus gives us that idea in Matthew chapter 25. There's going to be so many shocks. And the Lord's going to say, oh, you know, when you did this and when you did that.

And we're going to say, when did we do this and when did we do that? And he's going to say, well, you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren. You did it unto me. And you see, we maybe have no idea of the little part that we have to play.

But you know, in glory, all those who have, you have been responsible for helping come to faith. They will be your joy and crown. That's how Paul spoke about it.

He was looking forward to that day. My friend, led us every day. I remember, I think I quoted before the words that were given to Billy Sunday after he became a Christian.

[31 : 00] And an old Christian said to him, Billy, you know, in order to keep yourself from backsliding, can I give you a little bit of advice? Every day for 15 minutes, make sure you listen to the Lord.

Every day for 15 minutes, make sure you talk to the Lord. And every day for 15 minutes, make sure you talk to others about the Lord.

If you do that, you'll never be a backslider. Great advice. Well, I think, as Christians, we couldn't have greater advice than to make sure every day we spend a wee while listening to the Lord.

We'll find that in his word. Speaking to the Lord, what we do in prayer. And speaking to others about the Lord. Let us pray. Lord, our God, we ask to bless us this day and that we may hear thy word, that it will go into our hearts, that we might understand.

We give thanks, O Lord, for every opportunity where the word is able to affect and influence our lives for good. Be near to us, we pray. Grant us thy grace in all things and take us all to our homes and safety.

[32 : 13] Grant us peace and help and strength. Forgive us our sin in Jesus' name. Amen.