

## **Blessed is the One Who Waits**

**Daniel 12:1-13**

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to Daniel, chapter 12. Tonight we come to the last chapter of Daniel and the conclusion of the study of this great book. We have observed a number of times now that Daniel 1 through 6 records God's sovereignty in the life of Daniel, and Daniel 7 through 12 gives us a glimpse of the spiritual realities that lie behind his public ministry. And we've said the whole book is about the blessings of knowing God. Daniel is one of the great biblical models of what it means to know God. As we began our study of the last section of the book, in chapter 10, we found the emphasis that human causes and effects are not the only forces operative in the history of the world. Then, when we looked at chapter 11, we saw the Lord stretch Daniel's prayer concerns beyond the concern for the children of Israel to be returned from the exile, into the distant future desiring to see God's people upheld and protected, even under persecutions far into the future. And we saw basic instructions about how Daniel ought to pray and how we ought to pray given for us in Daniel, chapter 11. We ought to pray in light of God's interpretation of history, and not just on what the centers of world power say about the course of history. We ought to pray in light of God's refining providence, knowing that He uses all things to create a people that are separated to Him and like Him and, of course, we must pray and live in understanding of the kind of war that we are in. We are engaged in the spiritual warfare and that warfare involves powers and principalities far beyond just human enemies.

Now, Daniel 12 divides very easily into two sections. First, you see in verses 1 through 4 the end of the vision which Daniel had begun to receive, all the way back in chapter 10. There, we find the conclusion of the prophecy. But then in verses 5 through 13, we have Daniel giving us an account of the final moments of this visionary experience, because after the vision is concluded, and the words are over, Daniel hears two other figures talking to the one who revealed this vision to him and asking questions. And then Daniel asks a question. Now even that section, from verses 5 through 13, can be divided into two parts. First, the angels' questions in verses 5 through 7, and then Daniel's question from verse 8 down to verse 13. So let's look now to the word of the living God in Daniel 12, beginning in verse 1.

**Daniel 12**

*Father, we thank You for these words and we ask You now to nourish us by them spiritually for Jesus' sake, Amen.*

Daniel 12 contains a revelation, both of God's future purposes, and the application of that truth for Daniel's life. And so, just like in other places in this book of Daniel, and just like in other places in the Bible, we have an example of what theologians call an eschatological ethic. In other words, an instruction, a practical instruction for Christian living in light of our future hope. That's why they say *eschatological ethic*, because you can say that whole sentence in two words. A practical instruction for daily living in light of our future hope. In other words, our ethic is impacted, it's informed by the promises that God has made to us about the future. It's not just that we're supposed to know these neat things that are going to happen one day at the end, it's that our lives will be transformed and changed and helped and encouraged and strengthened now, because of what God is going to do then certainly for us. The directives, these divine directives for our daily Christian living are based on our understanding of God's promises for the future and supported by our Christian hope in those realities. And so in this chapter, God calls on us to live our lives in the light of His promises for the future. That is the purpose of Daniel 12. And I'd like to point you to two or three things that we learn in this passage.

### **I. God powerfully comforts His people in the time of their trials.**

The first one you'll see in the first four verses. There, we are reminded that the Lord is the church's protector, in that long, rambling description of the future history of God's people, and they are pressured by enemies that we read in Daniel, chapter 11. It became apparent that the Lord's people were in for a rough ride. And Daniel, chapter 12, verses 1 through 4 wants to assure us that no matter how difficult the times become, the Lord is still the protector of His people. And so we learn in this passage that God powerfully comforts His people in the time of their trials, and it's a typical pattern that, when an Old Testament prophet foretells trials for God's people, he also simultaneously gives them comforts so that they can endure under those trials. And notice what he says in verse 1: "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise." So even though it is going to be a time of distress like has never been seen before in the history of the nation, even at that time Michael will arise because the Lord wants Daniel and his people, and us, to have hope and comfort because of the promise of His protection.

At the end of this long vision that has described many difficult things for the people of God, it concludes with this word of comfort in verses 1 through 4. Daniel, in other words, must not allow himself to be overwhelmed with despair because God will provide His people with protection. If the Lord had ended this vision at Daniel, chapter 11, verse 45, it would have been grim indeed. But, verse

45 is followed by chapter 12, verse 1, and this great declaration that 'Michael will be with His people.' Michael, of course, the archangel, the name itself means *who is like God*? The name itself reminds us of the awesome uniqueness and power of God. And it points to that power of God protecting His people. Michael, the archangel, is a sign, a representative, a symbol of how God cares and protects His people. He's even a representative of Christ. Many of the reformers and puritans used to interpret Michael in the book of Daniel as the Lord Jesus Himself. I mean, it's not a bad idea. This in and of itself reminds us that we do not live in an impersonal universe. The forces of history are not controlled by impersonal mechanisms. God is personally involved and through the instrumentalities of His angels, He is protecting His people.

Then, we are told at the end of verse 1, that God's people must be prepared for trial and tribulation for the sake of the kingdom. Look again at those words: "And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time. And at that time your people, every one who is found written in the book will be rescued."

Isn't it interesting that Christ applies this language to the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew, chapter 24. Why don't we turn over there, because Matthew 24 and 25 may be fairly presented as an interpretation of Daniel and especially Daniel, chapters 10 through 12. In Matthew, chapter 24 and specifically verses 19 and following we read this: "Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days. Pray for your flight, that your flight may not be in the winter or on a Sabbath" and verse 21, "then there will be a great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now nor ever shall." Christ borrows this language from Daniel, chapter 12, to describe the portentous events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem.

And notice also that he parallels the language of Daniel, chapter 12. Notice particularly these words, "Everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued." And if you look at Matthew, chapter 24, verses 22 and 24, the Lord Jesus talks about the elect, the chosen being spared. And that's a beautiful parallel with what Daniel calls "those whose names are written in the book." The book of life, the book of the living, the book of those who survive these great portentous tribulations and judgments.

Now furthermore, Daniel tells us in verse 2 of Daniel, chapter 12, that a great number of the Lord's people who have lost their lives in the tribulation, they will be resurrected. Look at this word: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but others to disgrace and everlasting contempt."

Now you may wonder, "Well, is he saying that only some of the Lord's people will rise?" No, that's not his point. That's not why he uses the word *many*. *Many* emphasizes the great number of the Lord's people. That even though they fall

under the hand of wicked persecution, a great multitude which no man can number will be raised from the dead at the last day. They will be resurrected. "And many of those who sleep, will awake," he says in verse 2.

Notice that this is an unambiguous witness of the Old Testament to the doctrine of the resurrection. Sometimes you read literature about the Old Testament and say, "Oh, our Old Testament brethren, they had no concept of an after life in which there was fellowship with God. There was no concept of a resurrection." Well, here's one. They will rise. They will awake. By the way, this is the first occurrence of the expression *everlasting life* or *life everlasting* found in the Old Testament, and so it's very important for the development of the understanding of the people of God in terms of what the Lord is going to do in the future.

And then look with me at verse 3. Still further we see a description of the blessedness that awaits the faithful. Notice in verse 1, we are told that God will protect the faithful. In verse 2, we are told that if the faithful are persecuted unto death, then the Lord will resurrect the faithful. And now, we are told that the Lord is going to bless the faithful and those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven. In this passage, we see the blessedness that awaits all those who are faithful to the Lord. The goal of the hope of the believer is not individual death. Our goal is not death. Our goal is the resurrection. Our goal is the transformation. Our goal is the glorification that comes with the last day. Even in the Old Testament, that is the goal of the believer.

Now notice this encouragement that God has heaped up for Daniel here. He's given him a grim vision in Daniel, chapter 10 and chapter 11, and so he concludes with three encouragements. In verse 1 he reminds Daniel of His powerful, personal, providential protection. God reminds Daniel that His power is on the side of His people, He is personally, in the form of Michael, concerned for them. His providence controls all the events of their lives and He is protecting His people. So even in the midst of all this turmoil, God's people are not victims. We are never victims, and especially for those who feel oppression as a real part of their experience, there is nothing more blessed to know than this truth of God's providence. Though we may feel like our fate is out of our control and in the hands of our enemies, God is saying, 'Don't think that you are ever truly a victim. For no child of Mine can be victimized while I am in control of providence. And therefore every trial is purposed for your blessing and My glory.'

Notice also, He goes on in verse 2, to give them the encouragement of the resurrection. "Even if you lay down your life for Me, there will be a resurrection from the dead at the last day."

And then finally, in verse 3 he says, "Let me show you a picture of the glory that I am preparing for you now." This is the encouragement, this three-fold encouragement. I am powerfully and personally protecting you by My providence.

I'll raise you again from the dead, and I'm preparing a glory for you now in which you will shine like the sun.

And then in verse 4, Daniel is told to carefully preserve this revelation for the sake of God's people. Look at verse 4: "As for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time." This verse shows us that God is concerned about us. God is concerned that we benefit from this message of hope, and so He tells Daniel all those years ago, 'Daniel, be very careful to keep this word safe so that it can come to those who need it at the end of the ages.' We don't know exactly how this is intended. If he was thinking of a papyrus roll, it was very typical of an important document that you wrote two copies of the papyrus document. You had two rolls. So you had a duplicate document that was sealed up and it was kept safe. And then you had the other document open so that people could read it. So the second document served as a backup just in case something happened to the first document which people had access to. On the other hand, this could be sort of like Jeremiah's deed. You remember he was told to put that deed in a clay jar that served as sort of an envelope and on the outside of the clay jar, the sealed clay jar, there was a summarization of the deed that anybody could look at so that the document on the inside of the jar could stay safe. But, because the summary of the document was on the outside of the jar it was also open to people tampering with it. And so the deed on the inside had to be kept safe so if someone did tamper with the summary on the outside, they could always pull the deed out and say, "Nope, the deed says this." And so Daniel is told you keep this prophecy safe so it can come to those who live in the time of the end.

The verse ends with a very hard phrase though. Look at the very end of verse 4: "Many will go back and forth and knowledge will increase." Many good commentators have disagreed about what this means. It's a hard phrase, "Many will go back and forth and knowledge will increase." Is that meant positively? Many will increase in knowledge by studying the word? Many will seek for the truth of the word, or is it meant like Amos means it in Amos, chapter 8, verse 12. Turn with me there. Just a few pages over from Daniel to Amos, chapter 8, verses 11 and 12. "Behold days are coming," declares the Lord God, 'when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord. And the people will stagger from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.'" I think that Daniel is telling us here that there will be many in Israel who will seek knowledge and wisdom and they will not find it. They'll travel here and there, but because they have rejected the revelation of the Lord in His word, they will not find wisdom. God gives His people wisdom by His revelation. He reveals Himself. But unbelievers search unendingly, hopelessly, for knowledge and never obtain true wisdom. This is a solemn word to end this encouraging section.

## II. God's people must be prepared to persevere to the end.

Then I'd like you to see verses 5 through 7. Basically, we're told in that passage that we must be prepared for the long haul. In that passage we are told that God's people must be prepared to persevere to the end. Daniel, at the end of this vision, overhears two other figures questioning the man who was dressed in linen who had given the vision to Daniel. And they are asking Daniel, in verses 5 and 6, something that Daniel really wants to know. Look at those verses with me: "Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river, and the other on that bank of the river. And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, 'How long will it be until the end of these wonders?'"

Notice that the question is not, 'When is this going to happen?' as if the persecution, the tribulation which Daniel was talking about was something that was only going to happen far, far, far into the future. The question is not, 'When is it going to happen?' like is this going to happen a thousand years from now or two thousand years from now or two and a half thousand years from now. The question is, 'How long is this going to go on?' How long, O Lord, are Your people going to have to endure under this? I want you to understand the sweetness of this. This is an angel, one of God's messengers and he's looking at God's providence and he's looking at what God's people are going to have to endure and he can't resist asking the man dressed in linen, that very representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. How long are your people going to have endure, Lord? How long is it going to be that they are going to have to persevere under their trials?

And the response is one of the most solemn moments in the whole book of Daniel. There is a two-handed sacred oath taken; not only does the man in linen raise his right hand, he raises his left hand up to heaven and he swears by the One who lives, that the words that he says are true. Then he utters, *a time, times, and half a time*. The phrase indicates *an extended period of time*, but it also indicates *God's control of all events*.

When evil has done its worst, we are told, as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed. When evil has done its worse and the hopes of the people of God seem shattered, then God will act. The grim work of the oppressors will roll on and on and on. But at the appropriate moment God will intervene. I'm a great fan of Arthur Welsley, the Duke of Wellington, and I got hooked on military history primarily reading of his campaigns in the Peninsula War. One of the things that I loved about Wellington is that he never lost a battle. From the time that he became a brevet general in the midst of battle, as the leader of his army was killed in India, through the very last battle of his life, he never lost a battle. He was an amazing commander. But he was a commander who was famous for defensive tactics, not unlike Robert E. Lee. And in the last great battle of his life against Napoleon at Waterloo, he took

up a defensive position and his entire strategy was this: I'm going to put my army here. I'm going to let Napoleon pound at that army all day until the Prussian reserves from Otto von Blucher's armies come and then I'm going to have Blucher roll up Napoleon's right flank and we're just going to drive him into the Mediterranean. Now it was a great plan. The problem was, Blucher's army had to march about thirty-five miles through muddy, muddy territory and, whereas the plan was for him to get there in the middle of the day, at 1:00 pm he had not arrived, and at 2:00 pm he had not arrived, and at 3:00 pm he had not arrived, and at 4:00 pm he had not arrived, and by 4:00 pm Napoleon had broken Wellington's army in two. And everyone who knows military strategy in the 19th century, knows that once your army has been broken into two pieces, you're pretty much done for the day. And yet, Wellington held his men in place as Napoleon's columns pounded into them over and over. Finally, as the sun was going down, and Wellington was getting ready to announce a retreat into defeat for the first time in his life, he spotted on the edge of the field to the west, men coming through the woods in blue coats. At first he thought it was Napoleon bringing in reserves. But after looking through his field glass he realized it was the Prussian army and von Blucher, the prince of Bismarck. And in came those 33,000 soldiers and they smashed Napoleon's army. It seemed like the day was lost, and Wellington said later, "In forty-five minutes our defeat was turned to the greatest victory that we could ever imagine." So also the people of God, when we seem like we are in the most desperate situation, God intervenes. That is the story of Daniel, chapter 12.

### **III. God's people must be content to trust Him in His refining providences.**

And then we see in verses 8 through 13, that all these hard providences are for the purpose of refining God's people. The Lord's people will be purified, and the message that we learn here, in verses 8 through 13, is God's people must be content to trust Him even in His refining providences.

Daniel's question in verse 8 is very natural: "As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, 'My lord, what will be the outcome of the events?'" Daniel is saying, 'Lord, tell me more about what and when and how this is going to happen. Explain this to me. I don't understand. What is going to be the outcome of all this?'

And the answer that Daniel gets in verse 9 is a little bit frustrating: 'Daniel, it's not for you to know. What you are to know, Daniel, is found in verse 10. Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.' God's people will be purified and the wicked will continue in their wickedness to the end. That is what Daniel needs to know. 'No matter what happens,' Daniel, My people are being refined. 'They are being made like Me, they are being reshaped, they are being reformed to the image of Christ.'

And in verse 12, He goes on to tell Daniel that he needs to be prepared to wait, to persevere, to endure a long time: "How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1335 days." There are at least three long sets of days mentioned in the book of Daniel. In Daniel chapter 8 verse 14, 1150 days are mentioned. Then in Daniel, chapter 12 verse 11, 1290 days are mentioned. And then here in verse 12, 1335 days are mentioned.

The point is ,you must be prepared to persevere a long time and then a little bit longer, and then a little bit longer. The background of this is seen in the Lord Jesus' parable in Matthew, chapter 24 verses 42 through 51. You may want to turn there. In that parable Jesus tells us that we are to be faithful even if our Master doesn't come home at the expected time. The Lord Jesus knew that some of His servants would grow a little restless. It had been a long time since the Lord Jesus walked by the shores of Tiberias. 'Maybe He's not coming back,' the unrighteous servant says, but the faithful servant is ready when his Master comes even if his Master is longer than he expected. And so these words in Matthew 24, verses 42 through 51, echo the words of Daniel 12, verses 11 and 12, which teach us that these days are exactly known by God but they are unknown to us. They will seem like a long, long, time, but we must trust to the end. The message of those verses is that we are to keep the faith, we are to endure to the end, and we're to live for the kingdom now. We're to recognize God's reign now. We're to obey now. We're to attend to our responsibilities. We are to work for the sake of the kingdom in the world and we're to persevere to the end.

If you'll turn back to Daniel, chapter 12, we'll come to the last verse of this book. In this verse we have a beautiful personal promise for Daniel and for believers: "As for you, Daniel, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age." Daniel is told that his job, in response to all this now, is go on and endure. Daniel was who knows how old now, in the very final hours and days of his life, and yet his job is to continue being faithful. And then to enter into rest. In other words, 'Daniel, you're going to die and your soul is going to be with Me, even as your body is in the ground. And then you will rise again for your reward at the end of the age.'

So Daniel is to persevere, enter into rest and be raised to a reward at the end of the day. And it reminds us of those words that Jesus' said in Matthew 25 verse 21, when the Lord speaks to His faithful servant and He says, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into the rest that I have prepared for you." What a glorious promise for Daniel and for us at the conclusion of this great book. May this become a reality in your life by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Let's look to Him in prayer.

Resurrection \eschatology



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