

“THE TIME OF THE END.”

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Scripture Texts: Daniel 12

Introduction.

As we come to the last chapter of Daniel, let me remind you as I have before, Daniel is a kind of survival manual for the suffering church, for God’s people living in an alien land, in a godless culture. It is a survival guide for when there are no immediate solutions, no approaching rescues.

In the NT Revelation is that book, a survival manual for Christians and churches in times of suffering and persecution.

Over and over we have seen the emphasis on how hard life will become in the future, but it will be limited, God is in control and in the end, God will triumph over evil.

God’s people are encouraged to life with an eye to the future, on the promised joy set before us.

The Time of Trouble and Hope of Glory, vss. 1-4.

There will be a time to come of severe suffering and affliction such as has never been known before.

Mark 13:19-20 For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. 20 And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.

Perhaps more striking in this passage than how severe the trouble will be, is how secure is the hope of deliverance. The archangel Michael is standing guard, the people will be helped and delivered. Through him God delivers His people.

God has His legions of angel ministering to all the saints.

Matthew 26:53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?

Hebrews 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Psalm 91:11-12 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

12 On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

Do you know why we have angels ministering to us today? Because Jesus refused the ministry of angels while He was on the cross doing battle with Satan. He wrestled with and conquered Satan, so we could be surrounded with angels (Veldkamp).

Do you think God just lets the evil forces, the evil principalities and powers do their thing without any interference from Him?

We do not live in an impersonal universe, drifting along on our own and all alone. God's providence is never impersonal or mechanistic.

We have been preserved and protected times beyond counting, in more ways than we can know. Who can begin to imagine how many dangers and how much harm we have been delivered from?

The Book of Daniel teaches the resurrection of the dead.

This is one of the clearest passages in the OT of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

It has to be this way. How can Satan win? Satan is a creature created by God. How can the creature overpower the creator? What is a creature before the omnipotent creator of the universe? So Daniel ends the way Revelation ends, with the cosmic triumph of Christ.

God knows His own, the elect, and He will not lose a single one of them. He knows their names and when He calls them they know His voice and follow. They are all trophies of His grace.

John 6:39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

It does not matter one bit if your name is written in someone's will and you receive an earthly inheritance. The only thing that matters is that your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life and that you receive an everlasting inheritance.

Daniel 12:3 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.

The mention of those who are wise reminds us of those in the last chapter.

Daniel 11:33 And the wise among the people shall make many understand.

These are the one who understand the big picture, who can see the joy set before them and so endure the pain on the way, they are the ones who encourage and admonish others to remain faithful and true. They are able to say yes it's hard, but God told us it would be. Don't grow weary in well doing.

There are two well-known stories of what his kind of wisdom and encouragement looks like to a person struggling to persevere. Some are preserved in John Fox's *Book of Martyrs*. At the time of its publishing in 1563 in England it was the largest book ever published, 1,800 pages.

The account of the persecution of the Scots Worthies under King Henry VIII.

It catalogs the lives of hundreds of believers who, throughout church history, were willing to give their lives for the cause of Christ.

Jerome Russell and Alexander Kennedy were two English Protestants sentenced to die for their faith. When Kennedy, being but a young man, began to display signs of fear, Russell quickly encouraged him to stand firm:

“Brother, fear not; greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world. The pain that we are to suffer is short, and shall be light; but our joy and consolation shall never have an end. Let us, therefore, strive to enter into our Master and Savior's joy, by the same straight way which He hath taken before us. Death cannot hurt us, for it is already destroyed by Him, for whose sake we are now going to suffer.”

Later the story of Ridley and Latimer:

When Mary became Queen of England, she worked to bring England back to the Roman Catholic Church. One of her first acts was to arrest Bishop Ridley and Bishop Latimer to be burned at the stake in Oxford, October 16, 1555.

Latimer encouraged Ridley, "Be of good comfort, Mr. Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace, in England, as I trust never shall be put out."

We most likely will never face anything as serious as being burned at the stake, but what strength and encouragement and courage comes from having wiser, faithful, godly people around us to keep us strong, to help us keep our heads.

Who are the stars that shine brightest in your life? Who bears witness to the truth, who sets a godly example, who is most like Jesus to you? Who has brought light into our life, and without them we might be in greater darkness?

The Man Clothed in Linen and Certainty in Misery, vss. 5-7.

Living wisely in this broken world of ours doesn't mean we have all the answers to all the questions. In fact it means we will have some profoundly real and deep questions.

Two questions are asked in this text, one by the angel and one by Daniel.

An angel asks, "How long until the end?"

Daniel asks, "What will the outcome be?"

These are profound questions for those how are experiencing great trials and suffering, "How long?" and "How?"

This is what Daniel wanted to understand. This is what we still long to understand. We live in a world where we cry out "How long, O Lord? Where are you? What are you doing? Why aren't you answering my prayers? Why do things seem be going from bad to worse to terrible?"

We live in a broken, sinful, painful world where everything doesn't go as we hope or plan, where everything can't be fixed. How do we live with wisdom in this present age?

First, remember however long it may seem to us, the time is limited by God's grace and mercy.

Time, times and half a time refers to a severe but limited time when God's people endure great trial and testing. It will seem like evil is winning, but God is in control and promises to bring it to an end.

Sometimes when people ask me how I am doing, I answer, way better than I deserve. At a deep level it really is true for all of us. However we are doing, it is way better than any of us deserve.

If we see any good in us, any progress spiritually, however minimal, it is the hand of God, the work of His Spirit, more than we deserve.

However bad we may think we have it, it has been limited by God and is far less than we deserve.

Second, the timing of our trials and troubles is known to God down to the day, hour and minute. 1,290 is a more precise number. God has determined the time of suffering and judgment down to the day. He does not give us more than we can endure or more than is good and necessary for us.

He knows what kinds of trials and how long they are necessary for our sanctification and humbling and spiritual growth.

I have suffered at the hands of a dentist recently. It was not for me to say how long or how much pain I had to endure, that was for him to determine. He knew how long to drill and how deep and where to accomplish the most benefit for me.

He ended when he was done, not when I thought it should be done. His timing was perfect.

Third, our role, our response in all of this is to faithfully and patiently endure, to have faith and trust in God.

We can cry out how long or how, but in the end obedient trust is our calling. His wisdom is greater than ours. Our trials are not fate, not chance, not bad luck, nor are they random. They are as precisely purposeful as the number of their days.

The Time of the End and Purity in Perseverance, vss. 8-13.

How will the end come?

“... when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.”

Not when the power of the wicked is broken, but when the power of the wise is broken.

The answer makes more sense in light of the statement about purity and refining. The wicked are not refined by trials and troubles, they don't come out as gold like God's people do.

I Peter 1:6-7 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The world wants our best life now. God's way is to prepare us for the best life to come.

It is not the fire that determines the result, it is what is put into the fire. If you put gold into the fire you will get a purer gold out of the fire, but if you put dross into the fire you will only get dross out of the fire.

If you put the wise into the fire they will be purified. If you put the wicked into the fire they will only come out more wicked. The trial only reveals the heart.

The real undeserved miracle is when God takes dross like us and makes us into gold. Now that is cause for worship both by us here on earth and by the angels in heaven.

God will preserve a remnant who will preserve to the end.

Matthew 24:13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

When Satan has done his worst, there will still be a faithful church preserved and protected and sustained by our faithful Shepherd and Savior.

However long Satan has, his season is short. His day will come to an end. In the scope of eternity his day on earth is very short.

Don't grow weary in well doing. Press on in the upward call, don't give up or bow down to what is false. The temptations will be great. We must persevere by faith to the very end.

“God is going to have a thirteen-thirty-five people” (Dale Davis).