

Until the Time of the End

As we come to the end of Daniel's prophecy, we specifically come to the end of his third vision (chapters 10-12), in which the Lord reveals with amazing detail the things that will occur in the future of the people of God. In chapter 10 we were reminded that there are powerful spiritual realities behind the normal events of history; in chapter 11, we were encouraged to see that even when things are at their bleakest nadir, God is working together all things for our good; and now in chapter 12 we learn that the future of God's people is glorious indeed.

Daniel 12

¹“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 never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. ²And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³And 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. ⁴But 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.”

⁵Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. ⁶And 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?” ⁷And I heard the 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. ⁸I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?” ⁹He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰Many 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. ¹¹And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. ¹²Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. ¹³But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.”

One of the keys to living the Christian life is to lay hold of, and to live in the light of, this great hope, God's promised blessings for the future; and one of the common downfalls of church people is that we sometimes fail to live like we believe these grand promises. Here's what we learn in Daniel 12:

I. God's People Will Be Vindicated in the End (vv. 1-4)

A. This vindication is urgently necessary (v.1)

We Americans think we can fix everything. This is one reason, for example, we get so mad at congress: “If I were there, I could solve this problem by just....” But such is not the case. We can fix neither the world nor ourselves. Our deliverance comes in “a time of trouble, such as never has been....”

B. This vindication is unique (v.1)

Daniel is told that this deliverance is for God's people, “everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.” Only those who trust in the Christ of God will know and experience these blessings. And in order to receive Christ, we must forsake all things in this life, the things that usually receive our full devotion: houses, lands, families, reputations, investments, romances. Everything in life must be submitted to his Lordship.

C. This vindication is gracious (v.1)

Notice that this blessing is not based on what we have done, but rather on what He has done for us, namely, writing our names in His book---from all eternity!

D. This vindication is glorious (vv.2,3)

The vision of our final state revealed in these verses is nothing short of spectacular--bright as the stars in heaven! Here we have the most explicit Old Testament description of the final resurrection of all humanity and the glorious transformation of the saints of God on the last day. This is truly worth trading in everything else in our lives in order to receive.

E. This vindication is Scriptural (v.4)

The angel instructs Daniel to "shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end." The revelation of the glorious consummation of the church's history is now preserved for all ages, and we are regularly to consult this revelation that we might be wise. We notice in this verse that the wicked look everywhere for truth, but they never find it, because they refuse to believe God's Word. Daniel here reminds us of a similar verse: Amos 8:12.

II. God's People Must Learn to Wait (vv. 5-13)

A. There are some things we don't know (vv.5-12)

1. When (vv.5-7)

Notice that even the angel would like to know more details (cf. I Peter 1:12), but Michael has an interesting response: "...time, times, and half a time..." Go figure! Some things are not for us, or angels, to know.

2. How (vv.8-12)

But now Daniel himself gets into the act with an attempt to extract more info from Michael. Answer? "Go your way, Daniel..." Some things are not for us, or prophets, to know.

B. There are some things we do know (v.13)

In verse 13 we are told authoritatively that at the end of history we shall receive our rest (see Jesus' wonderful promise in Mt. 11:28-30 and the explanation in Hebrews 4:8-10 concerning our future rest) and that we shall stand in our "allotted place." And what is that allotted place? None other than the place Jesus went to prepare for us (see John 14:1-6), a place with Him, a place of great honor and blessing, a place of eternal pleasure (see Ps.16:11).

The believer, then, like Daniel, must embrace and live for this grand vision of things yet to come if he/she is to survive the lion's den and remain faithful to the Lord amid all the persecutions of this fallen world. The challenge is to trade in everything we have and hope to be in this life for the infinitely greater glory which awaits us in the world to come.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the symptoms of our delusion that we can basically solve any problem that comes our way? Why can't we successfully solve our worst problems?
2. What will the end of time be like for those who don't know the Lord? What will it be like for those who do?

3. Why, do you think, Michael answered the angel and Daniel the way he did? Why are his answers also sufficient for us? Why is it spiritually unhealthy for us to go beyond the answers given by God's revelation?

4. What are the most important things we DO know about the end of the days? How do these things help us in daily life?

5. What are the most difficult things in this life to “trade” for the glorious things awaiting us in the life to come? Why is it so difficult? What helps you the most in daily “making the trade?”