

Monday Morning in Light of Eternity

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[0 : 00] Good, well let's turn to our reading this morning and we are in the book of Daniel, Daniel chapter 12. And this is our last visit to the book of Daniel. We have been in the last five or six weeks, both in the mornings and then more recently in the 5pm services, working our way through these last chapters of Daniel and we have reached the end.

And this morning we are reading Daniel chapter 12. And this really marks the end of a long vision that really begins in chapter 10.

So it's the last vision that Daniel is given and it runs right from chapter 10 all the way through 11. And this is the end of Daniel's vision. And some final questions from Daniel about the end of time as we are seeing.

We are looking forward to the very end of history at this point in Daniel's vision. Let's read Daniel chapter 12 and verse 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.

[1 : 20] 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 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?

[2 : 26] And 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 peoples comes to an end, all these things would be finished. I heard, but I didn't understand.

And then I said, Oh, 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 1,290 days.

[3 : 36] Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,333 days. But go your way until the end. And you shall rest and stand in your allotted place at the end of days.

Amen. Well, may the Lord bless to us his word this morning. Good.

We'll be a help to have Daniel chapter 12 open in front of you as we spend a bit of time thinking about this message for us today. Now, what is your hope?

What is your hope? We all need hope. It's what keeps us alive. It's what gets us up on a Monday morning. It is what keeps us going on difficult days.

And Hope Explored, a new course from the makers of Christianity Explored, begins with these words. It opens like this. We need to find a hope worth having that won't get dashed and that won't disappoint us.

[4 : 53] A hope worth having is one that is true. We need to be confident that it really will happen. Not fantasy, but reality. Not a maybe, but a sure thing.

A hope worth having is one that delivers on what it promises. When we get there, it needs to meet our expectations and will be worth all the effort.

The thing we're hoping for should be every bit as good as we imagined it would be. And a hope worth having is one that will last. Otherwise, the joy will fade and we'll have to start hoping for something else.

And it is real hope. Hope that is true. Hope that delivers. Hope that lasts. That we have in this last chapter of Daniel.

Real hope fills this chapter at the end of the book. Now this is a vision that stretches forward to the very end of time and beyond for all eternity.

[5 : 57] It is a vision that is utterly realistic for it promises much hardship and difficulty. But ultimately, it promises deliverance and eternal joy for God's people.

This is the final section of the final vision that the Lord gives Daniel. And it was a vision of the future. A future that stretched on not just for Daniel's immediate future.

It wasn't just for the Christians and the centuries that would follow. But it goes on to the coming of Christ and beyond to the very end of time itself. And so there are things in this vision that are yet to be even for us.

It began back in chapter 10, as I mentioned. We saw that a few weeks ago at the 5 p.m. service. Daniel is being given a behind-the-scenes vision of the spiritual battles that rage in the unseen world.

Chapter 10 gave us a very sober message of the reality of conflict and warfare until the very end of time. There is, we saw, a heavenly conflict.

[7 : 10] And it's that conflict, the conflict that we cannot see, that conflict explains the conflicts we do see in this world against God's gospel and against God's people.

The conflict we do see is because of the conflict we can't see. And then chapter 11 begins to set out what that unseen conflict looks like in the real world.

How that conflict plays out in human history. Human kings and empires come and go. Therefore, we're told, do not trust in them. Do not put your trust in princes.

But at the same time, be prepared for persecution that will come as God's people live in this world. They'll get persecution coming at them from the kings of this world.

And we need to be prepared for that until the end. There will always be opposition for God's people. But, the opponent to Christ, the great enemy of the gospel, it will not last forever.

[8 : 19] Towards the end of chapter 11, we see the ultimate antichrist. And what happens to him? Look at the very end of chapter 11, the very last few words.

Yet he shall come to his end with none to help him. This is anticipating the great antichrist that will appear at the end of time.

And he will be dismissed. Six Hebrew words, and he's dismissed from the pages of history. And that is where this chapter picks up. Look at the start of chapter 12.

At that time shall arise Michael. So what we have in chapter 12 is the conclusion, this great vision given to Daniel. It is looking ahead to the very end of time, the great day of judgment.

Its scope is massive. It's hard to really get your mind around, isn't it? The scope of this vision. But the vision concludes in verse 4, and the rest of the chapter is something of a response to what Daniel has seen.

[9 : 26] What is he to make of this? This great vision. What is Daniel to make of it? And we get two questions and two answers in that final few verses. Question 1 comes in verse 6.

How long shall it be till the end? And then question 2 in verse 8. What shall be the outcome outcome of these things? Now those are obvious questions to ask, aren't they?

When are these things going to happen? And will it all be okay? And we'll get to those. But first, let's look at the conclusion of this vision.

So verses 1 to 4. And we see in verses 1 to 4 that our destiny is certain. Our destiny is certain. We have deliverance through distress.

Now these verses set out for us the great Christian hope. But it's a hope grounded in realism and not in fantasy. We see two key things here.

[10:29] Yes, there is deliverance but not before there is great distress. Look again at verse 1. At that time, as we've noticed, this is looking ahead to the very end of history, picking up where chapter 11 leaves off, a time it seems of increased hostility to God and his people.

Notice how that time is described in the next sentence. It says, and there shall be a time of trouble such as has never been seen since there was a nation till that time.

Never in history has there been a time of suffering so severe and intense. Now these are words coming as we saw from the Lord Jesus. This is the pre-incarnate Jesus speaking to Daniel, giving this vision.

And he says, never in human history will there be a time as difficult as this. And we've seen, especially in chapter 11, what this suffering and difficulty looks like for God's people.

Huge pressures to give up the faith, to compromise, to deny Christ. Huge pressure. But there are also here massive assurances of deliverance for God's people.

[11:43] Even in the face of unparalleled suffering and difficulty. Daniel and every reader since must not be overwhelmed with despair because of the protection and deliverance that God will provide for his people.

Remember who God is. Remember the promises that he has made to his people down through the generations. He is the sovereign creator God.

He has given his promises to his people never to leave or forsake them. That is the one who's making this promise to Daniel. That is the one who's giving this vision. And he gives two great assurances to his people here.

Two assurances and cling to these promises. things may get difficult. We don't know how difficult things may get. But cling to these two realities because these will enable you to stand firm.

The first is this reference to Michael in verse 1. At that time shall arise Michael the great prince who is charge of your people.

[12:56] Now this reference to Michael it might seem very strange it does seem very strange to us doesn't it? But it ought not to trouble us because we've seen this figure already in chapter 10.

We've seen the reality of an unseen spiritual realm. There is an unseen spiritual realm which is where the unseen spiritual battle rages.

and the message we saw in Daniel 10 is do not think that is not real. Do not think this world is all there is. There is an unseen realm.

The apostle Paul speaks of the very same reality doesn't he in Ephesians chapter 6. The apostle Paul says we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers against the authorities against the cosmic powers over this present darkness against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

That is where the battle is raging. That realm is real. That is the consistent testimony of the whole Bible. There is an unseen spiritual realm and there are angelic beings and Michael is one such being.

[14:19] it seems that he is a warrior advocate for God's people. We see in chapter 10 verses 13 and 21 that Michael assists the Lord Jesus in spiritual warfare against Satan and against his legions.

We see him again referred to in Revelation chapter 12 where Michael is leading again the armies against the dragon. Michael is seen in the scriptures as the one who battles on behalf of God's people and protects God's people in the spiritual realms.

We have a mighty awesome angel fighting on our behalf. His name is Michael and he's real. Do not make the mistake of thinking this is some fantasy.

This is real. There is a spiritual realm. There is a battle. And we have one who fights on our behalf. And that is it ought to be a great comfort to us.

The unseen spiritual reality explains so much of what we see in the visible world. And to know that there is one who fights on our behalf, a powerful angel who fights the enemy, that is a great comfort.

[15:43] We are not alone in the battle. And that is the first great assurance for a people under pressure the Lord gives to Daniel.

There is one fighting on your behalf. Michael himself is taking up the sword for you in the spiritual realm. So that's the first great assurance. The second one is the assurance of deliverance that comes halfway through the verse.

you get this resounding but, but, 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 everlasting contempt. see the second half of verse one is looking ahead, isn't it, to that day of resurrection from the dead. That day when Christ returns as the judge of the living and the dead. [16:47] On that day there will be deliverance once and for all for God's people. Deliverance for all whose name is written in the book.

It is the same book that is referred to in Daniel 7 and Revelation 20. The book of life which contains within its pages all those who belong to Christ.

And what is depicted here in chapter 12 is the great day of deliverance and judgment. It is a deliverance that follows resurrection.

notice that it says that many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. Now the word many there is the translation of a Hebrew word that means a totality.

So it's not saying that some of those who have died shall rise but not all. It's not saying that. It's saying the totality of those who sleep in the dust shall awake.

[17:57] Every person that has ever walked this earth will wake and face the judgment. Resurrection. The undoing of death itself.

The great enemy we must all come to terms with. The great enemy that has and will separate us all so cruelly from all that we've loved. It will finally be defeated and we will rise.

and there is going to be on that day a great separation some to everlasting life and some to everlasting judgment.

And this day this great day that the Lord Jesus promised would come this day of resurrection is a day of deliverance only because it is also a day of division.

there is no deliverance without judgment. To speak to the people of Ukraine there is no deliverance for them without judgment. And without judgment there is no end to wickedness.

[19:08] There must be this division. There must be this separation. And God's people, those whose names are recorded in the book of life will be raised to everlasting life.

those who have rejected God will be raised to everlasting shame and contempt. Now these are words of great encouragement for God's people because this is a glimpse, the briefest snapshot of the great destiny of God's people and it's wonderful and beautiful.

Here is the destiny of God's people forever. But before we dwell on that, before we dwell on the eternity that awaits God's people, we must first consider the eternal destiny of those who reject God.

Because not all go to everlasting life. Notice what it says there in verse 2. Some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

God's people and that is a very sober reality, isn't it? It's not a quirk of the book of Daniel. The New Testament speaks in even starker terms.

[20:27] The Lord Jesus in the starkest terms of all about this great division that will take place on the last day. Unbelievers, those who do not know, those who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior, those who have not submitted to him as sovereign, for them, their destiny is this everlasting contempt, everlasting separation.

Separation from God and the prospect of punishment, forever excluded from the presence of God. And so this presses home to us, all of us, everyone who's here this morning listening.

It presses home to us a very urgent and pressing question because the only thing that is of final, ultimate importance in time or eternity is that our name should be written in that book of life.

And so can I ask, is your name written in that book? Is Jesus your Savior and your King? if not, then there is nothing, absolutely nothing of more importance for you today than to repent and turn and turn to Jesus for salvation.

There is nothing more important. Well, that's the warning. That's the reality. But there is also great encouragement here, isn't there?

[22:01] As well as the warning, there is real comfort for God's people. There is the great and certain hope of eternal life.

Look how the believers are described there in verse 3. I think this has become one of my most precious, treasured verses I've been studying Daniel. Look at verse 3. Here is how God's people are described.

It says, And those who are wise, not that those who are clever, but those who trust in the Lord Jesus, 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. This is the destiny of those whose name is written in the book. Ordinary Christian believers who stand firm for Christ in the midst of difficult times and suffering will on that day shine.

like the brightness of the sky above. Easy to imagine on a day like this with the blue sky shining bright. Like the brightness of the sky above, like the stars you will shine forever.

[23 : 13] That is the destiny of those who follow Christ. You will, on that day, reflect something of the glory of Jesus. You are transformed into his likeness on that great day.

And that is the certain destiny for all of God's people. If you are a Christian here this morning, this is your eternal destiny.

On that day you will be set aside for him forever and you will shine like the brightness of the sky above. That is our destiny. destiny. So yes, there are difficulties in this world.

These first four verses show us, don't they, very clearly that there will be difficult times. But no sooner does God mention those difficulties than he peppers the text, as one writer put it, with tokens of our security, our eternal security.

see, this is where we're headed. Nothing can erase your name from the book of life. No earthly opposition or persecution can change your ultimate destiny.

[24 : 28] You will be raised to everlasting life with your creator and savior. You will shine like the stars forever. That is, Daniel is being shown and we are being shown, that is our eternal destiny.

destiny. It's an astonishing, overwhelming vision, isn't it? It's hard to get our minds around. And what is Daniel to make of it?

What are we to make of it? What is our response to this vision of what is to come? Well, because our destiny is certain, because our future is a sure thing, we see that our duty is clear.

This is verse 5 to the end. our duty is clear. We are to render service, faithful service in these last days. Because our destiny is certain, our duty is clear.

So in light of this huge, epic vision, Daniel and all of us are to respond to the certain future that awaits us, namely, resurrection life.

[25 : 35] We are to respond to that today with faithful service. we are being shown here how to live on Monday morning in light of eternity. Our duty is clear, because our destiny is certain.

And in this last section, we've got two questions and answers. Daniel looks and he sees two figures standing on either side of the stream.

In verse 6, someone says to the man clothed in linen who is above the water of the stream, he asks, how long shall it be to the end of these wonders?

That's the obvious question, isn't it? We've seen this great vision of the future. When's it going to be? How long do you have to wait? That is the obvious question.

As soon as any significant plan is made in our households, the first question I'm asked is how many days? How many days to our holiday? How many days till Christmas, dad?

[26 : 38] How long, dad? How long? And that's essentially the question here. How long? We've seen this great day. How long do we have to wait? When's it going to be? And the answer comes from this man clothed in linen.

It's the same man who's given this vision to Daniel in chapters 10, 11, and 12. It's most likely the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus himself. And here's the answer.

Here's what the Lord Jesus says. Just look with me from verse 7. And I heard the man clothed in linen who was above the waters of the stream.

He raised his right hand and his left hand towards 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 peoples comes to an end, all these things would be finished.

Now the answer that Jesus gives is absolutely certain. He raises not one hand, as was the usual practice for taking an oath, but two hands. It's a double oath, double certainty you might say.

[27 : 54] And Jesus is saying that although it's going to be very difficult until the end for God's people, very difficult. He talks about the shattering of the power of the holy peoples. It's going to be very dark and difficult.

But there is a very definite end. He says that it will be for a time, times, and half a time. It's the same phrase that's used in Daniel 7 to refer to the time God's people are to be delivered into the hands of

the Antichrist.

I think it also ties up with the second half of the 70th week that we saw in Daniel chapter 9, a reference to the last days, the days that we're living in right now between the first and second comings of Christ.

Days that will be marked by continued and seemingly growing opposition and difficulty for God's people. It's also what Jesus speaks of in Matthew 24 and 25 about the birth pains of the last days. Jesus teaches his followers there that there will be many who proclaim his second coming, many who predict when he will come back and there will be all sorts of unsettling things happening, wars, natural calamities, pestilence, tribulations, but no one can really know the precise timing of his return.

[29 : 14] No one knows. And this reference here in Daniel 10 is pretty cryptic, isn't it? Time, times and half a time, but it's deliberately so. It is not for us to know the precise time of his return.

But what he is saying is that God knows. He knows. God has determined the timetable and it's limited. And the clear message here, but also in Matthew, is that we are not to panic, but rather we are to persevere no matter what.

Difficult things will happen. People will be deceived. People will fall away. But God is in control. We mustn't panic.

Regardless of what may come, we must persevere, not be alarmed, not deceived, and not derailed from faithful service to Jesus Christ and his church.

And that is what we see in the second response, the second question that Daniel asks. It's all about the rendering of faithful service in the midst of difficult times. The second question is this in verse 8.

[30 : 34] Then I said, O my Lord, what shall be the outcome of these things? And the response from the Lord Jesus is wonderfully profound and wonderfully personal for Daniel, isn't it?

He says, go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the end of time. In other words, these things I've shown you are for the future.

But you, Daniel, go your way. He repeats that in verse 13. He says, but you go your way till the end and you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of days.

Great words of reassurance, aren't they, for Daniel? At the end of days, you will stand in your allotted place. on that great day of resurrection I've just spoken about, he's just seen it in his vision, hasn't he?

On that day, he would stand an everlasting life. His future is settled, he's told. His destiny is certain, and so he is told, in light of that certain future, Daniel is told to go your way.

[31 : 48] way. In other words, Daniel was to keep doing what he had been doing for the last seven decades. By this point, Daniel was probably in his late 80s, he's been in Babylon about 70 years, and the Lord says to him, go your way, Daniel.

As one writer put it, he was to go back to his desk, finish his day's work, plod along living quietly and working with his own hands and being faithful to King Cyrus, the Persian emperor.

Daniel was to live faithfully in the now, with his eyes fixed on what was surely to come. He knew where he was going, he knew his destiny, he was absolutely sure. And in the meantime, he was to keep on with the faithful obedience that had marked his life through all the years that had come before.

All those great stories you read about in the first half of Daniel, his faithfulness and difficult times, he was to keep on being faithful. In light of this magnificent preview of where history was headed, in light of this huge vision of God's future plans, his primary task was to live now, for God's glory now, faithful obedience now.

And as Sinclair Ferguson writes, this is always the constant application of all biblical eschatology. All visions of the end have this same application.

[33 : 22] In one form or another, every New Testament passage that points to God's future plans carries with them imperatives for the present. God's future plans inform how we are to live right now, today.

And the biblical response to the promises of God's coming certain kingdom is always for us to live now, today, for that kingdom, to be obedient now, to fulfill our responsibilities for him now.

And that is the message for us from Daniel 12. Because you and I have a certain future, we've seen a glimpse of it here, nothing is going to shake that. we will one day shine like stars forever with him.

And because that's certain, we have a clear duty today to live faithfully for Jesus today in this world. In the midst of difficulty and suffering, hardship and pressure, we're to remain faithful, as Daniel was.

We're to be faithfully obedient to God's word in every area of our lives. in our work, in our marriages, in our parenting, in our friendships, in our money, every aspect of our lives.

[34 : 39] We're not to panic, we're not to throw up our arms in horror, we are to get on faithfully obedient, as Daniel was. And we can be there, thank God, by taking our stand, committing ourselves, as Daniel did to God, and living in dependence on divine grace.

And we can enter into our destiny and ensure that on that last day, it will be said of us, you shall rest, you shall stand in your allotted place at the end of days.

Nothing in this world can shake that reality, nothing can shake our destiny, and so we're to persevere today, serving our great God.

God, that is the message of Daniel 12. Let's pray. Father, we do thank you for this great vision of the future, and we pray that you would help each of us, each one of us, to render you faithful service today.

Keep us from panicking, but rather help us to walk by faith, not by sight. Help us, all of us, to encourage each other, to keep going, to keep following our Lord and Savior Jesus through this world, looking ahead to that great day.

[36 : 21] So please help us to that end, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.