

Sermon outline and notes © Dr. Stephen Felker
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Daniel 12:1-3 “What the Future Holds”

Intro. Our text is the beginning of a new chapter, but this is one of those cases where the chapter division is unfortunate. That’s because these verses are a continuation of the message delivered to Daniel beginning with chapter 11. These two chapters contain a prophecy of what would happen to Israel, from the reign of the Persian Kings to the very end of human society as we know it. The last 10 verses of that chapter deal with “the time of the end” (v.35) when a willful king will arise, whom we call the Antichrist. Antichrist will be revealed during the Great Tribulation. It is during that time that vv.1-3 of chapter 12 will be fulfilled.

Tonight we are going to take a look into the future: what the future holds for Israel; what the future holds for the world, and what the future holds for those who have died. Most people are interested in what the future holds for us as individuals, and what the future of the world will be. Well, I am going to answer some of those questions regarding the future as we look at these verses together.

First of all, we will answer the question:

I. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ISRAEL?

As we look at this prophecy that covers over 2500 years, one thing that stands out is that:

A. Israel Will Continue to be a People to the Very End – There are many ancient nations that have ceased to exist, and the remnants of that nation have been scattered and assimilated into other nations. For example, Philistia is no longer a nation. But this and other prophecies picture Israel as a nation down to the time of the end. And even though the Babylonians and the Romans destroyed their nation, and in spite of their being scattered all over the world, Israel continues as a distinct people, and in 1948 their nation was reborn, and they continue to this day in spite of several wars and efforts to wipe them off the map. Keep in mind, Israel was not yet restored and rebuilt as a nation when this prophecy was first given.

This is yet another evidence of the fact that the Bible is the Word of God. We have seen this prophecy fulfilled right before our eyes.

Another truth implied by this and other prophecies in Daniel is this:

B. They Will Continue to be an Insolvable Problem - Zech. 12:2-3 says, “Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples..... On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples, All who lift it will surely hurt themselves....” (ESV). There is no human solution to the problem of the Middle East. Though there have been steps toward peace, even to this day there is no lasting solution to the constant conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as several of the nations surrounding them. Israel would like peace, but they rightly insist on others recognizing their right to exist in that land. Furthermore, Israel certainly isn’t going to give up their claim to Jerusalem. Their Islamic neighbors are not prone to compromise their position, partly due to their religious zeal. So it seems to be an unsolvable problem politically, and they will face war and conflict until the end except for a brief time of peace brokered by the Antichrist, as we have seen back in 9:27.

Something else that is in store for Israel in the last days is this:

C. They will Face Unequaled Persecution and Trouble - The Jews have already faced quite a bit of trouble and hardship as a people. They rejected Christ and said, "His blood be on us and on our children." And they certainly have suffered much as a result, especially when the Romans destroyed their nation, and killed hundreds of thousands. Up to 6 million Jews were killed during the German holocaust! But believe it or not, their worst suffering is yet to come. In the middle of v.1 we read, "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time." When one remembers former times of suffering, experienced down through history by the Jews, this way of describing the climactic time yet future takes on enormous significance. Likewise, Jer. 30:6-7 says, "Ask now, and see, can a man bear a child? Why then do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor? Why has every face turned pale? Alas! that day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it." It is logical to relate the intense suffering in view to the oppression brought by the antichrist once he breaks his covenant. Another passage, Zechariah 13:8-9, sets forth the startling figure of only 1/3 of the populace will be spared during that time. All of these Scriptures agree this end-time trouble will be the worst of all for Israel.

Now the picture of the future of Israel is very bleak for the people of Israel. Yet there is hope. For this prophecy also reveals:

D. They Shall Be Delivered – We read in the last of v.1, "at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book." Even so, though Jer. 30:7 speaks of the "time of Jacob's trouble", it goes on to say, "but he shall be saved out of it." Yes it will be a time of great tribulation, but God promises that Daniel's people will be delivered. Now let's see what it says about this deliverance in our text this evening:

1. The Agent of Deliverance – It says in v.1, "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people...." Michael the archangel will "stand up" and intervene on behalf of the people of Israel during the Great Tribulation. We are not told in what way he will intervene to help, though in vv.2-3 it appears that he would have a role in the resurrection. Surely it is more than that. Based on Daniel 10:13 & 21, he may help by striving against demonic forces that would influence governmental leaders against Israel. Perhaps he will help lessen their suffering and fight for their deliverance. But their ultimate deliverer will be the Lord Jesus Christ, when He returns to this earth (Zech. 14:3-4).

2. The Time of Deliverance - Information set forth in Rev. 12:6-17 is pertinent to be related at this point, because it enlarges on this time of deliverance. Satan is seen as a dragon, who concentrates on persecuting the "woman," who represents Israel. He continues to do this for 1260 days, or 3 1/2 years, a period correctly identified with the last half of the Tribulation period. Yet Rev. 12:14 gives a prophecy of how Israel will be delivered.¹

Notice that Michael's intervention does not keep the people of God from going *through* all of those times of trouble and trial. This is not out of line with the rest of Scripture. Generally speaking, God does not keep us from *entering* trials, but He is with us to carry us *through and out* of those trials (Jn. 17:15). Jesus promised, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age." There will be sorrow before salvation and tribulation before triumph.

3. The Objects of Deliverance - This deliverance does not include all the people of Israel of that time. But here in v.1 we read who will make up the remnant of Israel that shall be

¹ It is interesting to note that it is Michael who casts Satan from heaven, just prior to these endeavors of persecution, according to Rev. 12:7.

saved. It is “every one who is found written in the book,” that is, the book of life. Some believers will be delivered from physical death; all believers will be delivered from eternal death. The great tribulation time will be a time that causes the Jews to examine their scriptures once again. In their scriptures they will discover the one they rejected as their Messiah was indeed their Messiah. And the Bible says, “they will look on Me whom they pierced...” (Zech. 12:10) and they, as a nation, will turn to the Messiah and individual Jews will receive Christ as their Savior.² So evidently, there will be a wide-scale turning to Christ by the Jews who are still alive at the end of the tribulation. In fact, he says in the last of v.3, “those who turn many to righteousness [shall shine] like the stars forever and ever.” This is confirmed in Rom. 11:26, where it says of the end times, “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob’.”

God is a great Deliverer, a great Savior. You can count on Him to save you from sin. You can count on Him to save you in your time of need. God can be trusted to deliver us when we face trials and tribulations in life. He may even use an angel like Michael to do so.

See again what it says in v.1. “Everyone that shall be found written in the book.” Now you can get your name written in a lot of places. A student may be able to have their name written on the honor roll. You may get your name written in Who’s Who. You can get your name in a lot of prestigious places, but it doesn’t amount to anything until your name is written down in heaven. Do you know that your name is written in heaven? You say, “Preacher, I’ve got my name on the church roll.” That’s fine, but the church roll is not the Lamb’s Book of Life that’s up there in heaven. As someone posted on Facebook, “When we draw our last breath, only one thing matters. That our name is written in the Book of Life.

So we have seen what will happen to Israel. Now let’s see:

II. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE WORLD?

Not only will the Jews experience great trouble, but unparalleled trouble is in the future for the whole world. The prophecy says in the middle of v.1, “And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time....” We know from other Scriptures that this time of trouble will not just affect Israel but the whole world. I hate to sound like a prophet of doom, but our world is not ultimately moving toward peace and prosperity. Communism will not usher in utopia. Socialism will not usher utopia. If Islam takes over the world, there certainly will not be peace and prosperity. All human efforts to solve our problems will ultimately fail. Our future is not a political utopia of peace, but war and trouble.

Now it will not seem that way in the early days of the tribulation. The antichrist will offer and accomplish some measure of peace and world unity, probably after a period of war and conflict. But then, around the middle of the 70th week of Daniel, the antichrist will begin a reign of terror on all who do not obey his mandates and demands. World war will break out, followed by hunger and plagues. Revelation 6:8 shows that about 1/4th of the world population will die. Toward the end another 1/3 of the population will die according to Rev. 9:15. That ends up being 1/2 of the world’s population! Undertakers will be in great demand! That is why Jesus said in Mt. 24:21, “Then shall there be great tribulation as was not since the beginning of the world to this time no nor ever shall be.” So Jesus said it’s going to be the greatest period of trouble the world has ever known. Now look at v.22 of that chapter. “And except those days should be shortened, there shall no flesh be saved but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” It will be trouble of such

² That section is prophecy is followed by 13:1, “In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.”

character that it would result in the extermination of the whole human race if it were not cut short by the second coming of Jesus Christ. The whole course of prophetic Scripture moves toward the same revelation that history is consummated in a time of indescribable suffering and unbelievable turmoil, conflict and death. So I am not going to get excited about worldly efforts toward solving the problems of this world. The President and Congress are not going to solve problems, they are just going to make things worse!

So if I were you, I would not tie my hope and dreams to any politician or political party. Put your hope and faith in God.

Finally, let's see what this prophecy has to say in answer to this question:

III. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THOSE WHO HAVE DIED?

After all, I have already pointed out that billions will die during the Great Tribulation, including godly believers among Jews and Gentiles (Rev. 6:9-11). Yet I will be the first to point out that vv.2-3 have primary application to Jewish believers who have died during the reign of the antichrist. It gives them hope in a time when there seems to be darkness and hopelessness. This Scripture assures them of life beyond great suffering and a martyr's death. But this Scripture has great application to all of us as well, in one way or another. So notice with me what this Scripture says about the dead.

A. The Righteous Shall Rise from the Dead - The preceding verse, in speaking of the deliverance of those still alive at the close of the Tribulation, has left the question open as to the status of righteous Jews, who will have died under the crushing hand of the Antichrist. Will they be omitted from all benefit resulting when Christ comes to bring this deliverance and to set up the millennial reign? This verse answers that question by saying that they will not be omitted but will be raised again and made to share in all blessings with the living. The thought is parallel to that in Rev. 20:4-6. Notice also that here in our text we read that Michael will arise to bring deliverance. When 1 Thess. 4:16 speaks of the return of Christ and the coming rapture and resurrection of believers, guess who has a prominent part in that day? There we read of the voice of the Archangel calling out the dead on that great resurrection day. Perhaps Paul's statement is based on v.1 of our text. So the resurrection is evidently a major aspect of the deliverance spoken of in v.1. Notice what will happen when Jesus comes again:

1. They Will Awaken to Everlasting Life – It says in v.2, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life....” The word for “shall awake” means “to be aroused,” as from sleep. This is a reference to physical resurrection. This is the first use of the phrase “everlasting life” in the Old Testament. But other Old Testament saints also believed in a coming resurrection. It is clear that Abraham had confidence in resurrection from the dead when he was willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen. 22:5; Heb 11:19). Job 19:25-26 says, “For I know that my Redeemer lives...; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God.” Isaiah predicted that dead men would live again and that their bodies should rise (26:19). Ezekiel 37 can be viewed as a prophecy of the bodily resurrection, though it may primarily be prophecy of the restoration of Israel as a nation. So one of the doctrines that is gradually unfolded in the Old Testament is the doctrine of resurrection, but it is not brought to its full revelation and light until you get to the New Testament.

So when the Lord comes, there are going to be some commotions going on in the graveyard. Every born-again child of God will be coming up out of that grave and when they do they are going to have a brand new glorified body, a body like unto our Lord Jesus Christ. You will

have a body that is no longer subject to sickness, pain, death, or earthly limitations. Even so come quickly Lord Jesus. Amen.

Does the group include more than the righteous Jews who have died during the Tribulation and to whom, certainly, a primary reference is intended? The answer is that it must include righteous Gentiles as well, often called Tribulation saints (Rev. 7:9-17), for they will also have been killed by the Antichrist during this period. This is made clear in Rev. 20:4. By the way, because of this passage, many pre-tribulationists believe that the Old Testament saints will not be resurrected before the tribulation, but after.

Will you be a part of the resurrection of the righteous to eternal life? Nothing is more important!

2. Some Will Shine as the Stars – It says in v.3, “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” In addition to receiving eternal life itself, those who are among the resurrection to everlasting life will be rewarded by glorification (Rom. 8:30). This verse is an example of Hebrew parallelism. The first half is parallel to the 2nd half. “Firmament” refers to the space occupied by the stars. So we will shine like the stars of heaven some day.³ This world has its stars and its superstars. They come and go. They rise quickly, and fall quickly. But God has *His* stars, and they shall shine forever! If you want to shine as bright as the firmament, as the stars forever, then notice who qualifies for this reward according to this prophecy:

a) They Are Wise - In 11:33, 35 this phrase refers to persons who were wise themselves and helped to make others wise, in opposition to those who submitted to the outrageous demands of Antiochus Ephphanes. Here it refers to persons similarly characterized, in opposition to the Antichrist. They are described as “wise” in that they were able to see through the lies, unbelief and wickedness of their generation and put their confidence in the unseen eternal values of their faith. They behaved themselves wisely; that is, they were obedient to God. Oh, that we might be among those who are wise, who believe in Christ and are saved!

Are you a wise person tonight? This world has its standards of wisdom. We give IQ tests. A person is considered smart if he has a real high IQ. The world awards its accolades to those who have advanced academic degrees. We think the wise one is the one who gets ahead in business, or some other worldly endeavor. But God says the wisdom of this world is foolishness (1 Cor. 1:20; 3:19). If you don't know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have not even come to the beginning of knowledge. That's because the Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7). You may not be the smartest person who has walked on this earth, but if you are smart enough to know you are a sinner and smart enough to know Jesus died on the cross for you, and smart enough to repent of your sins and accept Him as your Savior, you've got enough smarts about you to do the most intelligent thing anyone can do. That's the wisest thing you'll ever do, to give your life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another characteristic of those who will shine as the stars is this:

b) They that turn many to righteousness - This details the special area of wisdom in mind for the “wise.” In their wisdom, they will have been active in persuading others, especially Jews, to turn and be faithful to God, in opposition to all for which the Antichrist stands. Such wise ones will not be fooled by the promises of the antichrist. Many Jews will hail the antichrist as their Messiah, but the wise ones will not. Thus, there will be strong efforts in Jewish evangelism in the last days.

³ At times celestial beings are likened unto stars. Judges 5:20 says, “They fought from the heavens; The stars from their courses fought against Sisera.” Job 38:7 says, “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” Yet the meaning in Daniel is the same either way. We will manifest the glory of God in heaven.

So here we see who the truly great ones are among the people of the earth. Tell me, in 1370 who were the lords, the dukes, and the rulers of the earth? Who were they? I have no idea. But most of us remember John Wycliffe, the translator of this Holy Bible, one who shines as a star forever and ever. Tell me, in the year 1660, who were the lords and the kings and rulers of the world? Some of us might guess one or two, but most of us know John Bunyan who shall shine in God's galaxy forever. Soul-winners are God's stars in this world.

If you want to do something that will last for a season then plant a flower. If you want to do something that will last a lifetime, then plant a tree. But if you want to do something that will last forever, plant the gospel in the heart of some sinner. When you lead a soul to the Lord Jesus Christ, that is an experience that will last forever and forever. When you get to heaven and you've had a part in leading someone to the Lord, that means that you and that person you've led to the Lord are going to be able to rejoice in the Lord forever. Wouldn't that be something. All along the way people will be coming up to you and saying, "Thanks for telling me about Jesus. I'm enjoying heaven because of you." [Illus.#C-3116].

So strong motivation is thus provided for faithfulness in witnessing for Christ in the world. Though the particular time in mind is the Tribulation week, the application is good for any day. Prov. 11:30 says, "... he who wins souls is wise."

Will you be among those who shine with the glory of God? At the end of your life, will you be able to look back, and see "many" whom you have turned to righteousness? I am afraid that there are some professing Christians who cannot think of one soul that they have turned from sin to God. Is there a son or daughter, a friend or neighbor, that you have been instrumental in leading to Christ? Can you think of someone who is now attending our church because of you? If not, I hope you will commit yourself to reaching them this week.

Now there is another motive for soul winning implied here. We should not only lead souls to Christ for our own reward, but also to keep them from the resurrection of shame, contempt, and damnation. So notice what else this text says about some of the dead:

B. The Unsaved Will Arise Also – Again, v.2 says, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt." This is the first and only reference to a double resurrection in the Old Testament, both of the righteous and unrighteous.⁴ Notice the use of the word "many" in v.2. All the dead shall arise from the dead eventually, but at first, only the "many" saints of God will rise. In v.3 "many" is found again, but there it has the definite article, thus "the many" of v.2 is referred to. Though not clear here, according to the book of Revelation 20:4-6, the wicked dead will not rise at the same time as believers, but after the millennial kingdom of Christ.⁵

Now notice what will happen when unbelievers rise from the dead:

1. They Will Suffer Shame and Reproach (v.2b) - The word for "shame" literally means "reproaches." Have you ever been reproached? Has someone called you an idiot for what you did? People in hell should reproach themselves for being such fools to reject God's gracious offer of salvation. They will be ashamed of themselves. Then the word for "contempt" means

⁴ Both resurrections are mentioned together in the New Testament in such passages as John 5:29, Acts 24:15 and Rev. 20:4-5.

⁵ It is not at all unusual for the Old Testament in prophecy to include events separated by a considerable span of time as if they concurred in immediate relation to each other. The passing over of the entire present age—the period between the first and second advents of Christ—in such passages as Isaiah 61:1-2 is familiar to all expositors of the Old Testament. The setting off of the many who awake, into two classes by inference assumes that there will be two resurrections with different destinies.

“something abhorrent,” like a maggot infested dead body? In Isa. 66:24 the word is used of the abhorrent state of eternal hell, where “their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched.”

2. They Will Suffer Eternally - “Everlasting” is best taken as modifying both states of being. So unbelievers will face eternal reproach in a contemptible state. What is the most difficult about all this is that the punishment never ends. That is one of the main things that makes hell so terrible. It is everlasting. There is no end to the shame, reproach, and suffering.

After the millennial reign of Jesus, we are told there is going to be a great white throne (Rev. 20:11ff). We are told that death and hell will give up their dead and there is going to be a resurrection of the damned to face God’s judgment. Think about that. That’s an awesome thought tonight. If you have never received Jesus Christ as your Savior, I have a solemn word for you tonight. There are some people who think that when we die we’ll be like a dog. It will all be over with and they’ll just throw us out there. No, it’s not all over, because the Bible says if you die in that lost condition, one of these days you’re going to be raised in that lost condition. It will be a resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt. If you are not yet saved, you need Jesus tonight more than you would ever know. You need the Lord Jesus Christ. Your only hope in eternity is to have a born-again experience. Instead of experiencing everlasting shame, experience life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

One primary lesson of this prophecy is the fact that the wicked and the godly each will get their ultimate due. As Solomon stated in Ecc. 7:15, at times in this life it seems that the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. It will be that way during the Great Tribulation, at least for a season. Life can indeed be unfair. Yet here we see that in the end, the wicked will suffer and the righteous will be eternally blessed. So if you believe in God’s Son, live a righteous life, and yet suffer, you have to have faith in a God who will ultimately make things right.

Conclusion: The greatest illustration of the triumph of goodness and righteousness over evil is the Lord Himself. Though supremely righteous, He suffered at the end of evil men. He even suffered death. Yet on the third day He rose again, and a few weeks later He ascended to heaven and was exalted to the right hand of God. And for all who believe in Him, He will secure the same victory. Yes, even the best of us will likely suffer in this life and experience death, but in the resurrection, we will be able to say with Scripture, “O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?” (1 Cor. 15:55, HCSB). For the child of God, death is not the end of the story!

Sources: W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on the Book of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976); Tremper Longman III, *The NIV Application Commentary: Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); Dr. Jerry Vines (notes from his sermon on this text); John F. Walvoord, *Daniel The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1971); Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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