

Daniel 12

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[0 : 00] Well, please do have a seat. We've reached the terminus on our journey through the book of Daniel. This is week 10 of 10.

Normally, I'm quite sad when we get to the end of a book, having got so familiar with it over the preceding weeks. I won't be that disappointed to leave Daniel behind, particularly these last four sermons.

These visions of beasts and farm animals and these enormous timelines and all these figures. It would be quite nice to have a break from that for a little while.

Though I think we should be encouraged that if we journey through the end of Daniel, which is some of the most difficult portions of scripture, if we can journey through that and learn some truth and worship God through them, then I think we can be greatly encouraged and confident that there's little else in the Bible that should daunt us if we've got through these last four chapters, these last six chapters together.

And so I think we've learned three enormous truths that have undergirded this entire book. The first one is this, that God is the boss. We've been reminded again and again and again and again that God is sovereign.

[1 : 22] The most high God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes. Real comforting words with all that's going on in our world at these times.

The second big truth is what God has been reminding of as well through his word, that God raises up and cuts down kingdoms according to his sovereign will.

With the ultimate purpose that in the end he will set up a kingdom that will be eternal and never shaken. The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed.

Nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself endure forever. That's where the world, all of history is heading.

And thirdly, I think what we've seen is that God's people have an important role to play in the unfolding eternal plan of God. Whether serving or praying or trusting or persevering or standing firm or proclaiming God's goodness to kings and kingdoms.

[2 : 31] That Daniel is not just a pawn, but he is an active participant in God's unfolding plan. So what's on the screen when Nebuchadnezzar throws Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego in the furnace?

He says our God can deliver us, but even if he doesn't, he's still worthy of our worship. So let me pray and then we'll dive into chapter 12.

Father God, thank you for your word. Thank you that it's true. Thank you that it's living. Thank you that it's active. Thank you that it's enough. Thank you that it's sufficient.

And Father, thank you that as we read Daniel chapter 12, it's full of hope. It's full of glorious truth. And may we leave clinging to it and loving you more because of it.

Father, thank you that it's your word. So would you come and use it to do your work in our lives, we pray. Amen. As Natalie walked past the door of her son Simon's room, she was alarmed to hear the sound of sobbing.

[3 : 42] Simon had once again disobeyed lights out and was face down under his covers reading his book by torchlight.

Natalie crept into the room, sat on the bed and started to rub Simon's back. After a minute or two, Simon crawled out from under the covers and looked with glistening eyes at his mum.

Gently, Natalie asked, why are you crying? Simon pulled the book out from under his bed.

It was the lion, the witch and the wardrobe. And Simon whimpered to his mum, it is just too sad. It's all gone wrong.

Aslan is dead. The white witch has won. Her army is on the march and there is no sign of hope. That's why I'm crying. Natalie pulled Simon in for a hug, kissed his head and whispered, It's okay. [4 : 52] I've read to the end. We win. Keep going. Simon stared at his mum quizzically and she simply repeated the phrase, It's okay.

I've read to the end. We win. Keep going. As we conclude our studies in Daniel, as we come to the big finale of Daniel chapter 12, Natalie's advice to young Simon could equally be God's advice to Daniel.

Daniel, it's okay. I've read to the end. We win. Keep going. Daniel, near the end of his life, after this series of outlandish and perplexing visions, is given the advice that in the end, it will be okay. That God will win. And that in the meantime, he is to keep on going. To keep on serving. This chapter 12 comes on the back of Daniel chapter 11.

That enormous chapter that Johnny took us through so skillfully last week. Where he showed us the unfolding history of the kings and the kingdoms that will come after Darius, the present Persian king.

[6 : 14] Three more Persian kings. Then Alexander the Great. After Alexander's untimely death, the kingdom is divided into four. Decades of conflict between Syria in the north and Egypt in the south.

All played out in the glorious land, the land of Palestine, particularly destructive to God's people dwelling there.

Then finally arises the contemptible person in chapter 11, verse 21. Antiochus IV, or Antiochus Epiphanes, who is a terrorizer of God's people in his attitude and actions.

Then in verse 36 of chapter 11, Antiochus Epiphanes fades into the background and into the foreground comes this Antiochus on steroids kind of character.

The epitome of Antichrist, the full and final enemy of God and his people. Though terrible and terrifying, this character meets his end at the very end of chapter 11.

[7 : 22] Yet he will come to his end and no one will help him. Chapter 12 then happens, the first bit happens in the same vision.

It is a flyover of the same part of history. See those first words, at that time. This time where the scourge of God's people is at his zenith.

And in many ways, chapter 12 answers the question, so what? We've seen all this stuff. We've seen these kingdoms rise and fall. We've seen these characters arise and terrorize God's people. So what are we supposed to do about it? And chapter 12, in many ways, answers that. The detail is difficult, but I think the instruction is quite simple.

Well, that God tells Daniel to do two things. He tells him to hold God's word, hold to God's word, and he tells him to walk in God's way.

[8 : 28] Hold to God's word, walk in God's way. What am I supposed to do if all this is going to happen? All these huge characters are going to arise.

And I feel like a tiny little canoe on a raging torrent of the sea. What am I supposed to do? And God says, hold to my word, walk in my way.

So let's get into this. And firstly, we see, hold God's word. See, verse 1b, that is this character, this ultimate expression of what Antichrist is, arises.

Verse 1b, there will be a time of distress such as not happened from the beginning of nations until now. This is unprecedented distress.

This is unparalleled distress. This is more distressing than being an England football fan on Monday nights. This is horrendous in every way.

[9 : 34] A time of unprecedented distress. See though, it's also a time of God's people being defended. At that time, Michael, this angelic figure, who in the book of Daniel seems to have a special place in defending God's people.

At that time, Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. As the Antichrist arises to rain down terror on God's people at the same time, Michael arises to protect.

Distressed, but defended. God's people are helped in distressing times. How different it is from the end of Antichrist we see in 45b, yet he will come to his end and no one will help him.

God's people defended in distressing times. See as well, defended, distressed, but also delivered. Defended, distressed, but also delivered. The end of verse 1. But at that time, your people, everyone whose name is found written in the book will be delivered, will be saved.

[10 : 58] A time of distress, a time of defense, but a time of ultimate deliverance. A time that God says you'll be saved ultimately.

Distress will not run forever, but there will be a decisive action from God that he will deliver his people. He will deliver the people whose names are written in the book, in the roll call of heaven, in the senses of God's people.

Those people will be delivered. This is God's word. It is sure and it is certain. And it is holding to this truth that will get God's people through this time of distress.

This isn't God offering up a plot line as a screenwriter. This is God laying down indelibly exactly what will happen. So that when unprecedented distress comes, to know that as God's people we're those that are defended and those that will ultimately be delivered.

That is what will fuel our perseverance. That is what will get us through. In distressing times, knowing that we're defended, and knowing that we'll ultimately be delivered.

[12 : 19] And so holding to God's word, that's what he's saying. Believe these things. It's going to get rough. but I'm on your side and in the end you'll be delivered.

I think that's what's exactly meant by verse four. But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words. These are full words. There's nothing to be added to that.

Until the roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. This is exactly what will happen. So you can put a line under it, it is definite and it'll all come to pass in the end.

Many will come and go, there'll be a thorough investigation of these things and there'll be an increase in knowledge. As time progresses and these things get closer, these words that I've given you will be seen to be true.

these words are God's words. And they're to be held onto and clung to in difficult times. That it doesn't matter how difficult it gets to know that we're defended and in the end, if we're God's people, we'll be delivered.

[13 : 31] But see the middle section in verses two and three, where we peer over the edge beyond the end. they speak of an eternal, a universal resurrection and an eternal division.

Verse two, multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Everyone will be raised.

Everyone who dies and sleeps in the dust will be raised to life again. we know a bit more of the story and we'll be raised to life to stand before the Lord Jesus, to be judged.

It's a complete reversal of Genesis two. From dust you were made and from dust you were to return, but at the end of time you'll be raised from the dust again.

And as everyone is raised, so everyone will be judged and there will be an eternal division. Some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

[14 : 47] Everyone will stand before Jesus and will be judged. We won't be judged on what we've achieved, what we've made of our lives will be judged on what we've received.

Whether we've trusted that Jesus is a glorious saviour who came into the world so that on that judgment day he might stand in our defence and the judge will also be our saviour and our lord and our king.

This division is picked up in three of Jesus' parables in Matthew 25 where we get the bridesmaids. Some are wise, some are foolish and there's a division. Some are welcomed in and some are left out in the cold.

There's the faithful and diligent servants who are given the talents and invest it well and there's the lazy foolish servants and the diligent servants are welcomed into their father's rest and the foolish servant is thrown out into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The end of Matthew 25 is the sheep and the goats. The sheep gathered by Jesus, the goats scattered from Jesus.

[16 : 05] That Daniel is telling us where the ultimate end of the beginning will be. Everyone will be raised and then there will be an eternal separation and the dividing line will ultimately be what we have done with the Lord Jesus.

How we've responded to him. Whether we've trusted him as our Lord and saviour or whether we've rejected him and said no I want to be God. I want to be Lord of my own life.

What we do with Jesus will ultimately determine what he does with us. If we accept him he will accept us. If we reject him he will reject us. If we've trusted him we're forgiven of our sin.

If we've rejected him we stand before him in our sin and judgment will be ours. Some to everlasting life. Those that have trusted Jesus others to shame and everlasting contempt.

So what are we supposed to do in light of that? It's coming to an end. This is where it's going. What do we do in the present? Well verse 3 tells us those who are wise, those who know these things, who have understood these things, who have trusted these things, will shine like the brightness of the heavens.

[17:26] And those who lead many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. Those who have trusted this word will live differently in this world.

They'll shine. They won't go up and down with raising geopolitical politics but they will have a steadfast confidence that no matter how difficult it gets, in the end they'll be delivered.

An eternal, everlasting life will be theirs. And then notice they not only shine but they share. Those who and those who lead many to righteousness, those who share this word with others in order that they might have the same confidence, the same hope, the same trust, will shine like stars forever and ever.

Same language that Paul picks up in Philippians 2, that as we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, we shine like the stars of heaven as we hold fast to the word of life.

It's exactly the same thing we see at the end of 1 Corinthians 15 where for 57 verses Paul has gone on about the truth of the resurrection and all that it means. And at the end he writes, therefore my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm.

[18:52] Let nothing move you. always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. What are God's people to do in the present in light of the future?

Hold to God's word. Live it out. Trust in its truth. Live out its commands and share its message with others. It's okay.

I've read to the end. We win. Keep going. Truth.

Hold to God's word. That's what Daniel's told to do. That's what we're told to do. Then secondly we get walk God's way. Verse 5 and 6 set up the scenario.

This has all been on the back of chapter 10 and 11 where Daniel has been in conversation with this man dressed in linen hovering over the water. And now he's joined by two other figures one on each side.

[19:57] And one of the new characters asks a question at the end of verse 6. How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?

It's a good question. If that's where it's going how long have we got? How much sand is left in the egg timer? How long until the time of grave distress, great deliverance, universal resurrection and eternal division?

It's a really good question. And it receives a very cryptic and confusing answer. The man clothed in linen who was above the waters, verse 7, lifted his right hand and his left hand towards heaven. when you make a solemn oath in the Old Testament you raise one hand. This is a very solemn oath. Raising both hands. And he says it will be for a time, times and half a time.

There has been countless ink spilt on what a time and times and half a time means. But I'm quite simple. So I'll give you an initial response of what I think it might mean.

[21:13] A time, times and half a time. How long will it be? Well it will be a time so you're going to have to wait. It's not going to be now, it's going to be in the future and you're going to have to wait.

And it's going to be times. You're going to have to wait a lot. You're going to have to be very patient. That even when a time is up, there's still times to come.

And then you're going to have to wait half a time. And the reason is half a time because God will decisively bring it to an end. You're going to have to wait. You're going to have to wait a lot.

Then you're going to have to wait some more but God will decisively intervene and bring it to an end. When the time is up, when he says the end has come, that will be the time.

According to God's timescale, all unfolding according to God's sovereign will. How long? For a time, times and half a time.

[22:16] A wait, a long wait, a little bit more of a wait and then God will decisively intervene. I said I was simple. Calvin also came up with that. So I'll give him a little bit of credit as well.

And then Daniel follows the question in verse 8. How long will it be? A time, times and half a time. And then Daniel's question. My Lord, what will be the outcome?

What will the outcome be? The response comes, look at it in verse 9. Go your way. Look at the beginning of verse 13.

Go your way. Literally, get on with your life. Get on with your business. Get on with what you've been doing up until now. Do what you've been doing.

Continue in the way of godliness and perseverance. Continue to serve in Darius' court as a diligent, faith-filled servant. Be prayerful. Be proclaiming the excellence of God.

[23 : 17] Stand firm and don't be moved. Be steadfast. Be undefiled and live set apart for God. And so we come to the end of Daniel and we're asking, so what?

If all this is going to happen in the future, what must I do now? And the answer is, keep doing what you're doing. Keep living for the Lord Jesus. Keep trusting the Lord Jesus.

Keep praying. Keep sharing. Keep shining. Go your way, Daniel. It's like the end of John's gospel where Jesus talks to Peter and tells him how he's going to die, that you'll be led where you don't want to go, you'll be dressed.

And then he looks at John and he says, but what about him? And what does Jesus say? You follow me. Follow me.

Daniel's saying, well, if all that's going to happen, what will the outcome be? And God says, go your way. Because the words are rolled and sealed until the end of time.

[24 : 23] There's going to be a wait. And waiting time, verse 10, will be testing time. That is, as time progresses, some people will use that time well.

They will be refined and sanctified. They will pursue holiness. They'll be made spotless. They'll shine all the brighter. But for others, the waiting time will be testing time and they'll go from bad to worse.

The wicked will continue to be wicked. But those who are wise will understand. There'll be this division.

This division at the end will be seen as time progresses. The wicked will not understand, but the wise will continue to understand. Verse 11 was a lot of reading this week.

From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

[25 : 32] I think the great encouragement we can take from that is that distressing times will last 1,290 days. But there'll be some of God's people who get to the end because 1,335 days is longer than 1,290 days.

Times will get tough. But there'll be some who get to the end who will be unmoved, who won't be capsized because of distress, who will see devastating things and continue to hold God's word and walk God's way.

They will cross into eternity at the end having stood firm, even though an unparalleled period of disaster has befallen them. That Michael, the great prince who protects God's people will protect some to the very, very end.

And then verse 13, see how the book finishes? As for you, Daniel, go your way till the end. Keep living a life for God until the end.

You will rest. Daniel gets a double RIP as everyone will get. Then you will rest in peace. Daniel, you'll die.

[26 : 56] But that's not the end. And then at the end of the days, when all this has come and gone, you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.

He will rest in peace. But then at the end, like everyone, will rise in power. and he will receive his allotted inheritance.

This idea of allotted inheritance is a Joshua word. A word used for when Joshua was divvying up the promised land once God has defeated all their enemies. And now Daniel is told that he will receive the ultimate expression of that.

He will receive his ultimate allotted inheritance, not in the geographical area of the promised land, but he will receive his allotted inheritance in the kingdom of God forever and ever, ultimately won by Jesus.

Knowing that this is ours, because God has said it, gives us two things to do in the present, to hold God's word, to cling to it no matter what happens and know that it's true, and to walk God's way, to continue living a godly life in the present, knowing all that is to come in the future.

[28 : 14] You see, the message of Daniel 12 really is this message. It's okay. I've read to the end, we win. Keep on going.

Keep on going, holding to God's word, walking in God's way, until this all comes to pass, and we will see God ourselves and receive an allotted inheritance from him.

because of the Lord Jesus. C.S. Lewis finishes the Narnia Chronicles, and on the last page of the last battle, he writes these words.

And as he spoke, he no longer looked to them like a lion, but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us, this is the end of all the stories. stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them, it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page.

[29 : 25] Now at last, they were beginning chapter one of the great story, which no one on earth has read, which goes on forever, and in which every chapter is better than the one before.

It's okay. I've read to the end. We win. Keep going. Let me pray.