

The Great Tribulation, Part 2

Scripture: Daniel 12:4–13

Code: 27-31

INTRODUCTION

In the last part of chapter 12 the Lord reveals the answers to some questions asked by Daniel and two angels. Daniel and the angels wanted to know the details of what will be coming to pass. Even after all the information revealed in the book, there was still much unknown about end time events. The revelation they received so far peaked their interest to seek more answers. So in this closing section the Lord clarifies some final features about the end times. Yet some things about the future still remain a mystery. But let's look at what's been revealed to us.

REVIEW

During the Great Tribulation the Antichrist will severely oppress the nation of Israel (Dan. 12:1). But in the midst of such persecution Israel will have the hope of the resurrection. At the end of the tribulation will be the bodily resurrection of the righteous, and at the end of the millennium that of the unrighteous. Some will be resurrected to eternal life, but others to eternal death (12:2). Israel will also have the hope of redemption, as God saves a remnant of the people in the midst of purging the nation. God's people will radiate His glory and influence many to trust Christ (12:3).

LESSON

I. THE CLOSING OF REVELATION (v. 4)

A. For Preservation (v. 4a)

"O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end. "

The Hebrew phrase translated "shut up the words" speaks of preservation. "Book" refers to written material. The angel was telling Daniel that he had received the final words of this last revelation, covering Israel's history from Daniel's time to that of the Antichrist. Since Daniel would receive no further revelation, it was time to roll up the scroll and close it. Sealing the book would ensure the security of its contents and could even apply to an authenticating stamp so that people might treat it with respect. The revelation was to be preserved until "the time of the end," referring to the time of the Great Tribulation.

When Will the Book of Daniel Be Fully Understood?

Daniel was told to preserve the divine messages given him until the time of the Great Tribulation. However, that doesn't mean the messages are hidden from us, only that they are safely preserved for those who come later--especially those living in the Great Tribulation. Today we obviously aren't in the Great Tribulation, but we can read and study the book of Daniel for ourselves. It's likely we can understand it better than Daniel did because we know the intervening history and have the book of Revelation and our Lord's commentary in Matthew 24-25.

But the fullest understanding of Daniel will not come until the Great Tribulation. During that time, the book of Daniel will undoubtedly be reopened and studied again by God's people. When they do so, they'll understand it as clearly as if they were reading the daily newspaper because all the events it foretells will come to pass. Many will believe in Christ not only as a result of the ministry of the 144 thousand Jewish evangelists (Rev. 7:9-10) , but also because the books of Daniel and Revelation

chronicle the details of every tribulation event.

B. For Future Study (v. 4b)

"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. "

In the Old Testament the Hebrew phrase "run to and fro" refers to someone's running around in search of something, especially information. For example, Jeremiah 5:1 says, "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in its broad places, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth justice, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon her. "

Similarly, in the end times the Jewish people will want to find an explanation for the unfolding events. They will engage in a painstaking pursuit. And when they come to the book of Daniel, their knowledge will be increased because they'll understand the reason for their suffering.

Bible teacher Leon Wood paraphrases the verse like this: "Many shall run to and fro in their desire for knowledge of the last things, and, finding it in Daniel's book, because it will have been preserved to this end, their knowledge shall be increased" ([A Commentary on Daniel](#) [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973], p. 321). Daniel was to preserve his book so that people of all time--from his day until the end--could have knowledge of the events it foretells.

A Far-Reaching Impact

Daniel 12:3 says that those who are "wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever. " The Lord will use Daniel to turn many to righteousness--even millennia after his death--because he is the human author of the book that provides answers about the tribulation.

So the angel was saying to Daniel, "The content of the prophecy is sealed. At this present time any attempt to fully understand the future will be impossible, but in the end it will all become clear. " The obvious question is, When will the end be? Undoubtedly Daniel wanted to ask that question because he asks a similar one later in the chapter (v. 8). But before he could do so, two angels asked first.

II. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION (vv. 5-7)

A. The Question (vv. 5-6)

"Then I, Daniel, looked and, behold, there stood two others, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?"

According to Daniel 10:4, Daniel was near the river Hiddekel, the Hebrew name for the Tigris River.

Looking toward that river, Daniel saw two figures--apparently angels--in addition to the one already speaking to him. Perhaps the two came as witnesses to confirm the revelation about to be made.

The two were just as curious as Daniel about future events. Apparently they don't know all the details about end-time events either. That's not surprising since Christ said no person or angel knows when the events preceding His coming will occur, but only the Father (Matt. 24:36). Even Christ in His human state didn't know (Mark 13:32). And the apostle Peter pointed out that angels are even curious about the nature of salvation (1 Pet. 1:12). Possibly being as fascinated by prophecy as we are, the angels asked their question before Daniel could.

Daniel saw a man clothed in linen positioned over the river. Chapter 10 helps identify this person: "In the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel, then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz; his body also was like the beryl, and his face like the appearance of lightning, and his eyes like lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet in color like to polished bronze, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude" (vv. 4-6; cf. Rev. 1:13-16).

The man clothed in fine linen was the preincarnate Christ. That's evident because the angels were

asking Him for information they didn't have. Furthermore, the angels were in a subordinate position by the edge of the river, while the One in linen was elevated "above the waters of the river" (Dan. 12:6). He was clothed in linen because that was the garment of the priesthood, its white color symbolizing holiness and purity.

The angels asked, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" (12:6). They wanted to know about the "wonders" connected with the reign of the Antichrist. Their question was not concerned with the entire history from Daniel's day to that of the Antichrist, but only with the conclusion of events. The angels wanted to know when the Antichrist would be permitted to bring oppressive measures against Israel and how long that oppression would last.

Why did the angels make such an inquiry? Perhaps even back in Daniel's time they were tired of fighting demons. They probably longed for the battle to be over. The archangel Michael had been defending the people of Israel for a long time. Surely he and his angelic army are just as anxious to see redemption completed as you and I are today.

The angels asked their question even though they had already received a satisfactory answer. It had been revealed that the tribulation would last three-and-a-half years, and that it would occur long in the future (eg. , 7:25). Maybe they needed an affirmation. Or maybe they posed the question, already knowing the answer, that it might be reinforced for Daniel's sake.

B. The Answer (v. 7)

"I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him who liveth forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and a half, and when he shall have accomplished the breaking up of the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. "

Whenever a Jewish person would make an oath, he raised his right hand. We do that today when a person testifies in court, raising his right hand and promising to tell the truth. That Christ raised both His hands emphasizes the announcement of an absolutely binding affirmation. He swore by His Father, "who liveth forever" (cf. 1 Tim. 6:16).

The Hebrew phrase translated "a time, times, and a half" time means that the Antichrist's reign of terror will last three-and-a-half years (cf. 7:25). The Lord described the activity of the Antichrist as "the breaking up of the power of the holy people. " The tribulation is divinely designed to devastate Israel, a nation set apart unto God. When the Antichrist comes, the people of Israel will place their trust in him and sign an allegiance with him for seven years (9:27).

However, in the middle of that period, he will turn against them and break their power. His persecution against them will be unprecedented in history (Dan. 12:1). The Lord's intention is not to destroy His people, but to bring them to the point of brokenness so they will look to their Messiah, "whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son" (Zech. 12:10). Having nowhere to flee but into the loving arms of Christ after three-and-a-half years of relentless persecution, Israel will accept Him as their Savior and Lord.

The book of Revelation affirms that the duration of Israel's intense persecution will be three-and-a-half years:

1. Revelation 11:3--The Lord said, "I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days. " Those 1,260 days are the equivalent of three-and-a-half years based on a thirty-day-month Jewish calendar.
 2. Revelation 12:6--God will protect the remnant of believing Israel for "a thousand two hundred and threescore days. "
 3. Revelation 12:14--Israel will be "nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. "
 4. Revelation 13:5--"Power was given unto [the Antichrist] to continue forty and two months. "
- It will be near history's end when the Antichrist crushes the "the holy people" (Dan. 12:7). Then they will in truth be holy. That's because their sin will be so deep and their destruction so complete that they will look to their covenant-keeping God. He will be faithful to redeem them through the Messiah.

Indeed there will be a glorious salvation for Israel in the future!

III. THE CONFUSION OF DANIEL (vv. 8-9)

Having heard the answer to the angels' question, Daniel was still confused. Keep in mind that he didn't have the insight of further revelation and history like we do today.

A. Daniel's Inquiry (v. 8)

"I heard, but I understood not. Then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?"

The tense of the Hebrew verb translated "understood" indicates that Daniel struggled to understand what had been said, but that understanding escaped him. Whereas the angels asked about the time and length of the persecution, Daniel was more concerned about what kind of persecution his people would suffer. He knew Israel's affliction would be catastrophic, but he wanted specific detail about events that would take place. For instance, How severely would his people suffer before turning to the Messiah?

B. The Lord's Reply (v. 9)

"And he said, Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. "

That was intended not only as mild rebuke, but also to bring comfort. Daniel didn't need to worry because God was in control and the events were far in the future from Daniel's standpoint. The revelation Daniel received will be preserved for God's people in the future and be a source of knowledge, comfort, and salvation to them. So the Lord was telling Daniel to be content with what He had revealed, staying away from useless speculation.

Today many people are trying to figure out every detail in prophecy, but that often adds unnecessary confusion. Let's accept what God has revealed, but not try to go any further. We don't have to catalog every prophetic detail and fully explain its meaning. Sometimes we must learn to say, "I just don't know. " That's not necessarily a sign of weakness, but can be evidence of trusting in God.

IV. THE CLEANSING OF ISRAEL (vv. 10-12)

A. The Salvation of the Jewish Remnant (v. 10a)

"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tested. "

Born out of this time of testing will be a redeemed remnant of Jewish people who will turn in faith to their Messiah (cf. Dan. 11:35). Zechariah 13 says, "It shall come to pass that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts in it shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will test them as gold is tested; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (vv. 8-9).

Notice that Daniel 12 doesn't say all will be purified, but "many"--one-third according to Zechariah. The rest will die in unbelief. That purification refers to the spiritual salvation of the Jewish remnant. The "many" of Daniel 12:10 is the "all" of Romans 11:26. In the midst of abominable wickedness, God will redeem the nation Israel.

It's ironic that the tribulation will not only be the worst of times, but also issue in the best of times. The most wicked time in history will be the tribulation, but it's also likely to be the greatest time of revival. There's no reason to think it will be more difficult for men and women to be redeemed while the world becomes more wicked. When left with nothing but evil, they will have little difficulty recognizing their sinfulness. And that is the prerequisite to salvation.

B. The Plight of the Wicked (v. 10b)

"The wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. "

Although great spiritual revival will occur during the tribulation, it will also be a time when the wicked are confirmed in their wickedness. Revelation 22:11 says, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. " Most people will continue in their gross evil, but in the midst of the furnace of affliction many will be

purified like gold and silver (Zech. 13:9). Only God can take the full power of Satan's fury and turn it into revival.

The wicked won't understand the prophetic events as they unfold. They may even read the book of Daniel, but won't understand it because "the natural man [does not understand] the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:14). Christ said that the Father has hidden spiritual truth "from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11:25). The human mind cannot perceive God's truth apart from enlightenment by the Holy Spirit.

C. The Establishment of the Kingdom (vv. 11-12)

1. Through divine judgment (v. 11)

"From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. "

The Antichrist will make a seven-year treaty with Israel, allowing the Jewish people to worship in their Temple. However, in the middle of that period the Antichrist will put an end to their worship when he desecrates their Temple and sets up an image of himself inside it. Then begins the fiery persecution known as the Great Tribulation.

In this verse we find a different timetable regarding the end of the tribulation. Other references mention 1,260 days or its equivalent (cf. Rev. 11:3; 12:6) , but here 1,290 days are in view. Why is there an extra month?

Since the Lord just told Daniel about the purification of His people in verse 10, it's apparent that the thirty days beyond the end of the tribulation and Christ's return will be for "the judgment of the nations" or "the judgment of the sheep and the goats" (Matt. 25:31-46). The Lord will use that time to determine who has the right to enter the millennium and receive its blessings.

2. Through preliminary preparation (v. 12)

"Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. "

After the judgment of the nations, an additional forty-five days (1,335 minus 1,290) will be needed to fully establish the millennial kingdom. If a person endured the tribulation and was part of the remnant of sheep at Christ's right hand (Matt. 25:33) , he will pass through the forty-five days and enter into the blessedness of the kingdom.

The Blessings of the Millennial Kingdom

The tribulation saints will enter the kingdom because they will have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. We also will be there, returning with Christ at His second coming in our glorified bodies to reign in His kingdom. What makes it so blessed to live during the millennium? Let look at what the Bible says:

Christ will be ruling (Ps. 2:6).

Satan will be captive (Rev. 20:1-3).

The saints of the Old and New Testaments will have authority (Dan. 7:18; Matt. 19:27-28; 1 Cor. 6:2).

Truth will dominate (Isa. 11:9).

Righteousness will flourish (Ps. 72:7).

Peace will reign (Isa. 2:4; 32:17).

Joy will abound (Isa. 12:3-4; 61:3, 7).

Justice will pervade (Isa. 11:3-4).

The Holy Spirit's power will be revealed in its fullness (Joel 2:28).

There will be a new Temple (Ezek. 40-48).

The earth will be purged (Matt. 25:31-33).

The curse will be lifted (Isa. 11:6-9).

There will be plenty of food (Joel 2:21-27).

Good health and healing will be abundant (Isa. 35:5-6; 65:20).

The city of Jerusalem will be exalted (Isa. 52:1-12).

V. THE COMMENDING OF DANIEL (v. 13)

"Go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days. "

This is God's blessing and promise to Daniel. Daniel was nearly ninety years old, but after living most of his life in a pagan land, he was devout, uncompromising, godly, loyal, courageous, prayerful, humble, zealous, and compassionate. He had been given thorough revelations about future Gentile kingdoms, Israel's destiny, and the frightful reign of the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation. Daniel knew that his beloved people Israel would suffer terribly, so God comforted him through the presence of the preincarnate Christ and the promise of future kingdom blessedness.

A. His Responsibility (v. 13a)

"Go thou thy way till the end be. "

The Lord was telling Daniel to remain faithful to His Word and will. That's similar to an admonition He would give centuries later: "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). The apostle Peter said it like this:

"Seeing, then, that all these things shall be [destroyed by divine judgment], what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness" (2 Pet. 3:11). Knowledge of the future brings a present responsibility to live righteously. We are to live righteously so that we will not be ashamed at Christ's return (1 John 2:28).

B. His Resurrection (v. 13b)

"Thou shalt rest, and stand. "

Daniel was to remain faithful to the time of his death. Although his body now rests in death, it will rise again. That promise is one of the great Old Testament statements about the resurrection.

C. His Reward (v. 13c)

"[You shall] stand in thy lot at the end of the days. "

The Hebrew term translated "lot" refers to an inheritance. Colossians 1:12 says the Father "hath made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints. " Our heavenly Father has given us an inheritance "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us]" (1 Pet. 1:4).

CONCLUSION

It's thrilling to look at the future with the kind of hope that the Lord shared with Daniel. As Christians we don't need to worry about dying because we'll be resurrected. At the moment of physical death, our spirits go immediately to be with the Lord, so it's only our bodies that we'll wait for (2 Cor. 5:8). And in the day they rise, we'll be rewarded by the Lord. Until that time, we're responsible to continue serving the Lord.

I remember reading about a father who was awakened in the night by his little boy. Apparently the child was having a nightmare and panicked, crying out for his daddy. As the father ran into the dark room, the boy asked, "Daddy, are you here?" "Yes, son, I'm here," the father said reassuringly. "Daddy," said the boy, "is your face looking at me?" The father answered, "Yes, son. " With those words the boy lost his fear and soon fell asleep.

Our great hope for the future is knowing that the face of our Savior is looking at us. There's no need to fear the future because He's looking at us with the same love that He had for Daniel. What great confidence our Lord provides for us! As we look forward to the promises of future resurrection and eternal reward, may we accept our present responsibilities to live like Daniel.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What was Daniel instructed to do by shutting up the book and sealing it (Dan. 12:4)?
2. When will the book of Daniel be more fully understood? Why?
3. Why will many be running "to and fro" during the tribulation (12:4)?

4. Give evidence that the angels are as curious about the future as Daniel was.
5. Identify the person who was clothed in linen and standing above the river.
6. What is the three-and-a-half-year reign of terror designed to accomplish with regard to Israel? What will come about as a result of it?
7. How did Daniel's question differ from the one the angels had asked?
8. In what way was the reply Daniel received in Daniel 12:9 a source of comfort?
9. Will all the nation of Israel be purified? Support your answer with Scripture. To whom does the "all Israel" of Romans 11:26 refer?
10. Why isn't it necessarily true that increasing wickedness will make it increasingly difficult to be redeemed? Ironically, what may be the greatest time of revival the world has ever seen?
11. Why won't many of the wicked understand the spiritual significance of what will be happening during the tribulation (1 Cor. 2:14)?
12. What do the thirty days beyond the 1,260 days refer to?
13. What do the forty-five days beyond the 1,290 days refer to?
14. What are some of the blessings of the Messianic kingdom?
15. Explain the promises that the Lord gave to Daniel in Daniel 12:13.
16. What is our great hope for the future? Explain.

Pondering the Principles

1. Daniel's godly life is a spiritual legacy for us to follow. Undoubtedly his recording of prophecies will be instrumental in leading many to faith in Christ. What about your legacy? Are you leaving a positive, spiritual imprint on those around you? You may never write a book about spiritual things like Daniel did, but the Lord can use you to tell someone about Christ. The simple gospel you share with someone may eventually begin a ministry through that person's life that could reach thousands for Christ. So invest in others' lives and reap great spiritual dividends.

2. Because of the wonderful future we anticipate as Christians, we should live righteously in this present life. Several verses reinforce our responsibility to be "the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13) rather than retreat into spiritual hibernation. Look up the following verses and identify what we are to do or be:

Philippians 3:20; 4:5:

Colossians 4:5:

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12:

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13:

1 Timothy 6:17-19:

Titus 2:11-15; 3:1-2, 8-9:

Did you recognize the constant theme of being both heavenly minded and earthly good? Evaluate your present ministry in light of Christ's imminent return. Are you keeping both in proper balance, or have you emphasized one more than the other?

3. Think back through our study of Daniel 9:20; 12:13. What new things have you learned about the end times? What truths in the final chapters of Daniel have made a significant impact in your life? Are you living any differently now based on what you've learned in this study?

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