

Sermon outline and notes © Dr. Stephen Felker
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Daniel 12:4-13 “A Proper Role and Understanding of Prophecy”

Intro. The last half of the book of Daniel deals with prophecy, at least from the time of Daniel. So as we have studied the Book of Daniel, we have also learned about what will come to pass in the last days. To Daniel and even the angels, much had been revealed. But here we see that they wanted to know more of the details of what will be coming to pass and when. To Daniel, this prophecy was a great mystery. Even though the full understanding of the book of Daniel was left for a future generation, a few more details are revealed.

Tonight we shall examine the closing verses of the book of Daniel, which mainly deal with the chronology of the end-time events. How long will the terrible rule of Antichrist last? Will the kingdom of Christ be set up immediately after His coming, or will there be an interim period? I will seek to answer these and other questions tonight as we study the final chapter of the book of Daniel.

Now first of all, I want you to look at v.4 with me. One issue that we will consider will be:

I. THE PRESERVATION OF PROPHETIC TRUTH

The angel says in v.4, “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end...” What he is saying is that the giving of the revelation about the history of Israel from Daniel’s time to the coming of the antichrist is over. Since that is the case, Daniel can roll up the scroll and seal it up, for the fulfillment of these prophecies was to be in a more distant future. Any attempt to understand it in Daniel’s time would be impossible. After all, we see in v.9 that he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.” It would be some time before the end time prophecies would be fulfilled, so they should be sealed up for now.

“Seal” (root, *hatam*) means “to close securely,” particularly with an authenticating stamp. Whatever the extent of the material the angel had in mind, Daniel was to preserve it carefully. The sealing of the book does not mean that its message was to be hidden, but only maintained safely.

Here we also see God’s purpose that His Word be preserved for future generations. This revelation will be especially useful for those who will be living in “the time of the end.” And God has indeed preserved His Word, in spite of several attempts to destroy the Bible from the face of the earth. And is it not significant that after 2,500 years, these words from Daniel are still being read and studied in our day? That is one of the arguments for the fact that this is indeed the Word of God. This reminds me of what Jesus said in Mt. 24:35, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”

II. THE INCREASE IN PROPHETIC UNDERSTANDING

In the last of v.4 the angel says, “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” That is especially speaking about the end times. But before we get to that, notice:

A. The Lack of Understanding Historically – Daniel says in v.8, “Although I heard, I did not understand.” “Understand” is in the imperfect tense, which means that Daniel kept trying to

understanding these things. But as great of a man as Daniel was, he did not understand the revelation that he had received. Among other things, he may have wondered as to how the deliverance from the Antichrist's power would be brought to pass. So Daniel sought more understanding about these matters. In the last of v.8 he asked, "My lord, what shall be the end of these things?" He wanted to know the kind of events that would take place. Daniel didn't get the answer he expected in v.9. In effect, the Lord said to him, "I can't help you, Daniel, because you wouldn't understand those events until you saw them come to pass anyway." Daniel doesn't need to worry because God's in control and the events are far in the future from Daniel's standpoint. Daniel should stay away from useless speculation.

So if you have a hard time understanding the prophecies of Daniel, you may consider yourself in good company. But there are men by the score who live in this generation, as in every generation, who would say: "We know all about it, we understand every syllable of it. What a fool Daniel was not to see it at the time." These people have their prophetic charts outlined in detail. They seem to think they have it all figured out.

Yet we would do well to exercise caution until the days of fulfillment actually take place. I think a lot of us are going to get our ideas of the ends times rearranged in the end anyway. So be cautious about becoming dogmatic about your interpretation of prophecy. We would do well to remember 1 Cor. 13:12, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (NIV).

B. But as the End Approaches, Understanding will Increase – In v.4 the angel says, "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." Some believe that the increase in knowledge indicates the rise of knowledge in today's modern technological and information age. That has indeed happened. From the days of Sumerian clay tablets, humans have "published" at least 32 million books, 750 million articles and essays, 25 million songs, 500 million images, 500,000 movies, 3 million videos, TV shows and short films and 50 billion public Web pages [update]. All this material is currently contained in all the libraries and archives of the world. (From *Preaching Now*, 5/16/06).

The verse could also be interpreted to prophecy the tremendous increase in travel that has come to pass in the modern age. He says, "many shall run to and fro." But even though that interpretation is very appealing, it is probably not the correct interpretation. I believe the interpretation that makes the most sense is the one that takes the running to and fro as the means of gaining more understanding. People in the Tribulation will intently try to find answers to what's happening. You see, every Old Testament use of the particular verb form here translated "run to and fro" refers to the movement of a person who is running around in search of something, especially information. That expression is found also in Jeremiah 5:1 and Zechariah 4:10. It refers to those who earnestly, meticulously, and painstakingly study the visions and prophecies, but they still do not understand. I believe that when the time of the end comes upon the world, some Jews are going to run around and try to find an answer to what is happening to them. Many will decide to look into the ancient Scriptures for answers. And when they study the book of Daniel, they will be amazed at what they find, and their knowledge will be increased. In the last days they will turn to the Lord like never before. They may even read the New Testament book of Revelation, and find more answers. They may read the Olivet discourse of Jesus, who said in Lk. 21:28, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws near." There we see that increased knowledge will largely be due to increased fulfillment. The tribulation

¹ One petabyte is just over 1,000 terabytes.

saints will understand Daniel as clearly as if they were reading the daily newspaper, because all of the events it has foretold will come to pass.

Now look at v.10 and notice:

C. The contrast – There we read that “none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.” Unbelievers will not understand the significance of end time events. 2 Thess. 2:11 gives one reason why, “And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie.” On the other hand, those who are wise will understand. This reminds me of 1 Thess. 5:3-4 where it says that the Day of the Lord will overtake unbelievers like a thief in the night. They will be totally surprised by what happens in the end times. But then Paul says, “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.” Those who are wise and look to the Scriptures for answers will not be surprised by the events of the end times. When Jesus gave His Olivet Discourse regarding end-time events, He said in Mt. 24:25, “See, I have told you beforehand....” He has given fair warning of what will happen in the last days.

So as we are approaching the last days, is your knowledge of prophecy increasing? Are you able to recognize the signs of the times? I think you should study prophecy, so that you will be better prepared for what is to take place.

Let us not be in ignorance regarding prophecy. Right here in chapter 12 of Daniel we are given more details about what is yet to come. So let’s consider next of all:

III. THE CHRONOLOGY OF PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT

According to 10:4, Daniel was near the river Hiddikel, which is the Hebrew name for the Tigris River. Looking toward the river, Daniel saw two angels, one on each bank of the river (12:5). In v.6 they ask a question about this prophecy. The significance of noting the presence of the angels at all is likely to show the interest that angels have in the affairs of men. The angels were just as curious as Daniel. Jesus indicated in Mt. 24:36 that the angels do not know the day or hour of the 2nd coming of Christ. 1 Pet. 1:12 says concerning the nature of salvation, that they are “things the angels desire to look into.” Possibly being as fascinated by the prophecies as we are, the angels asked their question before Daniel could. They ask, “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?”

In vv.6-7 we read to whom the question was addressed, and who could answer the questions that we will address. Chapter 10:4-6 helps us to identify this person. The man clothed in fine linen was none other than the preincarnate Christ. The fact that the angels ask him for information helps to confirm that they were speaking to the Son of God. Furthermore the angels are seen in subordinate places, down by the edge of the river, while the Lord is in an elevated position in the middle, connoting supernatural power and authority. If Jesus could walk on water, He could also hover above water! It is appropriate the book of Daniel closes with another vision of Jesus! The answer, which we will see in just a moment, is backed up with an oath (v.7). The Jewish custom of raising one’s right hand to give an oath is still with us today. The fact that both hands were raised emphasizes the announcement of an absolutely binding affirmation. So let’s see what we learn here about the chronology of this prophecy. We see here, for example:

A. The Duration of Anti-Christ’s Rule – The angel asked in the last of v.6, “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?” The word for “wonders” refers to things unique to

themselves. Reference is to the unique, oppressive actions of the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation, not to all the history related by the angel. So notice in our text:

1. The Initiation of His Oppression – Look at what v.11 says, “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.” (See Mt. 24:15-22). Here God clearly warns when the Great Tribulation will begin for the Jews. The antichrist will negotiate a treaty between Israel and her Arab neighbors (9:27). Evidently they will be allowed to rebuild their temple and offer sacrifices once again. But the Great Tribulation will begin when they are ordered to stop the sacrifices, and the abomination of desolation will be set up. That will be an idol, an image of the antichrist set up right there in the temple. Of course, the Jews will offer fierce resistance, and the antichrist will respond with fierce persecution, even worse than what they experienced under Hitler.

Next let’s see:

2. The Purpose of His Oppression

a) From his viewpoint - Daniel 9 says that the Jews will sign an allegiance with the Antichrist for 7 years. However, in the middle of that period, he will turn against them and break their power. The antichrist will seek to destroy the Jews. Satan hates anything to do with the true God, and since the Jews are His chosen people, Satan will inspire the antichrist to seek to destroy them.

But God will have another purpose in mind. So let’s see the purpose of the oppression:

b) From God’s viewpoint – The last of v.7 says, “that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.” Instead of allowing the Jews to be completely destroyed, they will be crushed to the point where they will be so broken that they will look to their Messiah, as Zech. 12:10 indicates. The angel thus revealed the reason for God’s permitting the Antichrist to bring his persecution, namely, to break the power of the Jews, for they have great military power. They have nuclear weapons. They have a great, well equipped military. They have the United States as an ally. As parallel passages indicate, this power and resulting sense of self-sufficiency will need to be broken so that the Jews will be willing to accept Christ as their rightful King. Right now they are trusting in their superior military power, and in their alliance with the United States. But all of that will be taken away some day, and they will be crushed by the antichrist. We are already beginning to see the support of Israel diminishing in the Congress due to the rising influence of the far left, though a recent attempt to defund Israel’s Iron Dome defense failed by a wide margin. Having nowhere to go but into the arms of Christ after 3 1/2 years of persecution, Israel will accept Jesus Christ as their King and Savior. Their sin will be so deep and their destruction so great that they will look to their covenant-keeping God for mercy and salvation.

We also see this in v.10, “Many shall be purified, made white, and refined.” What he said is that during the last half of the seven-year period, many Jews will experience being “cleansed,” “made white,” and “refined.” Taking the passive meaning for the verbs, the thought is that God will be the One sovereignly effecting this change of cleansing. Notice that v.10 does not say that *all* shall be purified; it says that “many” will. It seems safe to say that the total number will be at least 144,000, and probably more. Further, Zechariah 13:8-9 speaks of one-third of the Jews then living as being refined. The “many” Jews that survive the tribulation will become the “all” of Paul in Romans 11:26. Israel has rejected Christ for 2,000 years, but God hasn’t given up on them. At last God will finally succeed in turning the nation of Israel to Christ.

Even so, God will allow *us* to suffer, in order to purify and cleanse us. God uses trials at times to reach unbelievers. I wonder what it is going to take to get some other people that we know

to accept Christ as Savior? Will it take being hurt in a car accident before God gets your attention? God also uses trials and suffering to purify believers.

3. The Time-limit of His Oppression – In vv. 6-7 we read, “And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, ‘How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?’ Then 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 to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time....” The angels want to know when the Antichrist will be permitted to bring oppressive measures upon Israel and how long they will last. V.7 indicates that this reign of terror will last only 3 1/2 years. Actually, this was already indicated in 7:25. Likewise, in Mt. 24:21 Jesus indicated that the tribulation time would be cut short, or not allowed to go on and on.

So just hold on to this assurance, my brother and my fellow-pilgrim. Earth’s trials are not eternal. Revelation 2:10 says, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days....” That could be literal or symbolic². Either way the assurance is given the tribulation saints that their suffering will be temporary and will soon pass away.

And so I have some good news and some bad news. The good news for God’s people is that their suffering is always limited. Often, our suffering will only last a few days. Sometimes we may have to accept suffering that last for several years, or perhaps the rest of your lifetime. But regardless, the suffering for the child of God is *always* limited. God promises in Rev. 21:4 that someday, “...there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain....” But I also have some bad news. If you never become a Christian, you will experience the suffering of hell which has no end.

So we are told in this prophecy the duration of antichrist’s rule. Next, let’s see the fact that there will be:

B. A 30-Day Period after Anti-Christ’s Destruction – Look with me at v.11, “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.” In this verse we find a different timetable regarding the end of the Tribulation. Every other time there is the mention of 1260 days or its equivalent (v.7), but here 1290 days are in view. The question must be asked as to the significance of the thirty additional days. I believe that the 30 days refer to a time period beyond the end of the Tribulation and the return of Christ. This will be for the purging mentioned in Mt. 25, where we read of the judgment of the sheep and the goats, or the judgment of the nations. The purpose of the judgment is to determine those who will be permitted to enter into and enjoy the blessedness of the millennial Kingdom. The passage shows that those so honored will be only the people who have treated the Jews properly, and have thus demonstrated a true relation to Christ through personal salvation. But such an act of judgment will take a period of time for its accomplishment. The added thirty days in question would seem appropriate.

Next, we read of another chronological event of the end time. V.11 mentions a total of 1290 days. Then in v.12 we read of:

C. An Additional 45 Day Period – There we read, “Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.” The idea of the preceding phrase, speaking of being “blessed,” shows that whatever occasion falls at the conclusion of these days is something

² Such as ten waves of persecution in the first two hundred years of Roman rule.

good and desirable. The thought is thus suggested that it will be the actual starting point of the Millennium. After 30 days of purging through judgment, 45 more days will be needed for the full establishment of the Millennial Kingdom (explain about this kingdom). The earth will be in a big mess after the tribulation. What a clean-up time that will be! Furthermore, part of that time may be used for the setting up the governmental authorities for carrying on the rule of Christ. A new administration is coming to earth! Amen? Believers will rule with Christ (Rev. 5:10; 20:6). Even so, in the U.S.A. there is about 2 ½ months from the election of a president to the inauguration of a president. Also, the true and full border of Israel will have to be established. So a period of forty-five days would seem to be reasonable in which to accomplish these matters.

We have read about the preservation of prophetic truth, the increase in understanding of prophetic truth, and the chronology of prophetic events. Now let's conclude with:

IV. THE PERSONAL APPLICATION OF PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT

As we study prophecy, what should we do? Should we quit our jobs, sell everything, head to the hills and wait for the return of Christ? Well let's see from our text:

A. Daniel's Responsibility – Daniel was told in v.13, “But you, go your way till the end...” The Lord is saying, “Go about your business and leave the future to Me. Continue to live according to My Word and My will.” 2 Pet. 3:11 expresses it this way, “Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness.”

So don't panic and become frightened when you sense that they end times are upon us. After all, you could be wrong and many Christians have been wrong in the past. For now, just go your way. Live a good and godly life a day at a time. Then, when Christ comes, you'll not be ashamed at His appearing (1 Jn. 2:28).

Next we read the promise of:

B. Daniel's Resurrection - V.13 goes on to say, “for you shall rest, and will arise...” The Lord is saying, even though your body will rest in death, you will stand again. That is a promise of resurrection, in addition to the promise found in v.2.

Even so, the vast majority of Christians will die before the return of Christ, and they will participate in the great bodily resurrection to come. Only a comparative few will still be living when Christ returns.

C. Daniel's Reward – In the last of v.13 we read, “for you shall rest, and will arise [lit. stand] to your inheritance at the end of the days.” The word for “inheritance” (*goral*) means here that which may be selected by a cast lot. Its corresponding Greek equivalent (*merida*) is used in Col. 1:12 for the inheritance lot of the saints, which is approximately the thought here. Daniel would rise again to receive his inheritance. This would be “at the end of the days.” Daniel could know, then, that he would live again, following the Tribulation days, in time to enjoy his inheritance lot in the blessedness of the millennial kingdom, along with the others mentioned in the preceding verses. If Daniel is to be resurrected at this time, it follows that other Old Testament saints will be resurrected then as well, thus giving evidence that the likely time of resurrection for all Old Testament saints will be at the close of the Tribulation.

Even so, Peter spoke in 1 Pet. 1:4 of an inheritance awaiting us as being “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” Joshua in

Hebrew is the same as Jesus in Greek. Our Joshua shall some day divide to us our inheritance in the paradise of heaven and/or the Millennial Kingdom.

Conclusion: It's thrilling to look at the future with the kind of hope that the Lord has shared with Daniel. I don't worry about dying because I'm going to rise again. In fact, when we die, our spirits go immediately to be with the Lord. Then, in the day that we rise again, we shall be rewarded. What a hope! If you know Jesus as your Savior, you have hope for the future, come what may. But if you do not know Christ, there is no hope. Trust in Christ today!
(May want to use MacArthur's closing illus., p.111).

Sources: W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on the Book of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976); John MacArthur, Jr., *The Future of Israel: Daniel 9:20-12:13* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1985); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); 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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