



Daniel 12:1-4
The Resurrection of the Dead

NKJ Daniel 12:1 "At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.

2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

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.

4 "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."

What will happen to me after I die? That's a question that most people are interested in knowing the answer to. You might say it is the ultimate question, and you know it strikes me as ironic, that while we live in an age of information overload, with thousands of web pages, books, magazines, TV shows, radio shows, pamphlets being added everyday, there has probably never been a time in the history of the Western world when people were more confused about where to find the real answer to that Ultimate Question.

I was reminded of that just this week curiously enough by a Spam Email trying to sell me video games for the PC. I would have trashed it immediately but the name of the game caught my eye: "**BATTLE OUT OF HELL!**" So I read the accompanying blurb: "*You've just been killed in a car accident. Trapped in a dark and unwelcoming world between heaven and hell, you [are] struggling to uncover the reasons why you've been denied entry into heaven.*"

I mean in a way its amusing, but stop for a moment to consider how devoid of any sort of biblical knowledge that blurb is. [Incidentally, not surprisingly the key to salvation in this game like most modern PC games is blowing things up and shooting monsters. I don't think Pelagius on his worst day could have come up with that kind of scenario.]

It's yet another indication, if we needed one, that a large proportion of our society have literally gone back to a pre-Christian understanding of the afterlife. We have all of these information resources at our fingertips, as verse 4 puts it "**many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase**" but just as the verse itself implies this accumulation of knowledge is ultimately in vain. It's a situation that seems to be aptly described by Amos 8:12 "*They shall wander from sea to sea, And from north to east; They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, But shall not find it.*"

But Brothers and Sisters that's not surprising, because the one place where people seem loathe to look answers to their ultimate questions that only God has the answers to, is here in the bible. If people

would just read these verses in Daniel 12 with understanding they would find the answer they are looking for. Because just as the prior chapters of Daniel prophesied what would happen in the future of Babylon, Persia, the Greek empires, and then even Rome with 100% accuracy, so too this chapter tells us what will happen to all the dead at the end of this present age. And think about this, if it got everything right about what would happen up to this point in the book, do you really think that its going to be suddenly wrong about these final verses? No, you can trust this word, for exactly the same reason that the Woman at the Well knew that Jesus was the Messiah, and that she could trust Him, because He told her things about themselves that no one other than God could have known: John 4:29 *"Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did."* she told the other Samaritans.

So what is going to happen? Well we read in chapter 11 verses 36-45 of the rise of the final Antichrist and the conflict and terrible persecution that would attend his coming and that prophecy continues into Chapter 12 (you have to remember that the chapter divisions weren't added by Daniel). His reign is described as a time of totally unprecedented tribulation, such as never was since there was a nation. A time when as Stuart Olyott put it very well, ***"all hell will be let loose against the church."*** But just when it seems that all is lost, Heaven will step in and puts an end to him forever. Michael, the Angel who is spoken of again and again as the guardian of the church, stands up at the appointed time, and the tribulation ceases because there never has been a time when God has not been sovereign over what is happening here on earth.

In that day the elect, those who truly belong to Christ because they have been given into his Hand by the Father, will be forever delivered from the hand of their tormentor, that is what is meant by ***everyone who is found written in the book***. The book spoken of there is the Lamb's book of Life of Revelation 20:15 where God has inscribed the names of His people from before the beginning of time. Calvin said this of the book –

"His book is that eternal counsel which predestinates us to himself, and elects us to the hope of eternal salvation. We now understand the full sense of this instruction, as the Church shall remain in safety amidst many deaths, and even in the last stage of despair it shall escape through the mercy and help of God. We must also remember this definition of a church, because many boast of being Gods sons, who are complete strangers to him. This leads us to consider the subject of election, as our salvation flows from that fountain. Our calling, which is his outward testimony to it, follows that gratuitous adoption which is hidden within himself; and thus God when regenerating us by his Spirit, inscribes upon us his marks and signs, whence he is able to acknowledge us as his real children."

That day on which the Lord delivers from evil will be the day spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 when *"the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God."* That will be the day not only of the deliverance of the people of God on earth, but the day also when all the dead shall arise from their graves. And verse 2 makes clear that on that day, it is not just the dead in Christ who will arise, but *all the dead*. The Saved and the Unsaved, the Elect and the Reprobate, the Redeemed and the Damned.

Speaking of verse 2, one quick textual note, the word *many* is a slightly misleading translation, the Hebrew word there is *Rabbim* meaning Multitudes. It doesn't imply that some will arise and some won't. The clear implication is that all who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. But there will be a clear division between them. Jesus Himself warns in ***John 5:28 "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth -- those who have***

done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

Now there is no way we can climb up to heaven and look into the book of life to see if our names are there, the bible does not call us to do so. The bible simply tells you “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” and gives you the assurance that if you do, it is because your name was written there.

So the answer to the question *what will happen to me after I die?* is answered in a sense with a *that depends*. You know that all who die will rise again, but where you end up in eternity will depend on the day of the resurrection upon whether your name is in the Lamb’s book of life, it will depend upon whether you are a follower of the Lamb. Simply put, it will depend upon whether you truly know Jesus and He knows you.

You know when Christ returns, it won’t matter whether you were a king or a slave, rich or poor, General or private, the only thing that will matter where you truly a follower of Jesus? They are the ones who were truly wise. Not by the worlds standards though.

The world would say that in a time of persecution the man who makes himself obnoxious to the persecutors is a fool. Well during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes many Jews defied Antiochus and his Hellenizers and continued to instruct people in the bible and to point them to a righteousness that came through faith in the coming Messiah. Through their instruction many became believers, but they paid a high price for their faithfulness. Many were identified and put to death. Today, many Christians around the world are paying a similarly high price. For instance, the people who continue to carry the gospel into North Korea. The world looks at them and says, **“You fools! Don’t you know that if you are caught, they will torture you and starve you and kill you?”** And it’s true they will and they do. But God says, those men and women the world calls fools he says were the truly wise ones, because on that last day they will shine “like the brightness of the firmament” They were the means by which many were turned to Christ, and while they may have suffered for a time, in heaven they will shine like stars forever. As Jim Elliott, who died to bring the Gospel to the Auca Indians put it **“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose”**

Friends, the Word of God consoles the righteous who suffer for their faith with the knowledge that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. As bad as that suffering may become, it will still be nothing compared to everlasting life in heaven.

But if you want to get a glimpse of how bad hell will be, flip that analogy over, for the unrighteous, the pleasures of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the horror of that place where the worm does not die, the fire is not quenched, the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night.

This is a message the world needs to hear, especially today, and that is why Daniel is told to *shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end*. You see as Stuart Olyott explains: *The Old Persian custom was that once a book had been copied and publicly circulated, one copy was sealed and placed in the library. This was so that future generations could read it.*

God was saying to this old faithful prophet, your final job as a prophet is to make sure that the words of this prophecy are known by the generation of the times of the end, the last days. And we have been

in the last days since the ascension of Jesus. We need this message now as never before even as many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increasing, but nobody seems to be interested in the truth.

Well a couple of final applications:

To those of you who know Christ, you also know from Daniel that times are coming that will make prior persecutions seem mild by comparison. Times when it looks like the foundations of everything good and holy will be ripped up. Psalm 11:3 asks the question – “If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?” and long ago a preacher asked and answered that question “Go on being righteous of course” Do not allow external circumstances, as bad as they may be to turn you from your course. Go on running the race, continue to tell others about Jesus, come what may. What can men do to you? Not one of them can steal your real treasure, for it is heaven. And the worst that men can do, is speed you on your way to glory.

To those of you who don't know Christ, or perhaps don't even know what I'm talking about: know that the day is coming, when all that will matter will be whether you believe in Christ. Kids how many of you remember the story of what happened to Jericho? walls, now they thought they were safe, I'm sure they all thought they were good, but when judgment came, only one family was ready – Rahabs. She was a big sinner, but she went on to glory, even to be a forbear of the same Messiah who saved her from her sins.

On resurrection day make sure you don't stand up with the men of Jericho!