

The Great Tribulation

Daniel 12:5-13

Even though we have read the last 9 verses of Daniel, we are not finishing with the book.

There are two reasons why we have skipped over 1-4.

The **first** reason is a matter of orderliness as we follow the text chronologically. We will go back to 12:4 next and the increase of knowledge with time. Then follow up with the resurrection of the just and unjust in 12:2. At last we will close the book out with the righteous shining as the stars forever – 12:3.

The **second** reason is practical: who wants to end such a great book on talking about tribulation?

But it is good to begin our message in verse 5 with angels. Daniel not only saw but heard angels speaking to one another, and conversing about the end of God's wonders. See how they are interested in the works of God!

Everything about them is impressive: their purity especially is expressed by their white linens. They are moreover princes in their guards, beings of great honor and power. The one asks the other, How long till the end of these wonders – referring to when Michael will stand in verse 1, at the end of the distress, and the rescue of those in the book, and the resurrection, and the righteous shining as stars.

Remember here the words of Peter in the first chapter of his first letter, that angels desire to look into the things regarding our redemption! That is something amazing. They themselves don't need to be redeemed, but they look into this wonder of God. They have never sinned and yet they are interested in Christ's work of saving sinners.

They are not human like we are, and yet they look into our so great salvation. If they are so interested, how can we not be? Do we peer deeply into what God has done in giving us his only begotten Son?

Let us come to the body of the text and find here three different things going on here.

1. First of all we see a solemn oath is taken, swearing by the God of heaven, the eternal and living God. For several reasons we find this so impressive:
 - a. Notice that this oath is taken with two hands lifted up. Have you ever heard of such a thing? Usually just one hand suffices. But here there are two, to be emphatic; everywhere else in the Bible, always with one.
 - b. Second, is it not striking to you that an angel is found taking an oath! Why would that be necessary from holy beings whose yes is always yes and no is always no? Nevertheless, we have God Himself taking an oath, so certainly an angel may do so.
 - c. Lastly under this first part, this oath has to do with the amount of time for the distress that is to come, the time of shattering the power of the holy people. He swears this as though he will oversee it. How? Most likely, the angels will come at just the right time to the rescue those in need. Like the eagles in the Hobbit or Lord of the Rings, arriving just in the nick of time to snatch away the good guys from immanent danger.

So much then for the first element – angels solemnly swearing their involvement and in our welfare.

2. Second, there is a mysterious time frame given here in 12:7: a time, times and half a time.
 - a. This is exactly the same language as Dan. 7:25-27 – turn there and read.

- b. This is precisely the same language found in the last book of the Bible: Revelation 12:13-17 – turn there and read.
- c. Then there is a similar number repeated back in Dan. 12:11-12 – turn there and read.
 - i. The number 1290 is 43 months, 3.58 years (an extra 30 days)
 - ii. Mauro applies it to the time between the siege on Jerusalem in 66 AD and taking away the sacrifices which took place in 70 AD. But the text says something – from abolishing the sacrifices and the abomination being set up is this period of time.
 - iii. Keil and Young both say the days are symbolic, speaking of real time, but nobody can determine their length. They roughly model this off of the distressing times of Antiochus, who is the type.
 - iv. But it seems best to account for the extra 30 days by the Lord shortening that time. It fits with the readiness of the angels to intervene as they see God’s people being brutally destroyed.
 - v. The additional time of 1355 may indicate some sort of conclusion of the final judgment period – another 45 days; or it could set out the time frame between these two time periods, the earliest and latest.
- d. This is not the easiest matter to understand, is it!? But one thing is for certain – something we saw in an earlier message – that while this is a definite period of time (it cannot be stretched into a generic symbol for the whole church age), rest assured it will come to an end, because it is limited and temporal. It is though the Lord here is marking the days for evil on his calendar – so far, and no more!

3. Now we turn thirdly to Daniel’s place in this.

- a. He is the one recording this angelic conversation. How awesome to think that God's people will all dwell together one day and converse with holy angels!
- b. But we need to focus on the answer he is given to his question in 8-9 – "Go!" What does this mean?
 - i. Whatever outcome is being questioned, the fruit of enduring such persecution by the Lord's people is not told him. WE are not given everything in order to satisfy our curiosity.
 - ii. To seal up these words means either they will not be opened until eternity, or that they will be certainly opened at the time of the end. Either is possible. And we are not given a specific timetable from the Lord's heavenly servants.
- c. Daniel is told, go your way to the end, that is, to the grave, as all of that generation did, and every generation since then. I find it a little anticlimactic at this point – you start off listening to the conversation of two angels, they speak of momentous issues of the end, and you are told you cannot know and are sent to the long sleep of the grave!

But don't be fooled – there is much here for our edification, as well as Daniel's comfort. What are they?

Number One: God's people will, again, face tribulation – the same point as we saw the last time. Verse 7 – their hand, the hand of the believers, the symbol of power, will be broken, shattered. Yet, the Lord will keep his own, all those written in His book, and those who are killed will rise to a glorious resurrection.

This seems to be the point of Revelation 20 – the martyrs are singled out, those beheaded, butchered, are favored specially as rising again to a most glorious resurrection.

Number Two: see the contrast between the righteous and wicked running like a divided highway down the middle of time. Read verse 10. Here are two peoples, two families, driving in opposite directions:

Many will be purged, purified, cleansed. This speaks of their washed state, where they had been sinful, filthy, and wicked before.

They are moreover refined, brought through those fires of tribulation, but the gold is not hurt and cannot be hurt! Only the dross is burned off.

But the wicked are not so; whatever trials or heat they face brings out the worst in them; they will act wickedly on account of their evil hearts and minds.

This is strongly similar language as is found in Rev. 22:10-11

¹⁰ And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. ¹¹ "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy." ¹² "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. ¹³ "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." ¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. (Rev 22:10-15)

Here is not only the divide between two ways, but the divide between two peoples, with two opposing hearts – two different natures; one is of the flesh and the other is of the Spirit. You are either one or the other.

This also extends to the mind and the failure of the wicked to understand this difference between the two ways. They will not, cannot understand the things of the Spirit, and so do not grasp the enmity placed between the seed of the woman and that of the serpent.

But the purged, purified and refined will – or those of them who have insight will understand and grasp it.

This battle that began with Cain and Abel, which has raged on now for 6000 years or so, will be carried up to the very door of the world's end!

This is the verse that might be placed over world history:

²⁷ An unjust man is abominable to the righteous, and he who is upright in the way is abominable to the wicked. (Pro 29:27)

Thirdly, lastly, consider the blessed future of all those like Daniel – in the final verse. Three things are here; three things that can be said about every Christian you have ever seen; every soul that comes to Jesus, turning from their sins to him for life eternal:

1. Their death is called an entrance into rest. Their bodies rest in the grave, and they sleep. Their souls do not sleep but cease from the moil and toil of a sinful world. And their bodies are precious, as golden dust to the eye of God, and will be raised up at the last day.
2. Next, they will be resurrected at the end of the age. Their bodies and souls will be reunited and exalted at the end of the world. The spirits of just men in heaven made perfect, will be reunited to the bodies of just men raised up and made perfect, to never die again! The Lord saves not only our souls, but our bodies – both for him eternally.
3. Then see that they will have an allotted portion or reward granted to them at the end of the age. “Come, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your lord, provided for you from before the

foundation of the world!” When you see a believer these things are before them. Regardless how weak, sick or frail of body they may be; regardless of how weak, sick and immature in their faith they may be; and regardless of how poor, how uneducated, how otherwise low they may be in society – they are the sons and daughters of the living God.

Does this not thrill you? Whatever trial and tribulation you face, this is the final issue of it all.

In fact, whatever difficulties you face are more than compensated or balanced in the world to come. You are blessed indeed!

2 Corinthians 4:17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, (2Co 4:17 NKJ)*

What confidence and assurance can be yours in Christ, the risen Lord!

Death is already a defeated foe; the sting of death is removed already! May we live as those who will ever be with the Lord, for we shall! He will not, and cannot let us go! He is not satisfied until we are all with him in glory, with nothing left behind!

*Soon, too, my slumbering dust shall hear,
The trumpet's quickening sound;
And, by my Savior's power rebuilt,
At His right hand be found.*