
The Triumph of God over the Nations

Daniel 12

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Introduction Victory is such a sweet thing...

Background - the connection to 11:36-44. Listen to the NLT's rendering.

³⁶ "The king will do as he pleases, exalting himself and claiming to be greater than every god, even blaspheming the God of gods. He will succeed, but only until the time of wrath is completed. For what has been determined will surely take place. ³⁷ He will have no respect for the gods of his ancestors, or for the god loved by women, or for any other god, for he will boast that he is greater than them all. ³⁸ Instead of these, he will worship the god of fortresses—a god his ancestors never knew—and lavish on him gold, silver, precious stones, and expensive gifts. ³⁹ Claiming this foreign god's help, he will attack the strongest fortresses. He will honor those who submit to him, appointing them to positions of authority and dividing the land among them as their reward.

⁴⁰ "Then at the time of the end, the king of the south will attack the king of the north. The king of the north will storm out with chariots, charioteers, and a vast navy. He will invade various lands and sweep through them like a flood. ⁴¹ He will enter the glorious land of Israel, and many nations will fall, but Moab, Edom, and the best part of Ammon will escape. ⁴² He will conquer many countries, and even Egypt will not escape. ⁴³ He will gain control over the gold, silver, and treasures of Egypt, and the Libyans and Ethiopians will be his servants.

⁴⁴ "But then news from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in great anger to destroy and obliterate many. ⁴⁵ He will stop between the glorious holy mountain and the sea and will pitch his royal tents. But while he is there, his time will suddenly run out, and no one will help him.

(12:1) "At that time Michael, the archangel who stands guard over your nation, will arise. Then there will be a time of anguish greater than any since nations first came into existence. But at that time every one of your people whose name is written in the book will be rescued.

Perspective – a growing sense of a timeline and connected events, ideas, and metaphors.

The larger picture of the era from the rise of Babylon till the fall of the Anti-Christ...

The sharpening focus on the seventieth week and its yet unfulfilled events...

The growing image of the future superman, the anti-Christ...

The exhilarating assurances of God's ultimate and total victory...

What God is revealing to us through Daniel is the promise and prophecy of a great deliverance of God's people.

The Character of our Deliverance

(v.1-4)

“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. ² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; 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.”

“At that time” is a very significant phrase. It connects what is to follow in Daniel 12 with the events in the prior two paragraphs in Daniel 11. In other words, what is given to us here will happen at the time of the rise and fall of the anti-Christ.

With Angelic Accompaniment

The end will come with much involvement by the heavenly host. This will feature the arising of Michael, the arch-angel. Will Michael arise to defend God’s people? Is that what is implied here? Or does Michael “arise” and what happens next unfolds. In other words, Michael, who has been taking care of Daniel’s people, the Jews, arises with the effect that they enter a savage and terrible time of unprecedented trouble.

Apocalyptic texts, that is, texts concerning the last days including the book of Revelation are filled with the activity of angelic hosts. We find them interacting with the physical world, making public declarations, blowing horns and moving through the heavens and on the earth as restraining and attacking forces.

We once again get a pulling back of the curtains of the physical and material world to see what is normally hidden from human eyes. Maybe what is alluded to here has simply always been going on, but it seems to me that there will be an escalation of the engagement between spiritual forces that spills over into the physical world. I am not sure that we will be aware of it – much of the effect in the physical world simply looks like massive destruction by natural calamities.

In a Time of Trouble

At what time? At the time of the rise and fall of the anti-Christ there will be a time of unparalleled trouble and tribulation. Around the time of Michael, the archangel’s arising will there be this time of great trouble. It seems to be focused on Daniel’s people, the Jews. It seems to be intensified by whatever Michael is doing here. It will be for in-depth study of later texts to really get our arms around what is being said here. We just know for certain that Daniel is predicting a time of unprecedented tribulation for the Jews and for God’s people at large connected to and focused around the time of the rise and fall of the anti-Christ. More about this will follow in the next paragraph of Daniel 12.

Note that this is marked from the beginning of nations. This is usually associated with the tower of Babel and the dispersion then that created people groups clustered around languages. This time of trouble and tribulation for God’s people will have not parallel in history since the flood, *including the fall of Jerusalem, Israel and the exile.*

According to the Book of Life

In the time of great trouble will come the great deliverance. This is a redemptive deliverance. Just as the deliverance from Egypt in the exodus is a type of our redemption from sin, so this is deliverance from the judgment and wrath of God. It does not mean an exemption from suffering many trials and great troubles in that day. But it means that the redemptive deliverance that God has promised His people will be brought about.

Who will be those delivered? Will it be Israelites? Will it be the nation of Israel? No, the angelic messenger announces that the deliverance will be of those whose names are written in the book. So what book is this? From Revelation 20:11-15 we find that this is the book of life. This is why I believe this not a national deliverance for Israel, but is a redemptive deliverance for all of God's people.

Through a Final Resurrection

How will this final deliverance come about? Our deliverance will come through the resurrection of the dead at the end. This is an amazing text. While what is clearly stated here is not new to us, this is the first time the Old Testament has been unequivocally clear about a future resurrection of both the saved and lost. At the end of time, both the saved and lost will be raised from the dead. The lost will be raised in order stand before the final judgment and be cast into the lake of fire forever. The saved will be raised to share in the everlasting blessedness of eternal life. We will live with God and enjoy, serve and worship God forever.

Unto a Heavenly Reward

In beautiful imagery, the wise and faithful are pictured in their rewards. In that day, God will reward his people. Two groups are highlighted here because of what will follow. The wise, those who understand God's Word and know how to use it to understand life will shine brightly in that day. Those who turn many to righteousness, that is, those who fulfill the mission of the kingdom to evangelize and to edify, will know the approval of God's smile and pleasure.

So the deliverance God brings comes to His people through the faithful and wise witness and work of His people. It unfolds as both a slow growth over time as the wicked are turned to righteousness and also when God comes in sudden and final victory to raise the dead and bring the fullness and consummation what has been promised.

Until the Time of the End

Until that deliverance is fully and finally effected at the end of time, Daniel is to close up and seal the revelation he has been given. This seems to be both an ending of the revelation and also a hiding of its full meaning and import until time of the end. Then it seems there will be an increase in both interaction between diverse groups of people and an accompanying increase in knowledge. It seems that this interaction and increase of knowledge and the events of the end time will bring the revelation into sharper focus and clearer understanding.

The Chronology of our Deliverance

(v.5-13)

Having received the character of our deliverance, its key features and elements, we now have the chronology of our deliverance, when will it take place.

⁵ Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. ⁶ And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" ⁷ And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. ⁸ I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?" ⁹ He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. ¹¹ And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. ¹² Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. ¹³ But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days."

In its Majestic Declaration

(v.5-7)

First, it is delivered in a majestic declaration by heavenly messengers. What an amazing picture is drawn for us here. Two shining messengers stand on either side of the stream where Daniel stands. The messenger from Daniel 10-12:4 now moves from Daniel's side to hover over the stream. He is asked, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" He is asked a very important question.

In slow and solemn majesty he raises both hands to the heavens and answers. The stateliness of this is hard to convey. Both arms outstretched, he declares the answer. It is for a time, times and $\frac{1}{2}$ a time. This is not merely an answer like we would give on a quiz. This is even more than a declaration. He lifts his hands and swears to heaven. He promises that it will last no longer than the time period represented by "time, times and $\frac{1}{2}$ a time", that is, $3\frac{1}{2}$ years.

But that time period marks the shattering of the power of the holy people. Once again we are confronted with revelation whose words are easy but whose meaning and reference are difficult. The holy people here, at least from Daniel's frame of reference, refer to the Jews. It is possible that as time unfolds, this may point to a larger group. I am hesitant to apply to the whole of God's people because of the fact of the shattering of their power or reign. Because Daniel 7,9,11 and the early part of 12 all speak of some presence of a Jewish people and nation during the time of the end, if this is so, then Daniel is being told that his own nation will be shattered in its power/rule/reign within a limited time period represented by time, times and $\frac{1}{2}$ time. At the end of their shattering, then the end of all these things will come.

By a Thoughtful Question

(v.8)

The chronology is not understood and gives rise to a thoughtful question. Rather than asking a timeline question, Daniel asks an outcome question. He seeks for clarification on what will be the end game, the end result. In other words, he is

less concerned about the timing and duration of the events than he is about will unfold and what will come about in that time.

This is quite instructive for us. Too often, we have a craving to know exactly when and in what sequence prophecy will be fulfilled. Like Daniel, it is better for us to frame our investigation of the text in “what is the outcome” kind of questions. Even as we think back over the book of Daniel and as we move forward into other eschatological, future things, texts, we want this to be our primary question, “How does it all turn out?”

This is the emphasis and trajectory of the Bible. God is acting and moving the story along at exactly His ordained pace. In the fullness of time at exactly the right moment, he launches the beginning of the fulfillment of His kingdom in sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. While the Old Testament had prophecies about the time and place of that momentous event, they only made sense as the events actually unfolded.

With an Enigmatic Explanation

(v.9-13)

Daniel is ordered to close up and seal what he has seen. This means the closing of his own portion of revelation, the book of Daniel. Further, the implication here is that the full meaning of what is being revealed will not be disclosed until the end.

During this time, the wise will be purified and the wicked will be destroyed. The wise will seek to be made holy through this terrible time. The wicked will continue to act wickedly. The idea here is that the effect of the trial and tribulation are not what is generally expected. Great disaster transforms the wise while through it the wicked ever more resist and rebel against God. Certainly, Joel, 1 & 2 Thessalonians and Revelation portray in excruciating detail what is foretold here.

In answer to the question about “How long until the end,” we get what are clearly and in my view literal time markers and references. In answer to a question about time, we get a public event which marks a calendar. This clock first is related to the language of Daniel 9 in the words, “time, times and half a time.” It is also related to two sets of time lengths measured (or at least related) in days. 3 ½ years are spoken of by the phrase “time, times and half a time.” This would be 1,260 days on their standard 360 day year. But it is clarified as being actually 1,290 days. From the abomination of desolation to the end will be 1,290 days.

Now this may be given a different significance but it certainly appears that all this is related to the 70th week we talked about over the last couple of weeks. Here we are at the third horizon around the time of the Lord’s second coming. Then, as we come to the end of the time and the consummation of the kingdom when God will judge the wicked, reward His people, exalt His Son and fulfill completely all that He has promises.

Until that day, Daniel will wait in courage and confidence. He will die and be buried. But he will one day be raised to life anew. Then, he, along with all of us, will enter into the final rest of the New Heavens and New Earth living under, serving and worshipping Christ for eternity.

Reflect and Respond

First, let me summarize the whole thing in a brief paragraph.

At the end of days, the seventieth week of Daniel, a seven year period will unfold. Around that time, there will arise a terrible ruler who will be the consummate anti-Christ. During the middle of that 7 year period, an abomination of desolation is set up and sacrifice ended. Those who are wise and Biblically informed will understand the significance of that event and the terrible trouble that is about to follow. This begins a 3½ year plus 30 day period or 1290 days during which there will be a (the) great tribulation which will end with the coming of the Lord. This will bring about the anti-Christ's destruction, the deliverance of those whose names are written in the book (of life) and the resurrection of many to everlasting life and the rest to judgment. Thus, blessed will be those who arrive at the 1,335th day or 45 days later.

What majestic greatness stands to declare the holy deliverance of God's people and the horrific judgment that awaits the rest. The wise know the Word given them and the world around them and thus know how to respond to what is going on. But the wicked will, in that day, have no hope but judgment.

So, this call then is to carefully consider the state of your relationship to Christ. Now, today, here is an opportunity to hear the Word, to hear it with belief and obedience. Flee the wrath to come by taking up refuge in the cross. The wrath comes because of your sins, your rebellion, your doubt, your distrust, your disobedience. You have nothing to present to appease the wrath of God. You have no defense. But, God sent His Son, just as Bible had promised, had related and has interpreted. He lived a perfectly holy life and through His miracles, was certified as being who he claimed to be. He was arrested, falsely charged, tried and finally executed as a criminal. He did all this, not because of His own sin, but because God laid on Him, God put to His account, people's sins. Then God punished Him there on the cross. He was buried and three days later rose from the dead. He lived on earth among His disciples for 40 days after his resurrection and then ascended into heaven. One day, He will return just as we have been talking about. What is required of you? How will you be forgiven of your sins, be reconciled to God and live under His rule? How will you be saved? How will you come to participate in this great deliverance dimly seen through this message from Daniel 12? You must believe these facts, trust in Jesus alone, submit yourself to Him as your ruler and master and call on Him to save you. And He will.

So, while we may not understand exactly all the characteristics of these things nor know all the chronology of them, we do know their great outcome. GOD WINS. God will come and deliver His people. All that we hunger and long for in Christ will come to pass. Sin will be done. The devil, his angels and the wicked will all be judged and cast into the lake of fire. And we will be free. We will arrive safely at home. The kingdom comes. God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. God dwells personally, publicly and permanently among His people. All is well, all is well.