



Blessed Are Those Who Endure to the End

Pilgrim Living for the 21st Century

Daniel 12

David Sunday

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We're now at the end of our series in Daniel. We've walked with him since he was 18, and now he's in his 90s. All the while he's lived a wise, faithful, prayerful, influential and courageous life in Babylon—living faithfully for Yahweh in a pagan land. Today we'll be looking at the last chapter where Daniel is thinking about what many people in their 90s think about: the end, both the end of this life and what lies beyond.

The book ends with the vision that is introduced in chapter ten, that is further described in chapter 11 and the first part of chapter 12. In chapter 11, which Patrick preached on last week, we saw that God is ruling over all the details of history as it has unfolded. Today in chapter 12 we'll see that He is also ruling over all the details of the end of history—the future, the end times—because history as we know it will come to an end.

I read an interesting article this week in the New Yorker stating that President Obama is reflecting on the upset victory of president-elect Trump. Not many people in Obama's administration were expecting that. Not many people in our nation were expecting it. And the morning after the election, the article said many of the staff at the White House were so stunned that they needed to be consoled by the President himself. So he brought in many of his staffers—some of whom were young and had never actually been in the Oval Office—and President Obama said something that made me wish I could have conversation with him to probe him further. These were his exact words to his staff: "This is not the apocalypse." And he went on to describe to the man who was interviewing him what he meant by that. President Obama said, "I don't believe in apocalyptic—until the apocalypse comes. I think nothing is the end of the world until the end of the world." Those are direct quotes from our current President.

What I found intriguing was that the President himself believes that someday an apocalypse is going to come. He said he believes that someday the world is going to end. I'd love to have a cup of coffee with him to ask him to reflect further on what he thinks that will be like, and what kind of thought he has given to being prepared for the end of this world as we know it. And if he asks me what I think the end of the world is going to be like and how to be prepared,

Daniel 12 would be a great chapter to read with the President—and with any of our neighbors who are wondering what the end of the world is going to be like.

So let's hear God's holy Word in Daniel 12:

¹² "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."

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."

This is God's Word. Thanks be to God.

Lord, we praise You, Eternal God. You are the Lord of the past, the present and the future. As we gaze into Your holy Word help us live as we wish we will have lived when we die. Help us, Lord, not to do anything today that we would be afraid to do during the last hour of our lives. And help us live as if we were going to hear that last trumpet in less than an hour. God, help us live today with eternity in view. Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. We ask this in the worthy name of Your Son, our Savior Jesus. Amen.

Do you ever try to pack so much into your weekly calendar that you can't tell whether you're coming or going? Am I the only person who sometimes walks to the other end of my house and forgets why I went to that room and what I was intending to do there? Sometimes our lives can get so cluttered that we really forget what we're living for. This really underscores the wisdom of Martin Luther, who famously said, "I have only two days on my calendar: today and That Day." Today, and That Day.

Luther was saying, "I can't worry about tomorrow. I need to trust my future to God's providence. And I can't change the past. I need to trust my past to God's mercy. I can only live today because today is the only day the Lord has given me to live. And wisdom demands that I live this day in light of That Day, that great Day, when I shall stand face to face before my God Who made me and He will judge my life."

Now, it certainly helps if we know what to expect on That Day, and thankfully God's Word gives us all the clarity we need to be sufficiently prepared for That Day. So today I'm going to ask two questions: what does God want us to know about That Day, and then how shall we live today in light of That Day?

1. What does God want us to know about That Day?

We see several things in this passage about That Day, when God brings this world as we know it to an end. The first thing we see is that That Day will be preceded by a time of unprecedented trouble. The first words of chapter 12—"At that time..."—point us back to chapter 11, where we read in verse 36 of a king who will do as he pleases, exalting himself and claiming to be greater than every god—even blaspheming the God of gods.

Last week Patrick talked about rulers who arose throughout history, such as Antiochus Epiphanes, who were possessed by the spirit of the antichrist himself. These rulers foreshadowed throughout history the real antichrist who will arise at the end of it all, who will defy God and His people, and who will seek to abolish all worship of the true and living God. Chapter 12 is describing this uprising of evil through the antichrist at the end.

Verse one in the New Living Translation reads like this: "*Then there will be a time of anguish greater than any since nations first came into existence.*" Verse seven describes the shattering of the power of the holy people in that time. God's people will be shattered. It will look like darkness has won the day. It will seem like the antichrist is going to rule forever. It will be as bleak as bleak can be. But we read in verse one that God's people will not be left without help. Michael, the great prince, the great archangel, the great protector of the people of God will

arise—the one who stands guard over the sons of Your people—he will arise as the warrior-advocate of the people of God.

The second thing God wants us to know about That Day is that God’s people will be delivered. Look at verse one:

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.

There’s a book, and nothing should matter more to you than that your name is written in that book. This is what you should want more than anything in the world: to know, “My name is written in that Lamb’s book of life” as Revelation 21:27 talks about. Some of us have address books. Maybe you keep a book of birthdays to remind you, or a daily diary. God’s book kind of combines all three of these things.

Someone has written, “In His book He has recorded our names before we were born. He knows our address at every stage of the journey.” You never have to send Him a change of address notification. He knows where you’re moving. He watches when you rise, and when you lay down at night. He records the details of your life. *“In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them”* (Psalm 139:16). This book is like the registry of the citizens of the Kingdom of heaven. It’s the book in which the Lamb has written, in the indelible ink of His blood, the names of those whom He has purchased on the cross to belong to Him forever.

How do you know your name is written in that book? Well, there’s one thing all those people in that book have in common, and that is that they are trusting in Jesus Christ and in Him alone for their salvation. They know they need deliverance. They know they cannot rescue themselves from the evil that is in this world and the evil that is within their hearts. They know they are sinners, they know they need a Savior, and they know that Jesus and Jesus alone can save them. Everyone whose name is written in that book trusts in Jesus.

Have you repented of your sin and sinfulness? Have you changed your mind about the way you think about God and yourself? Have you recognized, “I can’t run my life the way I want to run my life. I have to submit myself to the Lordship of Jesus”? That’s what repentance is. And if you’re trusting in Jesus alone, your name is written in that book, and you will be delivered from Satan, from sin and from death itself. That’s something God wants us to know about That

Day. There's going to be unprecedented evil, but there's also going to be deliverance for God's people.

The third thing God wants us to know about That Day is that attendance is mandatory. God will make sure that every single person shows up on That Day. This isn't an invitation that you can decline. There's no yes, no or "Yeah, maybe I'll show up," like Facebook evites offer. You can't respond with "maybe" here.

Just think about how the Special Forces of the U.S. military can track people down. How many of you think that if the President of the United States wanted to see you tonight, he could find you today? He could send the Special Forces out, and it would take no time at all for them to track you down and summon you into the President's office. Likewise, there's a summons here that we're not going to be able to ignore on That Day. God has you, so to speak, on His GPS. He knows how to track you down and pick you up, and He can do a better job of it than the Navy Seals can.

It doesn't matter if you've already died. Death is just temporary. Look at verse two: "*Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.*" Death is called "sleeping" here, which is just a vivid way of describing the temporary nature of death. When you die, it's not over. You haven't escaped God's presence when you die. It doesn't matter if your remains have been reduced to dust in the earth. Did you know that all the molecules of our bodies are going through a state of constant flux, so that every seven years they undergo a total replacement? Yet you're the same person. You retain your identity.

Scientist John Lennox says there is a pattern somewhere that defines and holds each individual human in existence. And if we grant the reality of God and the supernatural, it is surely not hard to think that God Himself holds these patterns in His memory. He can re-use each pattern to fashion a resurrection body in the future, and He will do just that. All God has to do is speak the word and He can raise from the dead everyone whom He has made.

Jesus tells us the Day is coming when God will do just that. He said this, in John 5:28-29, "*Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice (the voice of the Son of Man) and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.*" Jesus is echoing Daniel 12:2 when He says these words. "*Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*"

Horatius Bonar, reflecting on these words, wrote a hymn in which he said this:

A few more years shall roll
A few more seasons come

And we shall be with those that rest
Asleep within the tomb

Then, O my Lord, prepare my soul
For that great Day
O wash me in Thy precious blood
Take all my sins away

That word “everlasting” that we see twice in verse two should make our hearts tremble. I remember as a young child thinking about eternity. I tried to imagine what it would be like—forever and ever and ever and ever. Sometimes I’d feel like my mind was going to burst, just trying to think about eternity. In this life everything comes to an end. Good things come to an end. Bad things come to an end. Nothing lasts forever. But there’s another dimension of reality that never ends—eternity.

How long is eternity? How long is everlasting? Someone described it like this: If a little bird should fly from the seacoast to a great plain in the middle of the continent, and deposit a grain of sand once every thousand years, when that mound of sand is the height of Mt. Everest, eternity shall have just begun. Whoo! Everlasting life...or everlasting shame and contempt.

Try to wrap your mind around that, friend. If you do not have Jesus, that should make you shudder. It should make you tremble, because we see in this passage that not everyone who’s raised is going to be raised to everlasting life. It’s terrifying to think of everlasting contempt—everlasting abhorrence—a remorse that will never relent—regrets that will never be relieved—shame that will torment the conscience forever. That’s hell. And hell is real. And hell will be populated.

When we think about this, it should make us flee to Jesus, because trying to get into heaven without Jesus is harder than getting into the United States at the immigration office without a passport. You’re an alien at the gates of heaven without Jesus covering you. If you do not belong to Jesus, there’s no way everlasting life can be yours, because He’s the only One Who has conquered death and Who can give everlasting life. Apart from Jesus there is no life. There’s only everlasting shame and contempt. We see in this passage that there are only two options for this eternal destiny. It’s either/or. There’s no third way. There’s no annihilation. There’s no escaping God’s judgment. The Bible is consistent in this testimony. It’s one or the other. It’s final. It’s forever.

The last thing we see about That Day is that it is fixed. The Day when God will judge the world—the Day when history as we know it comes to an end—is fixed in God’s mind. He knows

what He's doing in the world today. He knows where it's all leading. He knows how He's going to bring it all to an end.

In verse five, Daniel sees two messengers on either side of the stream. Then in verse six, standing above the waters, he sees this man clothed in linen who bears a striking resemblance to the one we saw in chapter ten who looked a lot like Jesus. Here's this man clothed in linen above the waters of the stream, and these two messengers, and they're asking him this question in verse six: *"How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?"*

Then verse seven captures the solemnity of it all. When we make an oath, we usually raise our right hand to signify the truthfulness of our oath. But this man clothed in linen, who's above the waters of the stream, raises his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and swears 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."*

So how long will it be? For a time, times, and half a time. Does that help you? Does that sound a little confusing? If it does, don't worry. Daniel himself didn't understand what this was all about. Look at verse eight: *"I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, 'O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?'"* He wants more clarity. But what he's going to be told here is that God has told him enough. God has said enough.

This is what you need to understand. A time, times and half a time signifies to us that God has a definite timeframe in mind. His plan is established. It's determined. It's unalterable. This should reassure us, when we're going through the anguish of this life, that God knows how He's going to bring it all to an end. When it seems like the world is in chaos, God is ruling over the world—and He's not wringing His hands, wondering how He's going to fix all this. It's a profound reassurance to us that even when evil seems to triumph, God's victory is sure. That's what we need to know about That Day.

2. What does God want us to know about how to live in light of That Day?

How are we to live in light of That Day—which will be preceded by unprecedented anguish? That Day that's going to result in a resurrection of life or of condemnation? That Day that is fixed in God's history books and in His plan? How shall we live today in light of That Day? That's our final question today.

The first thing we need to do is just this: repent and believe in Jesus. I've already said it, but let me say it again. If you have not turned from living for yourself, trusting in yourself—if you think that somehow you're going to get through that immigration gate at heaven and enter into

everlasting life without being connected to Jesus, without having a relationship to Jesus, you are deluding yourself.

Revelation speaks of the heavenly Kingdom and all the glory of it. There will be no temple in the city, for the temple is the Lord God, the Almighty, the Lamb. It says the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp. It speaks about all the glory of the nations being brought into that city—and then it says these words: *“But nothing unclean will ever enter it”* (Revelation 21:27). Nothing. Nothing unclean. Nothing defiled by sin will ever enter in to that heavenly city, *“nor anyone who does what is detestable or false.”* Well, that rules me out. That excludes me.

“But only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Praise the Lord. There’s a way for the defiled to be cleansed. There’s a way for those who have done what is detestable to be clothed in righteousness. There’s a way for the false to be made true, and that way is through the Lamb Who was slain on the cross from the foundation of the world, Who cleansed our defilement with His blood. Repent and believe in Jesus, and you will find the joy of knowing that your name is written in the book of life. That’s the first thing we need to do.

The second thing we need to do to live today in the light of That Day is to live for heavenly rewards. I love this line in a 1905 hymn, *Be Thou My Vision*: *“Riches I heed not, nor man’s empty praise.”* Let’s just pause there for a minute. How many of you have struggled with wanting riches this week? How many of you have worried about money this week? How many of you have thought about how to get a leg up in this world? How many of you have been concerned about what other people think of you? How well they speak of you?

The hymn says, *“I’m not going to heed those things, because You, God, are my inheritance—now and always.”* It says, *“High King of heaven, You’re my treasure. You’re my victory.”* What I want more than anything is to enter into heaven’s joys, *“O bright heaven’s sun.”* Live for that heavenly reward. Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, because it’s not going to be long before we’re going to be called to That Day when our eternal destiny will be finally realized. Live with heaven in view.

Look at how verse three describes that reward: *“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above...like the stars forever and ever.”* Jesus Himself said these words in Matthew 13:43: *“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”* Just like Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration when His glorified body was shining like the sun in all its brilliance, that’s what believers are looking forward to on the Day of resurrection. Philippians 3:20-21 says, *“Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

That’s what we’re looking forward to! And 1 John 3:2 says, *“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”* The image of stars and the sun in the Bible often are used to refer to rulers. When it says we will shine like the stars above forever and ever, it’s reminding us of the royal inheritance we have with the High King of heaven. He’s going to treat us as His royal princes and princesses in His heavenly Kingdom. What a reward to live for!

Verse three specifically states that we’re called to live for that reward, and that’s the third thing we should do to live in the light of That Day. We are to seek to *“turn many to righteousness.”* I got a beautiful card from a family in the church this past month and kept it because of what was on the inside—but also because of what was on the outside. It had a fall picture—fall’s my favorite season—and then it has this verse: Daniel 12:3. *“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.”*

What a verse! What a goal! What a way to live! Wisdom is revealed not in living for self. Not for being a spiritual person just for me, myself and I. That’s not wisdom. True spirituality is not looking inward about me and my godliness. True wisdom is shown in seeking to turn many to righteousness. That’s how the wise live. We can’t turn anyone on our own.

Just yesterday one of our members was speaking to me about his mother who is up in years. She’s struggling with serious illness and he’s tried in so many ways to point her to Jesus. He is trying to be wise in turning her to righteousness. What he is finding is that her heart is still hardened. He said to me, *“Only God can change her heart.”* And that’s true. But his great longing is still to be an instrument to turn her to the righteousness that can be found in Christ alone. I want to encourage that brother, and I want to encourage all of you who are in a similar circumstance that you are living wisely in making that your goal. That is a life that God will honor. When we are seeking to turn many to righteousness, that is a life that God will reward

Notice in this verse that evangelism isn’t about trying to get decisions for Jesus. It’s not just dropping little missiles from a gospel blimp and hoping that it hits someone. That’s not really what evangelism is. Evangelism has the goal of making disciples, of training people to obey all that Christ has commanded us, of turning people to righteousness so that their lives are transformed.

It requires wisdom to do this well. It requires learning how to listen to people and hearing what’s going on in their lives, learning how to be a good neighbor to people. It requires

persistence in relating to people, so that they can be turned to righteousness. It requires instructing people, as we saw in Daniel 11:33, *“The wise among the people shall make many understand.”* They shall instruct many.

We should be encouraged from Daniel 12:3 to enroll as many people as possible as fellow students with us in the school of Christ the Master, to aim for many converts, to turn many to righteousness, to look forward to the reward of many whose lives have been impacted for Christ through your influence. Matthew Henry said, “The more good any do in this world, especially to the souls of men, the greater will be their glory and reward in the other world.”

The final thing we should do to live today in the light of That Day is to respond obediently and rest assuredly in the words that God has spoken. Respond obediently, and rest assuredly, in God’s words. There’s a principle in Proverbs 9 that’s described here in Daniel as well. It’s the principle that those who are foolish become more foolish, and those who are wise will increase in learning. If you’re wise, you will become more wise. If you’re a fool, you will become more foolish. That’s the biblical principle.

The ultimate test of whether you’re a wise or a foolish person is how you respond to the words of God. We see this in verse four. God’s words are shut up and sealed in this book which signifies that these are words that will surely come to pass. *“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever”* (Isaiah 40:8).

Then it says that many people are going to run to and fro. Amos picks up on this same image of people running to and fro, searching for knowledge, searching for wisdom, seeking to find truth. Knowledge will increase. It’s astonishing how much knowledge we have in the world today. I think it’s probably accurate to say that just with our technology in the 21st century we have more knowledge than probably all the previous centuries combined. Yet there is more confusion in the 21st century. There’s not more wisdom. Because as knowledge increases, if it’s not founded on the Word of God, we run to and fro searching and seeking, but we never find what we’re looking for here.

Here’s the thing we need to understand. God has told us everything we need to know to be ready for eternity. If you’re waiting around for more information from God, for more revelation from God, you’re waiting in vain. God has told you what you need to know to be ready. He’s not going to tell you anything more than He’s already revealed in His Word. The question is: what are you going to do in response to Jesus and His summons? What has God told us in this chapter? There will be a day when God’s people will be delivered. There will be a judgment and only those whose names are written in the book of life will be saved. There will be a resurrection and even if you’re in the dust of the earth, you will be raised. Heaven is real. Hell is real.

Sadly, many people go on their way as if none of this really matters, as if this is just religious talk, just a myth. The same message produces two divergent responses. Look at verse ten: *“Many (when they hear these words) shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined.”* They shall obey God’s words. They shall respond to gospel teaching and will experience the purifying work of God in their lives. They will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. *“But the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.”*

There are only two responses. Believers are those who respond obediently and rest in the words God has spoken, even when it seems there are things that we’re not skilled to understand. Daniel asks a question in verse eight, for greater clarity, and God basically tells him in verse nine, “Daniel, I’ve told you everything you need to know for right now. You have gotten enough information for right now. Go on your way. Keep living for Me in this world. Rest in what I have spoken to you.”

Verses 12 and 13 speak of the blessing of those who rest in God’s Word and endure to the end: *“Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days.”* I’m not sure what that means, but God knows what that means. We’re going to wait on the Lord. Then this is the benediction: *“But go your way till the end.”* In other words, “Keep living for Me in this world. Keep doing your work in Babylon, Daniel. Keep faithfully serving Me. Keep faithfully trusting in My words. And here’s the promise I give you: *You shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.”*

There will be rest for the righteous. You will stand faultless and with great joy before the throne of the only God, through Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior, and you will say to Him, “All glory, honor and dominion is Yours forever.” That’s what the inheritance is for of those who respond obediently to the gospel message. What great inheritance!

Let’s rejoice in this as we look forward to that resurrection day. Let’s pray.

Lord Jesus, let us be among the wise who hear Your Word and do it. Help us, Lord, to recognize the urgency of the things that are spoken here and not foolishly ignore them. May we not be like the foolish person who built his house on the sand, and when the floods came, it fell—and great was the fall of it. Instead, Lord, help us to live with heaven in view, with the resurrection in view, and may that give us joy and courage to keep pressing on, enduring in faithfulness to You, as long as You give us breath. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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