



Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

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Chapter 12: The Time of the End: Trouble and Deliverance

12:1-3, Trouble, Deliverance, and Resurrection!

Michael shall stand up: As mentioned previously, the archangel Michael is often associated with spiritual battle (Daniel 10:13 and 21, Jude 1:9, Revelation 12:7). In the Jude passage we see him identified as an archangel directly opposing Satan. He is a protector of God's people.

There shall be a time of trouble: This refers to (yet another!) time of persecution for Israel, likely the same one called the "time of distress for Jacob" in Jeremiah 30:4-7 (remember, Daniel had been studying the prophecies of Jeremiah):

These are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah:

"Thus says the Lord:

*We have heard a cry of panic,
of terror, and no peace.*

Ask now, and see,

can a man bear a child?

Why then do I see every man

with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor?

Why has every face turned pale?

Alas! That day is so great

there is none like it;

it is a time of distress for Jacob;

yet he shall be saved out of it."

Such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time: The Jewish people had known many times of distress through their history. But this will be a worse time of trouble than Israel has ever seen before. Ultimately this foretells the time that Jesus talks about in Matthew 24:21:

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

This prophecy reaches beyond the time of Daniel and even of the near-future atrocities of the likes of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 68-70, and beyond. Revelation 12:17 tells us that “Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” The “woman” referred to in that passage is the church. Satan’s attacks will continue until the very end. This is why God has provisioned protection for the church in the opposition of the great archangel Michael.

And at that time your people shall be delivered: Despite the tribulations to come, God’s deliverance is assured. No matter how great the attacks are against His people, God promises to preserve them. He will never break the covenant He cut with Abraham (Genesis 17:7):

And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

Everyone who is found written in the book: Notice that this promise of deliverance is *not* for every person of Jewish heritage, or native-born Israeli, but for believers; those whose names are found written in the book. As Paul wrote in Romans 11:25-27, “Israel” won’t be complete until all the chosen Gentiles have been grafted in:

...I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,

*“The Deliverer will come from Zion,
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob;
and this will be my covenant with them
when I take away their sins.”*

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: While some commentators think this refers to the resurrection of Israel as a nation, the simplest reading is that it refers to the “resurrection of the body” in general, some to life, and some to judgement and eternal death, which Jesus teaches His disciples about in John 5:25-29:

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Even Satan and his angels/demons suffer the final judgement (Revelation 20:10)!

The word usually translated as “many” here can also mean “all”. Some commentators and theologians from the dispensational premillennialist school of Biblical interpretation insist that there will be multiple bodily resurrections based on their reading of Revelation 20:5-6, but those verses tell us of those who have *already* taken part in the “first resurrection,” and therefore reign with Jesus. Who are those people? All people are born dead in their sin; the first resurrection is the new birth given by the Holy Spirit through faith; believers in Jesus! While they/WE take part in the “first death”, a physical one, we all have eternal life in Christ and need not fear the “second death” (eternal separation from God). And along with all people, we will participate in the *second* resurrection, a bodily one at Christ’s return. In the meanwhile, saints in heaven and on Earth live and reign with Jesus as our living and ruling Savior.

Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament: Those who live by faith in God (“wise” in the sense of knowing God’s wisdom) will shine. Despite all the calamity and difficulty coming upon Israel, God has already chosen those who are wise (Ephesians 1:4-5), and they shall shine.

God’s people are like stars in the sense that they reflect His light and are used by God to help others to see Him. And here we have a promise that despite all the physical, earthly evidence to the contrary, those “stars”, the faithful remnant, will be kept and preserved by Him “forever and ever”.

12:4-13, Conclusion of the Vision (and the Book!)

Shut up the words, and seal the book: To “shut up” the words implied that the words should be kept safely until the time when they were needed. “Seal the book” carries the sense of both authenticating the message he has been given, as well as preserving it.

Until the time of the end: There would come a day, “the time of the end”, when this prophecy would be of more value than it was to Daniel’s contemporaries. Therefore, it was important to shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end. The time of the end almost certainly is when Daniel understood that he was near death; he needed to be sure the prophecies and histories he recorded survived for the benefit of God’s people.

It makes no sense to me that this “time of the end” is referring to the end of the age, as some teach. One of my go-to commentators for extra-Biblical historical information, Adam Clarke, was one who “calculated” that the time of the end could not arrive before the end of the 20th century, completely missing this point, and thinking that this part of Daniel was not recorded for pre-Messianic Israel. He wrote in 1825:

“We must wait ‘till the time of the end;’ and this, it appears from the following calculations, will not arrive before the TWENTIETH CENTURY. We here see the reason why these prophecies are at present so imperfectly understood. God has sealed them.”

Argh. Perhaps this is an example of “many shall run to and fro, and (or ‘yet’) knowledge shall increase.” Of course, we can see that culminating in Jesus’ discourse with His disciples in Matthew 24.

It’s not that Daniel has revealed enough to us so that the book really can be sealed until the last day; he kept and preserved the message that would reveal God’s foreknowledge, and comfort His people, regarding the tribulations to come

Two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that river bank: Daniel is referring to the river bank first mentioned in 10:4. The visions of Daniel 10-12 all took place as Daniel stood at this riverbank.

One said to the man clothed in linen... “How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?”: One angel asked the other, not for the benefit of the *angel*, but for Daniel – and us.

Held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever: In a solemn oath, a promise ratified by God Himself, the messenger “who was above the water” (hmmm, *he walked on water???*) announced that the time of trouble would last a limited amount of time, three and a half years (a time, times, and half a time). This is not the first, nor the last, time, we encounter this length of time, or periods of time very close to it, associated with opposition to God and His people being limited or constrained.

Daniel 7:25 identifies 3.5 years as the period that our “antichrist prototype” Antiochus IV Epiphanes would “wear out the saints of the Most High”.

Revelation 12:6 (“1,260 days”) and 12:14 identifies 3.5 years as the period that Israel is preserved by God in the “wilderness.”

Revelation 13:5 identifies 3.5 years (“42 months”) as the duration of Antichrist’s authority to rule, persecute and blaspheme. How interesting that Revelation refers to such limits *already imposed* on antichrists of the past as well as those of the present and future!

When the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished: The people of Israel will indeed be shattered during the coming troubles, but God will cause these things to end, ultimately with the coming of the Messiah, who will save His people.

Although I heard, I did not understand: In a way, this should be a comfort to us. Although we have the benefit of history to see how so much of this prophecy was indeed fulfilled, there will always be tribulations and uncertainties until the end. Daniel didn’t understand it all, even though he heard it first-hand. So rather than trying to reverse-engineer God’s plan, we can simply trust in it, because it is His plan.

Go your way, Daniel: The sense of this isn’t to “leave, get outta here!”, but rather “relax; trust God; go on with your life.” More details might be revealed later; but Daniel should be content with what God had revealed to him thus far.

Many shall be purified, made white, and refined: This is a Messianic prophecy, looking ahead to work of Jesus completed on the cross.

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. Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. This is a very specific prophecy, and almost nobody knows

what to do with it. Some try to tie calendar dates to the “days”, some convert the days to years and contrive that into a prophecy concerning the rise of Islam!

These two periods of time are relatively close together, only 45 days separating them, and are both connected to the activity of antichrist, and of the ultimate end of not only antichrist, but evil. Remember, Jesus pointed to Daniel’s prophecy of the “abomination of desolation” as a sign of His return.

Many dispensational premillennialists think that the end of the 1,290 days is when Jesus will return, and 1,335 days is the final judgement, which makes the millennium the 45 days between the two.

Nah. There’s just no Biblical reason to draw that connection. Or anything like it.

So instead of clicking off days or years on our calendars, let’s be assured and comforted that God’s timetable is intact, that the apparent victories of Satan in this world are truly temporal and limited, and that those who endure to the end – the “wise” ones who shine like “stars” – shall indeed be saved.

But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.: Daniel was not to spend all of his time and energy speculating and worrying about things he couldn’t know. Instead, he should simply trust in God and “go your way” until the end. Let that be encouragement for us all, because we know our “allotted place” is at rest in full communion with our Savior and Lord!