

Daniel 12 - The Last Battle

March 10, 2012

Good morning! My name is Pastor Kurt. I want to say a special “Hello” to those joining us on the Internet. It is good to have you. I just checked our Internet statistics. We have 21 of you connected with us for this service. Eleven were connected with us for the first service earlier this morning. It is great to have you virtually if you cannot be with us physically.

As a church, we are studying the Old Testament book of Daniel. This week, we finish this fascinating book. Turn to Daniel 12, which is found on page 750 of your pew Bible. Take out your sermon notes, you will want to write stuff down. This is an exciting final chapter.

The first four verses of Daniel 12 are a completion of the vision we studied two weeks ago in Daniel 11. If we want to make heads or tails of these introductory verses in chapter 12, we need to begin by touching base with what happened in Chapter 11. Two weeks ago when we studied that chapter, we learned saw the chapter divided itself into three prophetic lenses where God gave us windows into how history will unfold.

The wide-angle lens

Daniel 11 is Daniel’s final vision from God. He is approximately 80 years old when God gives it to him. The first part of chapter 11 is a wide-angle lens which prophetically details the struggles between the Seleucid kingdom, that was just north of Israel in Syria, and the Ptolemaic kingdom, that was south of Israel in Egypt. It details a struggle between these kingdoms that lasted approximately

400 years. As these kingdoms battled, they ran back and forth through the nation of Israel.

The prophecy so precisely describes what happened between these two kingdoms for that 400 year period of history that it causes most liberal scholars to say this is evidence the book of Daniel wasn't written by Daniel in 500 B.C. but rather the book of Daniel was written hundreds of years after the fact by somebody claiming to be Daniel. They claim the book of Daniel is then a work of fiction, with little grounding in history because its authorship is a sham. What evidence do the liberal scholars have that Daniel is a pseudo history? Nothing other than they find the first part of Daniel so precise it is hard to believe. They don't believe God could give prophecy which is that specific.

We believe quite the opposite. The whole message of Daniel is that God is large and in charge. He is completely sovereign over history. He knows exactly how history will unfold in the future. He could prophetically tell Daniel how it would happen with any amount of precision he chose to use. Rather than being evidence the book of Daniel is a work of fiction written by a fraud, this is evidence it was written by Daniel. God ordains world history. He ordains our history. No matter what happens, he has it under control. We know he loves us so we can trust him even when we don't understand where world history and our history will go.

The zoom lens

The second part of chapter 11 moved from a wide-angle lens to a zoom lens. The chapter prophetically described one particular ruler of the northern

Seleucid empire, a man by the name of Antiochus IV. He is also known as Antiochus Epiphanes. He was a man who claimed to be God in the flesh. He was also one of the most barbaric and brutal oppressors of the Jews ever to walk the face of the planet. Amazingly, Daniel 11 describes him and what he would do in precise detail hundreds of years before he was born. This is more evidence that God is large and in charge of history.

The telescopic lens

The third part of the chapter moves us from prophecy that was fulfilled in ancient history between the time of Daniel and the coming of Christ to prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled in history. The last part of Daniel 11 talks about the great final antichrist who will rule the world at the end of history. The chapter describes him as one *like* Antiochus Epiphanes, the brutal dictator of ancient history. The last part of chapter 11 uses Antiochus Epiphanes as the lens we look through to see what the great final antichrist will be like, except he will be much worse. Just as Antiochus Epiphanes wanted to be called God in the flesh, the antichrist will have the same desires. The final antichrist will gain control of the world government. He will then take over world religion and demand to be worshipped by the world. He is the one man who will appear to achieve the status of being a god and receiving the worship due God. Why are the antichrist and Antiochus Epiphanes similar? The Bible tells us Satan is the unseen spiritual power that indwells both of them. They want to be worshipped as God because worshipping them is really worshipping Satan. Receiving God worship was, is, and always will be Satan's desire.

How does it end? Christ returns and exercises his authority over all the fallen spiritual powers. On the cross, he not only conquered sin and death but the Bible tells us he disarmed all the fallen spiritual powers in the universe.

When we left off our study in Daniel 11, I promised we would return to learn more about the end of the world. The first four verses of Daniel 12 give us the details we are looking for.

The Great Tribulation

...And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time... Daniel 12:1 (ESV)

As history wraps up, there will be a time of great tribulation.

Once the antichrist achieves worldwide dominion and worldwide worship, he will oppress the people of God like nobody has oppressed them before in history. Antiochus Epiphanies' and Hitler's oppression of the Jews was child's play compared to the oppression the final antichrist will unleash on people of God.

It is not just Daniel that talks about this Great Tribulation, but Jesus also talks about this.

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. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Matthew 24:21–22 (ESV)

This time of incredible oppression is called the Great Tribulation. The Bible says the world will get barbaric, especially against the people of God.

To give you a fair understanding, there is a part of this that great theologians disagree on. Some of you have heard of a pre-tribulational rapture.

Some theologians believe Christ will return secretly before this time of tribulation and take Christians home to be with him in heaven. If that is true, only the Jewish nation will go through this time of terrible persecution. As a result this brokenness, they will ultimately turn to Christ. If that is not true, Christians and Jews go through it together. That is called the post-tribulational rapture position. Some scholars believe in a mid-tribulational rapture. As you might guess, it quickly becomes confusing.

I am sure some of you are wondering my thoughts on the subject. I am hoping for a pre-tribulational rapture. Anyone who is not hoping for it needs a good hit on the head. While I am hoping for it, I can't guarantee it. That is one of those mysteries Bible scholars disagree on.

God promises divine help during the time of greatest need.

“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people...” Daniel 12:1 (ESV)

In Daniel 10, we learned there is a vast unseen spiritual world, which God created, that exists around us. The Bible hints that this unseen angelic world is more vast and complex than the seen universe. In Daniel 10, we learned angelic beings cross the spiritual/physical boundary and influence our physical world. Satan even assigns powerful fallen angels to influence world leaders toward evil. In addition, in this unseen angelic world, there are different ranks and powers of angels.

Regarding powerful angels, in Daniel 10, we learned one of the studliet angels in God's angelic army is an angel named Michael. He is called an archangel. Revelation 12:7 tells us he is the leader of the Lord's army. Here we

learn that during this time of unprecedented tribulation, God will assign one of his most powerful angels to protect his people during one of our most difficult times.

It is a great encouragement to know that in this time of terrible trouble, there is divine help for the people of God. One great thing to know is that special angelic help and protection is not something that is reserved for the Great Tribulation. In Hebrews 1:12 God promises to send us angelic help as we go through our every day tribulations. We also read about this in the Psalms.

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. Psalm 91:11 (ESV)

This is great and encouraging news. We may never see these angels. We may never know they are there, but we know God promises he will send them our way in time of need.

What happens next when it will look like all hope is lost, the antichrist has achieved world-wide rulership and is receiving world-wide worship? The people of God are destroyed in ways beyond anything that happened in history. All hope will appear lost. Where can rescue come from?

Christ's return

But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. Daniel 12:1 (ESV)

How will God's people be delivered? Christ will return. The one man who wants to be God will meet the one man who is God. Jesus will bring the antichrist to nothing.

Interestingly, at this point, the Bible tells us there is a book in heaven. In this book are the names of everyone God has chosen to be his own. We think

that when we choose Christ, our name is written in the book of life in heaven.

The Bible tells us what happens is exactly the opposite. Our names are written in the book of life from the foundation of the world. God then draws us to himself and to Jesus. As a result of God's choosing us, when we hear the Gospel in this life, we choose him. The evidence your name is written in that book is you are drawn to Christ and you have asked him to be your Lord.

...and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. Revelation 13:8 (ESV)

If Christ isn't your Lord, you have no assurance your name is in that book.

Today, ask Christ to be your savior!

The resurrection of the dead

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. Daniel 12:2 (ESV)

At the return of Christ, after he conquers the antichrist, he will raise the dead. Everybody will get his or her body back. This includes those who know Christ and those who do not know him. While everyone gets his or her body back, the bodies we get are similar but different. They are the same bodies but they are transformed to be of incorruptible nature. The Bible tells us the prototype of the resurrection body we will receive was Christ's resurrection body. Was Christ recognizable after his resurrection? Yes! Could Jesus eat in his resurrected body? Yes! He ate fish with his disciples. While the resurrection body is similar to our current body, it is different. It is incorruptible. Our resurrection body will not get sick. It will not die. Our resurrection body will be incorruptible. Jesus also went through a wall and appeared in the locked upper

room with his disciples. That is a new quality our resurrection body will have that we do not have now.

Daniel 12:2 is one of the first hints in the Old Testament that there will be a physical resurrection. When Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac on Mt. Moriah in Genesis, the book of Hebrews tells us he believed God could bring him back to life. Job, in Job 19:25-27, believed he would see God in his flesh. After that, there is not much information on the resurrection and our resurrection bodies in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament, information comes pouring forth.

There is more than one resurrection.

In the Old Testament, it appeared everyone would be resurrected at once. In the New Testament, we discover everyone will be resurrected but not at the same time.

But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 1 Corinthians 15:23–24 (ESV)

Christ's resurrection was the first resurrection of the dead, and it took place in the middle of history. When Christ returns, those who belong to Christ rise from the dead because of their faith in Christ. Later comes the end.

Revelation 20 tells us that when Christ returns, Christians will rise from the dead and receive their resurrection bodies. Christians will rule and reign with Christ on earth for a literal thousand years called the Millennium. During the Millennium, Satan will be bound up in solitary confinement. After the thousand years, he will be released and get one more chance to repent. Do you think he will have learned his lesson? Definitely not! He will immediately mount

opposition to Christ. At that time, Jesus will crush him once and for all and will send him to the Lake of Fire eternally. It is after Satan's last rebellion that everyone else is resurrected by Christ and gets his or her resurrection body. After they receive their resurrection bodies, those apart from Christ are judged by Christ. They are then assigned a completely just experience of eternal, conscious punishment in the Lake of Fire based on how they lived.

The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Revelation 20:5 (ESV)

In an interesting passage in John, we find Daniel 12:2 almost completely restated, but we learned God has delegated the right to give life and execute judgment at both of these resurrections to Jesus.

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. John 5:26–29 (ESV)

We will be rewarded for how we served Jesus.

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. Daniel 12:3 (ESV)

This reminds Christians in eternity based on how we lived for him. This is especially true for those who continue to witness for Christ during times of tribulation on earth. The key thing to remember is the reward given by Christ in eternity for enduring persecution and turning away from sin will always be greater than the temporary pleasure we enjoy by giving into sin. We must remember that

choosing to honor Christ and turning from sin is always a choice for more joy and pleasure, not less.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV)

The book of Daniel is not just ancient history, it is a roadmap for all of history.

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. Daniel 12:4 (ESV)

To understand this, you need a little Persian history. When a book was written, it was circulated for people to read. If it was an important book that needed to be referenced in the future, it was sealed and put in the time capsule section of their library. God told Daniel this book is intended by God to endure until the time of the end. As the end of history unfolds, people will be reading the book of Daniel like they were reading a script that describes how history unfolds, because things will be happening at the end of history exactly the way God said they would. The same reaction of shock and awe that we had two weeks ago when we read the first part of Daniel 11 that was prophecy about near future events which are now precisely fulfilled will be the reaction of others in the future when they read the last part of Daniel 11 and into Daniel 12 about events that are being precisely fulfilled before their eyes. Their confidence in God and the Bible will be bolstered as they realize it is all happening just as the Bible said it would.

Jesus double promises history will unfold exactly the way he said it would.

Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. 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?” 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. Daniel 12:5–7 (ESV)

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. Daniel 12:11–12 (ESV)

I pulled these together so we can see the precision of God’s control over history. First, more angelic beings show up around the man clothed in linen. We met that guy in Daniel 10. We learned this angelic being is most likely Jesus because the description of him in Daniel is almost identical to the description we have of Jesus in the beginning of Revelation.

The man clothed in linen raised both hands to take an oath. This was not because he was charismatic. In this culture, raising both hands to take an oath is the way you take a double oath. This is a doubly sure promise.

He promised it would be for time, time and half a time and when the shattering of the holy people comes to an end and all these things will be finished. Some commentators believe this will be 3½ years and it is the length of the Great Tribulation. I am not sure. The word “time” is non-specific. It could have been years, but that isn’t what he said.

That being said, when we go to verses 11 and 12, things get very specific and we are talking about days --- 1,290 days and 1,335 days. What will happen at these specific points in history? I don’t know. I just know that when others are reading this book in the future, they will discover God is true to his word right down to the exact day when things happen.

Daniel didn't understand everything in the book; neither will we.

I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my Lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?" He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. 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. Daniel 12:8–10 (ESV)

I found this encouraging. There is a lot I don't understand in this book.

The author of the book also didn't understand all of these revelations from God.

God told him not to freak out about it. Realize the book contains a roadmap of history. In the future, it will make sense to people in ways it can't make sense to us today. Just as Daniel didn't understand what the beginning of chapter 11 was talking about in history about the near future he hadn't experienced, when we look at what the Bible says about the distant future, only people in those day will understand it precisely as they see it fulfilled. Some day in the future, as history unfolds, Christians will recognize it is all happening just the way God said it would, thousands of years before. As a result, they will be sure the Bible isn't like any other book. It is a book that contains prophecy because it is authored by God. Only God can tell us how history will unfold.

Applications

1. **God is large and in charge** --- This is the big idea of the book. God is in control of world history and my history. He loves us. We may not understand what he is doing but we can trust him. Some day from the perspective of heaven we will look back on the script of our lives and tell God we couldn't have written a better script for our lives.

2. **Honoring God has a payoff** --- There will be times of great trouble as the world wraps up. There is a great spiritual struggle transpiring in the unseen spiritual world around us. Satan assigns powerful fallen angels to influence world leaders. The most satanically-influenced world leader will be the antichrist. He will focus his efforts on oppressing God's people. Continuing in faithfulness to Christ in those costly times will be richly rewarded by Christ. Live for the moment when we stand in front of Jesus. In that moment, all that matters will be our faithfulness to Christ and how we loved and served people in his name. It won't matter what car we drove or what jeans we wore.
3. **Don't lose hope in times of trouble** --- We are reminded there are times of trouble coming our way. There are times when life will seem hopeless. That will be true at the end of history but there are times now in the middle of history that we feel that way. Don't give up hope. God promises to send his angels to protect us in our times of greatest need. Just as when all hope is gone at the end of history, Christ comes to the rescue, many times God operates the same way in our lives right now in the middle of history. It is when we are utterly broken that Jesus breaks into our lives with his grace and mercy and saves the day.



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