

A Description Of The End Times

Daniel 12:1-4

Introduction

In the last chapter of Daniel the angel provides a description of the end times (vv.1-4) and the duration of the end times (vv.5-13). In his description of the end times the angel speaks of a prince who provides supernatural protection and a time of unprecedented trial and sorrow (v.1). The angel also speaks of deliverance and hope for those who persevere. There is a recording book, kept by God, kept in heaven (v.1). The suffering will lead to an event of epic proportions; a resurrection of the dead and everlasting rewards and everlasting punishments (v.2). We might think about this day as the day of separation. Dark days also bring opportunities to shine (v.3). The prophet Daniel is then instructed to “seal up the book until the time of the end” and we are given a brief glimpse into ever increasing technological advances (v.4).

A Time Of Suffering (v.1)

Daniel 12:1 (NKJV)1 “At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.

The verse begins; “*At that time*”. What time is that? The time of the end. The time of the great seven year tribulation (see vv.6-13).

There is a prince who guards or “stands watch over the sons of your people”. These are Jews. The Bible makes clear that Michael is the “guardian of Israel” in this future time of tribulation.

This is the same Michael that fought with the “prince of Persia” in the invisible war that is being waged all around us (see Daniel 10:13). This angel is tasked with the preservation of Israel in order to fulfill all of God’s plans and promises concerning this people. He is called “Archangel” in Jude 1:9 and in Daniel 9:13 he is called “*one of the chief princes*” which implies other creatures of similar rank and powers. We are left with the impression that without Michael’s help, the preservation of the Jews would not be possible.

History is littered with Satan’s repeated attempt to destroy the Jew. It seems interesting to me that each Gentile world power contributed to the reduction and planned elimination of the Jewish people. Assyria’s destruction and enslavement of the ten northern tribes; Babylon’s destruction of Jerusalem and subsequent enslavement of the two southern tribes; the planned genocide of Jews by Haman in the times of the king of Persia; the purges of Antiochus IV Epiphanes during the Greek subjugation; and the Roman’s conquest and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. We could easily document the persistent persecutions during the Roman rule, the displacements, tortures and persecutions during the Middle Ages and the programs in Czarist Russia and the extermination camps of Nazi Germany.

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In the New Testament Satan misquotes Psalm 91:10-11 in an invitation to tempt Jesus. “No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; (11) For he shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways”.

How bad will it get for the Jewish people? The New Testament gives us additional information about this future time. It is important that you understand the difference between *tribulation* and the *great tribulation*.

In the past and in our present the saints experience *persecution* and *tribulation*.

In his book *40 Days Through Daniel* Ron Rhodes presents several facts that differentiate between persecutions, tribulations and the Great Tribulation period:

- * *Scripture refers to a definite period of time at the end of the age (Matthew 24:29-35).*
- * *It will be so severe that no period in history past or future will equal it (Matthew 24:21).*
- * *It will be shortened for the elect's sake (Matthew 24:22). Otherwise, no flesh could survive it (see pages 273-274).*

Ron includes several additional points; the time is called Jacob's sorrow because it is a time of consequence for rejecting God's Messiah (see Jeremiah 30:7 and this passage of our study). The nations are judged for their sin and rejection of Jesus and their persistent persecution of Israel (see Isaiah 26:21 and Revelation 6:15-17). The period will last seven years (see Daniel 9:24,27 and Daniel 12:5-13). This period will be so horrific that people will want to hide and die (see Revelation 6:16).

Several Bible scholars have mentioned that the horror of this period cannot be overstated. The Book of Revelation spells out these horrors in graphic detail. Some attempt to soften the blow by employing interpretative salve or metaphorical balm. Could it be as bad as the Bible says?

The Book of Revelation describes a time of global conflict; pandemic disease and geological and astronomical catastrophe. We are given a series of judgments that are unleashed on the earth that makes the judgments on Egypt seem welcome. In the Seal judgments a rider on a white horse—the antichrist—goes out to conquer and make war (Revelation 6:1-2). In the Second Seal judgment peace is taken from the earth with people killing one another on genocidal levels (vv. 3-4). In the Third Seal judgment widespread famine emerges; almost certainly because of the global wars; transportation systems and food delivery systems are brought to a halt (vv.5-6). In The Fourth Seal Judgment describes massive casualties that result from widespread famine and pestilence over all the earth. This is further complicated by predatory animals that savage remaining populations (see vv.7-8). With the Fifth Seal comes massive numbers of God's people who are murdered without any mercy (vv.9-11). Then comes the Sixth Seal; a massive earthquake accompanied by astronomical disturbances. Some scholars suggest the rotation of the planet

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might experience some catastrophic shift. Whatever is left of the human population looks for anything that might resemble shelter. A third of the Sun, moon and stars are darkened at the sound of the fourth trumpet (8:12). The Sun is darkened by the smoke of the abyss at the fifth trumpet (9:1-2); and the Sun scourges the inhabitants of the earth with fire and heat that might cause the fiery furnaces in the Book of Daniel seem like a relaxing day at the Spa. In the final—seventh seal judgment—releases a series of trumpet judgments even more catastrophic.

You might ask—how could it be worse than you have already described? In the Olivet discourse Jesus seems to mirror John’s catastrophic vision of the end; false Christs; wars and rumors of wars; famines; earthquakes; increase in martyrdom. In Revelation 8 we are given a description of hair and fire that scorch the earth. . . “a third of the earth is burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up” (v.7).

The climate change alarmists aren’t entirely wrong. The earth is on a crash course to climatological catastrophe. The problem is man made. BUT it is Man’s sin that is the problem. The changes that will take place on the earth in the future is described in the Bible as coming from God. God Himself will judge the world. Will God allow human beings to use nuclear devices again in the future? What else could burn one third of the planet earth? The Book of Revelation describes a fiery mountain that plummets into the sea which turns the oceans to blood. This includes the death of marine life and a complete disruption of earths ecology and food chain. A star falls from heaven (Revelation 8:10-11). Some suggest a meteor or an asteroid hitting the earth causing near extinction level damage (vv.12-13).

Daniel is told by the angel in spite of the ever increasing judgment a remnant of the Jewish people will survive to the end. The KJV reads; “*at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book*”.

That is a pitiful minority. How do we know? Read Zechariah 13:8; “*In all the land. . .two parts shall be cut off and die, but the third shall be left therein.*” Ezekiel 20:38 seems to say the same thing; it seems to pronounce the crushing verdict of persistent unbelief—that comes to the Jewish people and to the unbelieving Gentile world. In fact if we are reading Ezekiel 38 and 39 correctly; all the armies that gather to wage war against Israel only one sixth survive.

Which book is the angel referencing? Some say the Book of Life. Moses spoke of such a book in Exodus 32:32-34—as willing to be blotted out of this Book if it meant the preservation of God’s people. Moses offers his own life rather than disinherit the Jewish people. Blot me out of Your book which you have written” (v.32). “And the Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book” (v.33). Does that simply mean death? Could this be a way of saying; those who are set aside for preservation will be preserved? Or does this book contain the names of all who are saved (see Revelation 13:8; 17:8; Philippians 4:3)?

Daniel insists that a remnant must survive. For this remnant will embrace God’s Messiah at the end of the Tribulation period. The forces of the Antichrist pressing down on Israel

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will in some fashion serve to bring a kind of spiritual awakening! Joel 2:28-29; “And it will come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men see visions. (29) And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”

Some have suggested that because of the dire threat of the Antichrist and the armies pouring into the Middle East the Jewish people will plead with God for Messiah to return and save them (Zechariah 12:10; Matthew 23:27-39; Isaiah 53:1-9).

A Time Of Separation (v.2)

2And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

There are those who dispute the mention of resurrection in the Old Testament. Here it is. This is speaking of the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous.

There are some left leaning commentators who suggest that Daniel is referencing not an actual resurrection but a moral and national revival of Israel. The people of Israel will be regathered to the Land in unbelief—a remnant will respond to the Gospel and be swept into the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. Clearly Jews from all over the world have returned to the Land. Clearly many Jews remain unconvinced about Judaism and unconvinced about Jesus.

Most people who enter the period known as the Great Tribulation will not survive. Most will die. The good news for God’s people is death is not the end. The good news for God’s people is bad news for everyone who concludes that God’s Grace and God’s Messiah and God’s Gospel are not wanted or needed.

All people will one day share in the resurrection. But not all people will share the same destiny. There are two deaths. There are two resurrections. There are two destinies.

In John’s Gospel Jesus says (5:28-29); *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice (29) and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”*

In the New Testament Jesus told Martha at her brother’s gravesite; “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live” (John 11:25 NRSV).

Paul told the Philippians (3:21) “He will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like his own glorious body; using that power by which he is able to bring all things under his rule” (GNB).

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The resurrection of Jesus is the dividing point in all of human history and the foundation of our faith. It is also proof that Daniel's prophecy that a future resurrection is necessary for all. The Bible teaches that the future resurrection includes a body and a soul (1 Corinthians 15:12-28).

The resurrection is a certainty because of Christ's resurrection. The Apostle Paul adds in I Corinthians 15 that we as believers merit only pity—if in fact the resurrection is a hoax or fiction or lie. In Paul's day following Christ brought pain, persecution, ostracism from family and in many cases poverty and sometimes death. There were few tangible benefits in this life—but there were many spiritual benefits! Peace! Joy! Comfort! Hope! Paul makes it clear that if there is no resurrection there is no forgiveness of sins and no hope for eternal life.

Our resurrected body will be different and eternal (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). Our resurrected body will not be bound by present limitations. Our current body is prone to injury and subject to decay. Some have suggested the reference to sleep here suggests that the dead are unconscious or unaware. Nothing could be further from the truth. The dead are very much aware of who they are and where they are.

The repeated testimony of the New Testament is that the believer is alive and aware and in the presence of God (see Revelation 6:9-11; Philippians 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:8).

A Time To Shine (vv.3-4)

3Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

We see a reference to the wise. Who are the wise?

Those who know the true God. Those who see through the Antichrist's deception. Those who trust in the Lord Jesus as Lord and Savior. Those who have by grace through faith in Christ and God's Word have true knowledge.

To shine in glory is the privilege of the saved. And those who turn many to righteousness is a reference to all who plead and pray and convince others to turn from sin and turn to the Savior. What about those who only exercise a subtle influence towards righteousness? Yes! We are all pushing people towards heaven or away from heaven! The stars vary in size and luminosity. We all have different capacities to reflect God's glory! But we must reflect God's glory.

Solomon begged God "So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" (1 Kings 3:9 NIV). Indeed. Who can govern a family or a business or church or nation? Wisdom begins when we ask the Lord to be our supply. Wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge to everyday life. We are made wise by studying and then applying God's Word.

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Trust in the Lord and then you will be truly wise. Wisdom is the ability to see life from God's perspective and then to know the best action or course or direction to embrace. We become wiser as we become more like Christ.

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.”

What does this mean? Daniel is instructed to preserve the vision in a book.

Almost certainly “the time of the end” is the period we call the Great Tribulation. The implication is the survival and transmission of this prophecy until that time. The vision began in chapter 10. The vision was to be recorded and preserved and kept safe for future generations—but the final generation would benefit most from its mysterious content.

Scholars are divided about what the phrase “Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

Does it mean an ever increasing ability to travel and a virtual explosion of scientific and technological information? Or does it mean that during the Tribulation some people will understand what is happening in the world based on Daniel's revelation?

Darby translates this “many shall diligently investigate”. Tregelles renders it; “many shall scrutinize the book from end to end.” Does it teach that many will study this prophetic Word and knowledge of it—that is the book of Daniel will increase—at the time of the end?

Conclusion