

Sermon – 30/12/2007 am

Press On

Study Text: Daniel 12:4–13

And now I will tell you the truth (11:2). The message of the pre-incarnate Jesus to Daniel in this vision covers events in this world from the time of Daniel to the end of the world. Close to the end there will be great tribulation but the people of God will be delivered. Following the judgment will be the resurrection of the dead, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting disgrace.

Daniel was told to *shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end* (12:4). But the vision does not finish here. The man clothed in linen was speaking to Daniel, but two others now appear on the scene. They ask Jesus how long it will be till these wonders take place (12:6). Daniel is also interested in this question (12: 8).

You are probably interested in this question also. The matter of when this world will end potentially affects all that we do. People take a very different view of life when told they only have a few weeks or months to live. The matter of when we will face divine judgment affects how we live today. But of first importance is to acknowledge that what is written here is true. We must believe this word of Jesus. By believing in Jesus fear of the end and fear of judgment is removed.

Wrap It Up

Many libraries have a rare book section. Such books are treated very carefully. They cannot be borrowed, but may be read or copied. Sometimes they are sealed in a glass case for further protection. Each day a page may be turned so people can read, but not touch, this rare book.

A few hundred years ago libraries were quite small by today's standards. Many books were still written and copied by hand. But all these libraries would have had a copy of the Bible in them, usually in a prominent position. Some people would go to the library every day to read the page that was opened for that day. Knowledge has increased exponentially but is not God's word, the Bible, fundamental to all knowledge even today?

Daniel was told to seal up this book, this book containing the words of Jesus, till the time of the end. This book is like no other. It is not like a newspaper, a history book or a novel for it tells the absolute truth, the truth of God and it tells about the future of this world as God has planned it.

These words are precious indeed must never be lost. They must be passed on to successive generations. Daniel would not see the days he wrote about. He would rest; he would pass from this world and rise to receive his inheritance at the time of the end (12:13). Future generations of God's people would experience even greater suffering and tribulation. They would need the same comfort and encouragement that Daniel was now receiving from heaven.

Some parents worry about bringing a child into this troubled world – and they have every reason to be worried. But the words that we read here give us hope, and they give hope and assurance to our children. In the middle of the darkest tunnel that we may enter, even that of death, these words shine as a light at the end of that tunnel.

In all this we are reminded of the solemn nature of the Bible that we have in our hands. Every word of Scripture is divinely inspired and is for our instruction and edification (II Timothy 3:16). These are words written by men as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:12). Peter tells us that men of old were ministering to us when they wrote the Scriptures for they were searching for and writing about things which we are blessed to understand more fully (I Peter 1:10-12).

Daniel was here recording a vision about things in the near and distant future. He confessed he did not understand all that was revealed to him (12:8). But this did not lead him to despair, much less to unbelief. Some people get unsettled when they cannot understand something in the Bible. They rack their brains and start twisting things to make them fit. We are going to come across things today that we will not understand but let us not get upset. Let us press on in the faith and let the light of the glory of Christ shine ever more brightly in our lives.

How amazing is the Bible that we have before us. It is a book in which our parents found blessing as they read it, our grandparents and their parents also. Here is a book which Daniel received and wrote. He was blessed by this revelation. The Bible is the book for all generations. Is the Bible precious to you?

I was encouraged to read that our Prime Minister used to carry a small Bible with him wherever he went. I pray that he continues to do so, and that you also will always have a Bible within reach. Best of all memorise portions of the Bible. Then if trouble comes and your copy of the Bible is forcibly taken from you, you still have it in your mind, and accessible by your heart. How thankful we are today that Daniel did seal up the words of this vision and that God has preserved them for us to read today.

When

Daniel saw *two others* appear as his vision came to an end. They stood on each bank of the river. They asked Jesus who was above the waters, when these *wonders* would be fulfilled (12:6). They were indeed amazing things which Daniel was told. These other heavenly visitors must have been listening to what Daniel was told. They now ask a question which was on Daniel's lips. When will the end come? When will the books be opened, when will the antichrist and Satan be destroyed, when will the people of God be delivered, and when will all be raised from the dead.

When Jesus came into this world as a man he was asked the same thing. His disciples asked Jesus 'when will these things be' as he spoke about the end of the age (Matthew 24:3). Whilst Jesus told his disciples all about the end, what life would be like and how they would survive, he did not tell them the time of the end. He told them of signs pointing to the end. For one thing Jesus said he did not know (Mark 13:32), but more importantly it was not the will of God to reveal the day or the hour.

The answer here in Daniel's era was much the same. Jesus raised both hands to heaven to utter a solemn oath as he answered this question. He gave no precise date but a rather cryptic

word about a *time, times and half time* (12:7). This was not the first time that Daniel had heard these words. In a previous vision he was told that the people of God would be given into his hand for a time, times and a halftime (7:25).

The time of tribulation will not go on forever. God determines times and seasons, not man or Satan. When things seem to be going well for the enemy – from time to times – then God will cut short their time – and a half. God will cut short those days for the sake of the elect (Matthew 24:22).

The people of God will be brought very low towards the end. They will be powerless in the face of intense opposition. They will be broken and shattered but by the power of God they will be delivered. This is what God will permit and he will permit it for good reason as we see – that many may be purified and made white (12:10).

Daniel heard the answer but did not understand it (12:8). He asked Jesus what was in effect the same question. When? After a gentle rebuke he was reminded of what, in the purposes of God, would happen at the end. But he is then told two time intervals – 1290 days and 1335 days (12:11, 12).

The first, at least, is from the time that the abomination of desolation is set up. This points to the tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanies in 168BC, but in the light of Jesus words in Matthew 24:15 could also point to the tyranny of Titus in AD70. It is difficult to understand what these times mean, but still many take them literally and get lead into all manner of speculation. This is a vision, and like similar numbers in other apocalyptic passages it is best to take them as symbolic. God is certainly counting the days and we should be also but only God knows when the counting will stop.

Wait

In answer to the question ‘when’, Daniel is told to ‘wait’! To accept there are things we cannot know is not something human beings readily accept. To be told to wait is regarded of no help at all. But for Daniel and us it is different in that we know the One who does know. We can wait with patience knowing that God knows the day and the hour, and that he also knows us, that he loves us and has delivered us already in his Son Jesus Christ.

Blessed is he who waits Daniel was told (12:12). *He who endures to the end will be saved* said the incarnate Jesus (Matthew 24:13). Daniel was told not once but twice in this final message – *go your way till the end* (12:9, 13). Jesus had told him all he needed to know, all he needed to know to live in this world; to live with hope and assurance that he and future generations would indeed be blessed as they waited for the second coming of Jesus and the judgment.

Nothing is going to change dramatically in this world until the end. *While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest...shall not cease* (Genesis 8:22). The wicked will go in their wicked ways. They may increase in knowledge but not in wisdom. The people of God on the other hand will continue to suffer at the hands of Satan and his wicked followers. But this will be a time of refinement and purification for the saints. Being made more and more like Christ they will be ready and waiting to enter into his glory when he comes.

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