

Sermon – 23/12/2007 pm

The End

Study Text: Daniel 12:1–3

Great and marvellous truths were revealed to Daniel in this final vision recorded in this book that bears his name. He was an old man at this time but still walking faithfully with his God. He was by the river in Babylon; he was fasting and praying when the Lord Jesus appeared to him.

Jesus told Daniel what his people would see and experience in this world in the next 400 years. He went to tell Daniel of the antichrist who would arise and of tribulation for the people of God as the end of the world approaches. But in the end the antichrist will be destroyed and, according to the passage before us today, the people of God will be delivered.

The Book

The archangel Michael is mentioned once again. He was first mentioned with reference to Jesus coming in answer to Daniel's prayer (10:13). The chief prince Michael fought against the prince of Persia. Michael is the angel or *great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people* (12:1). He is the guardian angel of the 'people of God', a reference to the Jews in this context but, in the light of the New Testament, to all who trust in God and follow him.

Daniel was engaged in a spiritual battle while living in Babylon. We are engaged in a spiritual battle living in this city. In this vision we get a glimpse of the nature of this battle. It is a battle in the heavenly realms, so is impossible for us to fight with purely human resources.

The apostle Paul told the Ephesian and Corinthian churches the same thing (Ephesians 6, II Corinthians 10). He told them to put on the armour of God and to fight with the weapons of God. Prayer is essential in this battle. Daniel was a man of prayer.

Even though we have angels watching over us we do not pray to angels. Certainly we do not pray to dead men and women whom the Pope calls saints. Why do people want to talk with servants when they talk with the king! We are privileged to be able to call upon God in prayer. The only mediator is Jesus Christ who died for us. We pray in his name but Jesus himself told us to pray 'Our Father in heaven'.

Daniel was told that there will be great trouble for his people; trouble like never before in the history of the world. Jesus is now telling about events beyond the time of Antiochus Epiphanies. He is telling about events towards the end of the world. He is telling about the people of God who now include Gentiles as well as Jews – as a brief look at the book of Revelation will confirm.

Those who believe in Jesus Christ will suffer in this world. Jesus told his disciples *in this world you will have tribulation* (John 16:33). Suffering will not get less but will in fact increase as the end approaches. The antichrist will become more active and more desperate as he seeks to increase his army and his power in a vain attempt to defeat Almighty God.

In the midst of this suffering God's people will actually grow stronger. They will draw near to God and carry out great exploits (11:32). They will stand firm in the truth of the gospel. Jesus told Daniel *at that time your people will be delivered* (12:1).

The incarnate Jesus told his disciples much the same thing – *be of good cheer; I have overcome the world* (John 16:33). *Then comes the end* wrote the apostle Paul *when he* (Jesus) *delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet* (I Corinthians 15:24, 25).

Who are the people who will be delivered? They are 'your people', the people who are of the same faith Daniel. But notice the extra detail about these people. They are those whose names are *written in the book* (12:1). Moses first referred to such a book in Exodus 32:32. This is the book referred to in Revelation 20:12, the book of life. God knows those who are his people for he chose them. He wrote their names in his book in the very beginning, and he will deliver them.

This is not a book recording the names of nations, of ethnic groups, of families, or of religious groups. It is not like the book at cemeteries with different sections for Protestants and Catholics, for Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists and Anglicans. This is the book of life with the name of everyone who is saved by the blood of Jesus and who will be raised to life on the Day of Judgment.

The Resurrection

These final words spoken to Daniel in this vision are saturated with doctrine. We find in the second verse the doctrine of the resurrection clearly outlined. For the first time in the Bible 'everlasting life' is spoken of directly. The apostle Paul did not invent this doctrine. He clung to the doctrine of the resurrection with all his might because it is true and essential to faith in Jesus Christ. *If the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen and if Christ is not risen your faith is futile* (I Corinthians 15:16-17).

Did you hear the archbishop saying the virgin birth is not essential to the Christian faith? There are those who say the resurrection is not essential either. What a great tragedy it is when men make up their own doctrines and still call themselves Christians. *Your faith is futile, and you are still dead in your sins* is the simple word the apostle Paul has for such people!

Jesus also spoke of the resurrection in unequivocal terms. He said *all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come out* (John 5:28). Do not be put off by the word 'many' in verse 2; it means do not mean anything less than 'all'.

What will happen at the resurrection? Some will rise to everlasting life. Who are these? In this context they are those whose names are written in the book. The sovereign God wrote their names in his book and he will raise them to life in the last day, just as he raised Jesus to life.

What about those whose names are not written in the book? They will be raised also, but not to life. They will be raised *to shame and everlasting contempt* (12:2). All will be raised, but their will be two destinies. Those who are outside of Christ will be put to shame as their life is exposed. As their life is exposed they will be rendered speechless. They will not have Jesus to

intercede for them because they rejected Jesus in this life. They will be condemned by the Judge of all men and live in utter contempt and eternal punishment.

Shining Stars

The final word of the pre-incarnate Jesus to Daniel is indeed beautiful. It is a word about *those who are wise*, who in this context are those who stand firm in the truth of God and his word. This has nothing to do with earthly wisdom. This is heavenly wisdom. This is wisdom from above. The wise are those who hearing the gospel repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Knowing the righteousness of God the wise are concerned above all things for righteousness. *They are those who turn many to righteousness (12:3).*

In this dark world the wise will shine like stars in the night sky. A star guided the wise men to the Christ child in Bethlehem – despite what the bishop of Canterbury says. It is written in the Bible and true Christians believe the Bible. They believe every word as the infallible word of God.

Stars were once used in navigation guiding mariners across the dark ocean waters. This is the picture set before us in this verse. There is a great and desperate need for such guiding lights in this dark world in which we live. We need a light to guide us on our journey lest we get lost and perish.

Jesus is the light of the world. Followers of Jesus are called upon to reflect his marvellous light. Paul calls upon the children of God to be blameless and pure without fault in this crooked and depraved generation in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold fast the word of life (Philippians 2:15). Paul may well have had these words from Daniel in mind as he wrote this letter to the church at Philippi.

What an amazing description this is of a believer. Are you like a star shining forth into this dark and depraved world? Are you reflecting the glory of God? Are you telling those around you the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ? Are you praying for many to turn from sin and believe in Jesus Christ?

What a great passage this is for evangelism. We have here the doctrines of heaven and hell, of sovereign election, of the resurrection, and of divine judgment. And finally we have the doctrine of mission, the people of God shining like stars into the community in which the Lord in his providence has placed them.

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