DANIEL 12



T. M. Moore A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Cover art: Rembrandt, Daniel in the Lions' Den

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Daniel 12: Introduction

The book of Daniel closes clearly but cryptically. We understand what God intended for His people, as they were returning to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. But they could not understand all the details of what they would face until the time of the coming of the Messiah. In retrospect, we can fill in many of the details. But these were not at all clear to Daniel or his readers.

Even now, these last revelations to Daniel are fraught with mystery. Much ink has been spilled and many speculative words proffered in seeking to unravel these mysteries, and the effect is often that we miss what's obvious, and what God wants us to focus on as we await the final unfolding of His redemptive plan.

God wants us to be a holy and faithful people. And even though we must face difficult and trying times, and endure much uncertainty about many things, we must remain steadfast in our focus on His sovereign goodness and unfailing promises. And this we do by waiting patiently on the Lord to do what only He can do.

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T. M. Moore, Principal tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 While We're Waiting

Introduction

The visions given to Daniel are very difficult to understand, especially if we put ourselves in Daniel's shoes. But while the details of the visions might escape us, or be subject to competing interpretations, what God is looking for from His people is abundantly clear. So while we're waiting for Him to fulfill all that He has promised, we need to be busy about what we know He has called us to do.

Read Psalm 27.7-14.

Read Daniel 12.1-3.

Think it through.

- 1. Perhaps most commentators see these verses as referring to the general resurrection at the end of the age. But I'm not entirely convinced. For example, does this prophecy address the resurrection of *all* (v. 2)? Is there another period we know of when *many* were raised (cf. Matt. 27.51-53)? The time preceding this resurrection is described as an unprecedented time of trouble. However, it is also a time when God's people are "delivered" (v. 1). Which people? How would they be delivered? Is it possible that this text, like other prophetic texts, may have reference to two events, separated in time (cf. Ps. 22)? Explain.
- 2. In view of the coming deliverance and resurrection, verse 3 prescribes the course God's people must take through tumultuous times and troublesome events. What does it mean for the "wise" to "shine" like the brightness of the sky? Can this have a double meaning, for example, for now and for the age to come? How does someone "turn many to righteousness"? Why does doing so make such people brilliant as the night stars? How does this counsel, which Daniel is recording for the people of Israel in his day, apply to us in ours?

Meditate.

"In accordance with the merits of each, some shall rise up to eternal life and others to eternal shame. But the teachers shall resemble the very heavens, and those who have instructed others shall be compared with the brightness of the stars. For it is not enough to know wisdom unless one also instructs others; and the tongue of instruction that remains silent and edifies no one else can receive no reward for labor accomplished." *Jerome (347-420 AD)*

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me..." These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. Acts 1.4, 14

The Apostles waited for the promised power to shine like witnesses by gathering together for prayer. Let my prayer life be more a source of power, Lord, as I...

Pray Psalm 27.1-4.

Use this time of prayer to meditate on the beauty of the Lord, to see Him in His brightness and strength, and to delight in His presence.

Psalm 27.1-6 (Joanna: Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise) Lord, You are our Light and our Savior most dear! You guard us with might; therefore, whom shall we fear? Though evil surround us, our enemies fall; No harm shall confound us when on You we call.

One thing we request but to dwell with You, Lord. Your beauty to test and to think on Your Word. In trouble You hide us secure in Your grace; No foe may o'erride us: We sing of Your praise!

2 Shut and Sealed

Introduction

Here is a difficult verse indeed. Why would the Messenger go to all the trouble of burdening Daniel with these powerful, frightening visions, if He only intended that they should be "shut up" and "sealed" until they actually come to pass? There is great wisdom in this, and we need to discern it.

Meditate on Jeremiah 23.18-20.

Read Daniel 12.4.

Think it through.

- 1. How can we understand this instruction to Daniel? Clearly, the Messenger Whom we have previously identified as the Word of God does not intend that the contents of these revelations should *not* be read and heeded. If that were the case, then the Lord Jesus overstepped the bounds of His own instruction by citing Daniel in Matthew 24.15 (and note Matthew's curious exhortation to those who *read* Daniel's and Jesus' words!). The verb *shut up* carries the meaning of closing something so that nothing can be added to it. The verb *seal* indicates the stamp which a writer might use to indicate that a letter is from him. Meditate on Deuteronomy 4.3 and 12.32, Revelation 22.18, 19, and Acts 1.7. What did the Messenger intend for the words He gave Daniel? How should this understanding caution or guide us in trying to understand the visions given to Daniel, and all the rest of Scripture as well?
- 2. At "the time of the end" the full meaning of these visions will be plain, but only to readers who are thoroughly familiar with the visions before the events begin to occur. All Scripture is like this: It proves the truth of its teaching as we live it out in our daily lives. The more we know of God's Word, even though we may not understand it fully, the more we will experience the truth of it as it unfolds in our daily walk with the Lord. The danger is that we can allow our much busyness and many goings-on ("many shall run to and fro") and all the competing information that comes at us from the media and elsewhere ("knowledge shall increase") to distract us from what God has spoken, or to lead us to neglect or misunderstand God's Word. This is precisely what the Messenger was warning Israel, through Daniel, to avoid. How can we know whether we are being distracted from this Message (the Word of God)? How can we avoid being distracted from or misled about what God has revealed in His Word?

Meditate.

"And Jeremiah also says, 'In the last days they shall understand these things.' For every prophecy, before its fulfillment, appears to people to be full of enigmas and ambiguities. But when the time has arrived and the prediction has come to pass, the prophecies have a clear and certain meaning." *Irenaeus of Lyons (135-202 AD)*

And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority." Acts 1.7

O Lord God, let Your Word be the lens through which I view my world today, so that I see as Jesus sees, and I live as...

Pray Psalm 27.7-11.

Let this time of prayer establish your focus on our exalted Lord and King, so that He may lead and teach you throughout the day.

Psalm 27.7-13 (*Joanna: Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise*) Hear, Lord, when we cry and be gracious, we pray! Lord, do not deny us Your favor this day!

Our help, our salvation, though others may fall, Preserve our good station when on You we call.

Lord, teach us; Lord, lead us because of our foes! Hear, Lord, when we plead for release from their woes. Had we not believed all Your goodness to see, Our heart sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

3 Hearing and Understanding

Introduction

At the end of this last vision, Daniel is left baffled. He has heard well, and he has recorded all that he heard. But he has not understood, at least, not as fully as he might have liked. He will have to be content with this, however, for, as we shall see, it did not please the Lord to give Daniel any clearer insights than these into the events that were to come. And if Daniel could not understand these, we should be careful about presuming to know more than he. Some things of God must remain secret. Otherwise, we will end up trusting more in our wits than in Him.

Read Deuteronomy 29.29.

Read Daniel 12.5-8.

Think it through.

- 1. The two angels on either side of the river (probably the Tigris) may have been the "princes" assigned to the Medes and the Persians angelic beings charged with overseeing the affairs of this great empire. We notice that there are mysteries into which they long to look (cf. 1 Pet. 1.10-12). One angel asked a question of the Messenger, Who was, as it were, walking on the water of the river. What was that question? What is implied in the word *fulfillment*? The Messenger has His hands in heaven and His feet on earth (cf. Jn. 1.50, 51). Why is it important that we know this? I assume that the answer, given in verse 7, must be describing the time from the giving of the vision to the fulfillment of all its components. Many commentators interpret the phrase *time, times, and a half* time, as meaning three-and-a-half years, referring to a period just prior to the return of Christ. I find it difficult to glean that meaning from this answer. When we consult Daniel 7.25, where this phrase also occurs, it is again difficult at least as I read the text to deduce three-and-a-half years before the return of Christ. The phrase occurs in Revelation 12.14, where it seems to refer to something entirely different. What else might this phrase imply?
- 2. The phrase time, times, and a half time, is qualified by the remainder of verse 7: "and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished." To what period does this seem to refer? Daniel heard everything clearly, but he did not understand. He requested further clarification in verse 8. His question was literally, "What shall be the final outworking of all these things?" He was not asking for more details concerning what he'd already heard. He understood that only additional revelation from God would enable him to understand what he had heard. This suggests an approach to growing in our understanding of God's Word. Meditate on 1 Corinthians 2.12, 13 (where "spiritual things" refers to Scripture). How should this encourage us in our continued work of reading, meditating on, and studying the Scriptures?

Meditate.

"And if the prophet himself heard and did not understand, what will be the case with those people who presumptuously expound a book that has been sealed, and sealed until the time of the end, a book that is shrouded with many obscurities?" *Jerome* (347-420 AD)

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 1 Corinthians 2.12, 13

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Acts 17.11

Lord, I know I will only grow in Jesus as I submit to more of His Word. Help me to improve my time in Your Word by...

Pray Psalm 27.7-14.

God calls us to seek His face and to wait on Him, strengthened in heart and full of courage. How will you wait on the Lord today?

Psalm 27.7-13 (Joanna: Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise) Hear, Lord, when we cry and be gracious, we pray! Lord, do not deny us Your favor this day! Our help, our salvation, though others may fall, Preserve our good station when on You we call.

Lord, teach us; Lord, lead us because of our foes! Hear, Lord, when we plead for release from their woes. Had we not believed all Your goodness to see, Our heart sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

4 A Perpetual Conflict

Introduction

The Messenger declines to elaborate further on the vision He has revealed to Daniel. The interpretation will only be fully understood as the events unfold in the days to come. Daniel needs to get on with his life, bearing in mind that times of struggle and conflict lie ahead. And though these may leave the wicked perplexed and confused, they who are wise will understand that the sovereign God is doing all things well. In the parable of the wheat and tares, Jesus picked up on the essence of these revelations, and extended their application through to the end of the age.

Review Daniel 7.18-27.

Read Daniel 12.9, 10.

Think it through.

- 1. What did the Messenger intend when He instructed Daniel to "Go"? Go where? Doing what? No more clarity or substance would be granted, so the answer to Daniel's request in verse 8 was simply a repetition in different terms of what had been previously revealed (cf. Dan. 7.18-27). Here is a pattern we should all emulate: Come to the Word of God daily. Get as much as you can, without feeling like you have to understand everything. Then go out into your Personal Mission Field fully aware that this is a field of conflict (Eph. 6.10-20) and live the Word God has given you for this day. Does this represent your approach to daily living? Explain.
- 2. Verse 10 anticipates the parable of the wheat and the tares. Both the righteous and the wicked will continue together until "the time of the end". The terms *purified, made white, and refined* refer to those who are being sanctified by the Word of God (Jn. 17.17). Why is this a good way to think about growing in the Lord? There will always be wicked people doing wicked things, and, as we see in our own day, their wickedness will perplex and disturb even them. They will not be able to understand why we can't all just get along. They will pine for peace and unity and the brotherhood of humankind. They will create institutions which they hope will achieve these. They will sing lofty songs, make hopeful films, and dream peaceful dreams. But it will not be, and their inability to achieve what they can imagine and what they hope for will leave them baffled and despairing. Nevertheless, *the wise shall understand*. Who are the wise? What do they understand, and how are they able to understand it? Meditate on 1 Chronicles 12.32. How should you apply this text and Daniel 12.10 to your Personal Mission Field?

Meditate.

"And who are they who are chosen but those who believe the word of truth, so as to be made white thereby, and to cast off the filth of sin and put on the heavenly, pure and glorious Holy Spirit, in order that, when the Bridegroom comes, they may go in immediately with him?" *Hippolytus (fl. 222-245 AD)*

"The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age." Matthew 13.38-40

As I go today, Lord, help me to be ready for the conflict that awaits me. Make me wise and help me always to focus on Jesus, exalted in glory, ruling all things, doing all things well, and lead me to...

Pray Psalm 27.1-13.

Cast your fears on the Lord. Lean into the Lord's strength, and ask Him to shine His light through you today, as you go into your Personal Mission Field, focusing on Him.

Psalm 27.1-14 (Joanna: Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise) Lord, You are our Light and our Savior most dear! You guard us with might; therefore, whom shall we fear? Though evil surround us, our enemies fall; No harm shall confound us when on You we call.

One thing we request but to dwell with You, Lord. Your beauty to test and to think on Your Word. In trouble You hide us secure in Your grace; No foe may o'erride us: We sing of Your praise!

Hear, Lord, when we cry and be gracious, we pray! Lord, do not deny us Your favor this day! Our help, our salvation, though others may fall, Preserve our good station when on You we call.

Lord, teach us; Lord, lead us because of our foes! Hear, Lord, when we plead for release from their woes. Had we not believed all Your goodness to see, Our heart sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

5 Blessed is He Who Waits

Introduction

What do these verses assert? (1) Daily sacrifices will cease. (2) The temple will be desecrated. (3) All this will take some time. (4) Blessing will redound to those who wait. These are two of the most difficult verses in the book of Daniel. Ancient commentators differ on how to understand them, as do commentators in our day. Let's try to stay focused on what *is* clear, and to think about what these verses would have meant to Daniel and those who would read his words upon returning to Jerusalem. But we'll also try to understand them in the light of the larger and more complete revelation of God's redemptive plan.

Read 1 Samuel 13.1-15; Acts 1.7-14.

Read Daniel 12.11, 12.

Think it through.

- 1. The daily sacrifice the morning and evening offerings of the Jews was stopped three times after the Jews returned to Jerusalem. The first, as we have seen, was under Antiochus, in the second century BC. The last was when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. The most significant stoppage of sacrifices is referenced in Hebrews 10.1-10. Explain. Do you suppose the Messenger could have had all three of these episodes in mind? For the Jews returning to Jerusalem, knowing that the sovereign God would allow this stoppage, how would this have led them to think about the real value of the sacrifices? Did the writer of Hebrews have the attitude toward these sacrifices that Daniel's Messenger intended? The "abomination of desolation" also has three occurrences, one under Antiochus, and one under the Romans. To the Jews, Jesus was the supreme "abomination of desolations." How can you see this (cf. Mk. 15.55-64)?
- 2. With respect to the mention of many days here, and elsewhere in Daniel, I am inclined to agree with Calvin, who taught that the days stand for years, implying a time "immeasurably prolonged". The divine plan for the redemption of His people and the restoration of the world unfolds over a long period of time. We may become impatient with the Lord, and think, like Saul, to take matters into our own hands whether to try to peer into details of revelation that are deliberately being kept vague (cf. Acts 1.7), or to act presumptuously as if we knew better than God what we should be doing (cf. Jn. 18.10, 11). The Messenger promised that they will be *blessed* who *wait*. The word *blessed* here refers to the condition of righteousness, peace, and joy which comes from faithfully abiding in the Law and Word of God (cf. Ps. 1, where *blessed* is the first word of the psalm). Thus, *blessed* has *Kingdom overtones* (cf. Rom. 14.17, 18; Dan. 7.18-27). Can you see how this word points to the coming of the Kingdom of God? How do we *wait* for this coming promise from God (cf. Acts 1.4, 12-14)? Does such waiting involve other forms of seeking (Matt. 6.33)?

Meditate.

"These days make up three years and a half. I have no hesitation in supposing the angel to speak metaphorically. As he previously put one year, or two years, and half a year, for long duration of time, and a happy issue, so he now puts 1290 days. And for what reason? To shew us what must happen when anxieties and troubles oppress us. If a man should fall sick, he will not say, Here I have already been one month, but I have a year before me — he will not say, Here I have been three days, but now I languish wretchedly for thirty or sixty. The angel, then, purposely puts days for years, implying — although that time may seem immeasurably prolonged, and may frighten us by its duration, and completely prostrate the spirits of the pious, yet it must be endured." *John Calvin*, Commentary on Daniel 11.11, 12

...then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. 10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Hebrews 10.9, 10

Daniel 12

I am not good at waiting, Lord. Help me to rest in Your Word, to be filled with Your Spirit, to take one day and one situation at a time, and at all times to...

Pray Psalm 27.1-13.

How will you wait on the Lord, persevere in His grace, and abide in His Word today?

Psalm 27.1-14 (Joanna: Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise) Lord, You are our Light and our Savior most dear! You guard us with might; therefore, whom shall we fear? Though evil surround us, our enemies fall; No harm shall confound us when on You we call.

One thing we request but to dwell with You, Lord. Your beauty to test and to think on Your Word. In trouble You hide us secure in Your grace; No foe may o'erride us: We sing of Your praise!

Hear, Lord, when we cry and be gracious, we pray! Lord, do not deny us Your favor this day! Our help, our salvation, though others may fall, Preserve our good station when on You we call.

Lord, teach us; Lord, lead us because of our foes! Hear, Lord, when we plead for release from their woes. Had we not believed all Your goodness to see, Our heart sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

6 Go, Rest, Rise, Inherit

Introduction

The book of Daniel concludes with four important words, words Daniel needed to hear, but which all who believe in Jesus need to hear as well.

Meditate on Psalm 16.

Read Daniel 12.13.

Think it through.

- 1. Let's take these words last to first. The Messenger promised that Daniel would receive an *inheritance*. According to Psalm 16.5, 6, of what does that inheritance consist? What does it mean to say that this is the inheritance which God's faithful expect? What makes that such a desirable inheritance (Ps. 16.11)? When do we expect to receive that inheritance? Before Daniel would receive that inheritance *fully*, he must first *rest*, then *arise*. Looking at Psalm 16.9-11 (cf. Acts 2.22-32 and Jn. 14.19), to what does this refer? Why should Daniel only expect to receive his *full* inheritance *after* this? Would any of that inheritance be available to him *before* this? Explain. What the Lord has promised is what we as believers hope to receive. How would you explain this hope to someone who asked you about it (1 Pet. 3.15)?
- 2. For the time being, the revelations to Daniel being completed, the Messenger commanded him to "go" and to keep going "till the end." What is implied in that verb, go? How long was Daniel to go? How would Daniel's understanding of his *inheritance* have affected his going? In Matthew 28.18-20, Jesus used a form of the verb go which may be translated, as you are going. What would you describe as the as you are going of your life? What are you supposed to be doing as you are going? Daniel was to go, keeping in mind all that God had showed and taught him. Can we accomplish our going apart from what God reveals and teaches in His Word (cf. Matt. 28.20)? Explain.

Meditate.

"He says in effect, 'Now you must receive the end of your days; but you will rise—and not merely rise but rise for your inheritance, that is, with the company of like-minded people.' And once he has shown this, he adds, 'at the end of the days.' So the divine archangel clearly taught the resurrection through the blessed, no, thrice-blessed Daniel." *Theodoret of Cyr* (393-466 AD)

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28.18-20

Today, Lord, as I go out into my Personal Mission Field, help me to...

Pray Psalm 27.1-14.

As you pray through this psalm, think about how to apply it to the *as you are goings* of your life. Pray specifically with respect to the places you will go today and the people you expect to encounter there.

Psalm 27.1-14 (Joanna: Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise) Lord, You are our Light and our Savior most dear! You guard us with might; therefore, whom shall we fear? Though evil surround us, our enemies fall; No harm shall confound us when on You we call. One thing we request but to dwell with You, Lord. Your beauty to test and to think on Your Word. In trouble You hide us secure in Your grace; No foe may o'erride us: We sing of Your praise!

Hear, Lord, when we cry and be gracious, we pray! Lord, do not deny us Your favor this day! Our help, our salvation, though others may fall, Preserve our good station when on You we call.

Lord, teach us; Lord, lead us because of our foes! Hear, Lord, when we plead for release from their woes. Had we not believed all Your goodness to see, Our heart sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

7 Wise, White, Waiting

Introduction

Daniel could not understand all of what the Messenger revealed to him, just as we cannot understand all that God has revealed in His Word. But what we can understand, we must be faithful to obey. Daniel's message to the people of Israel was that they should rest in the sovereign power and goodness of God, and be wise, maintain their garments white and pure, and wait in patient obedience for the unfolding of all God had revealed. This is God's message to us as well.

Read Revelation 22.12-21.

Read and Meditate on Daniel 12.

Think it through.

- 1. How are the endings of Daniel and Revelation similar? How are they different? What do we learn from these about how to conduct ourselves in the world as we await the further unfolding of God's Word and promises?
- 2. Wickedness will always be in the world, as Jesus explained in the parable of the wheat and tares. Should this affect our witness for the Lord, or the obedience we owe to Him? Explain. Meditate on Hebrews 10.24. How can Christians encourage one another to be wise, keep pure, and wait on the Lord in times when wickedness is increasing? What are the most important lessons you take away from Daniel 12?

Meditate

"...he calls blessed only those who gave witness during the time of troubles, who did not desert their religion and who then found abatement of their ills." *John Chrysostom (344-407AD)*

Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. Revelation 22.14

Let me not be intimidated by wickedness, Lord, but let me be faithful as Your witness to...

Pray Psalm 27.1-14.

Meditate on the beauty of the Lord. Seek His guidance for this day. Wait for Him to direct your steps into the good works that He has prepared for you for the day ahead (Eph. 2.10).

Psalm 27.1-14 (Joanna: Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise) Lord, You are our Light and our Savior most dear! You guard us with might; therefore, whom shall we fear? Though evil surround us, our enemies fall; No harm shall confound us when on You we call.

One thing we request but to dwell with You, Lord. Your beauty to test and to think on Your Word. In trouble You hide us secure in Your grace; No foe may o'erride us: We sing of Your praise!

Hear, Lord, when we cry and be gracious, we pray! Lord, do not deny us Your favor this day! Our help, our salvation, though others may fall, Preserve our good station when on You we call.

Lord, teach us; Lord, lead us because of our foes! Hear, Lord, when we plead for release from their woes. Had we not believed all Your goodness to see, Our heart sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

Daniel 12

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1. What are the most important words in this chapter? Why?
- 2. Why is it so important that we obey the things we *can* understand in God's Word? Is it enough to read and affirm Scripture? Explain.
- 3. What are the most important lessons about God from the book of Daniel? How should these encourage us in our faith?
- 4. How should Daniel's teaching about God encourage us in working our Personal Mission Fields?
- 5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

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