

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## The Great Tribulation – Daniel 12

With today's talk on Daniel 12, we complete the present Truth for Today series of studies on the prophetic portion of the book of Daniel. Chapter 12 is also the end-point of Daniel's prophecies – the opening words “at that time” refer to the “time of the end”, which we come across in 11:40, when the apostate Jewish king of 11:36, Antichrist, is attacked from both the north and the south. The expression “the time of the end” was also used in 11:35 and previously in 8:17 and 19. It is used again in 12:4 and 9. Throughout it has this common meaning - the end-point of Daniel's prophecies. 12:1-3 summarise what will happen: “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. 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. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever” (English Standard Version).

### The Archangel Michael and the Great Tribulation

Michael is charged by God to take care of Daniel's people, the nation of Israel. From 10:13 and 10:21 we learnt that he was helping Christ in spiritual battles against evil forces at the very moment Daniel was receiving this final vision (chapters 10-12). Revelation 12:7-9 and 13 explain why, when Michael is aroused there'll be a time of unparalleled tribulation for Daniel's people Israel: “war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him ... And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued [Israel] who had given birth to the male child [Christ]”. This war in heaven initiates trouble on earth, called “the Great Tribulation” by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in Matthew 24:21, which is almost a direct quotation from Daniel 12:1. In Jeremiah 30:3-7 it's called the time of Jacob's trouble. But the outcome of this final period of suffering is the very reverse of Jewish experiences throughout their troubled history. The end of Daniel 12:1 triumphs: “But ... this [final] time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book!” Yes, at the second coming of Christ, “when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in ... all Israel will be saved, as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion’” (Romans 11:26). As the words of the end of Daniel 12:1 make clear, salvation only comes for those whose names are found to be written in the book of life (also see Exodus 32:32; Psalm 69:28; Luke 10:20; Revelation 20:12).

### Verse 2: The national resurrection of Israel. Its awakening

In 1948 Israel re-emerged as a distinct nation and has been repatriating Jews ever since. At present the nation is composed mainly of those whom we call Jews, that is, from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. They formed the original southern kingdom under the royal line descended from King David. In 721 BC, the northern kingdom, composed of the other ten tribes, was deported because of their disobedience to God. They have been integrated into the nations of the world, lost or “asleep in the dust of the earth”, as verse 2 describes it. But the time of the end brings about a total national awakening for both Ephraim and Judah. They'll come back by the trumpet call of God. It's the prophet-in-exile Ezekiel, not Daniel, who speaks of this: “O house of Israel ... as I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely ... I will be king over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the [nations] where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face”, Ezekiel 20:31 and 33-35.

### The saved and the lost

The phrases at the end of Daniel 12:2 “some to everlasting life some to shame and some to everlasting contempt” show that this is a discriminating judgment. There's blessings for the remnant, see Isaiah 10:20-22. These are ‘the elect’, for whom the Lord Jesus Christ said the days of trial had been cut short, otherwise no human being would be saved, Matthew 24:22. But the majority of the nation are found in unbelief and committed to everlasting punishment (see Isaiah 33:14-15, Matthew 13:41-43). Perhaps we're more familiar with Ezekiel 37 and the valley of dry bones. There, in verses 14-28, the blessings of the reunited nation, revived by the Spirit of God, are described in detail. (See

also: Isaiah 26:12-19; Ezekiel 20:34-38 and 36:24-28; Matthew 24:31). Here in Daniel 12:3, they're described as the wise who shall reign in Messiah's everlasting kingdom. During the Great Tribulation they'll turn many people to righteousness by preaching the gospel of the kingdom, which will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, see Matthew 24:13-14.

#### **Verse 4: Daniel's Prophecies and Visions,**

Daniel's now instructed to shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Twice before Daniel had received a similar instruction:

1. "The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now", 8:26.
2. "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place", 9:24.

Here in verse 4 the instruction relates to the whole book of his prophecies. From now on he personally would receive no further revelations. His prophecies were to remain a closed book until the time of the end, when Israelis will be so anxious to find out from Scripture what to do that they'll frantically search for it. "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "when I will send a famine on the land - not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it", Amos 8:11-12. These are the many of verse 4, the unbelieving majority of the nation. As verse 10 states: "none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand". The wise are the believing remnant who shall be given clear insight and for whom knowledge of what to do shall increase (end of verse 4). For example, they'll act on the Lord's instruction when He said: "the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. 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", Matthew 24:13-21. More especially, they'll count 1290 days and then another 45 days as we shall see in verses 11-12.

The directive to "shut up the words and to seal up the book" is the very opposite to that given to John the seer in Revelation 22:10: "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near". The reason is that Revelation is for the benefit of the Christian church. Most importantly, Jesus had just said to John in verse 7: "behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book [of the revelation of Me]".

#### **Daniel 12:5-6, How long?**

Daniel's still by the Tigris River, where he'd been since the vision commenced. Now he sees three people, one on each side of the river and one above the river. There are two angels, different from the ones Daniel had already seen in chapter 10. The third person is a man clothed in linen. He's the pre-incarnate Christ as in 10:6. When someone asked Him: "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" He raised His hands heavenward (compare Revelation 10:5-7) and swore by God "that it would be for a time, times, and half a time", verse 7. As we saw in 7:25, this is exactly the same time period that the nation would suffer at the dictates of the future Roman Emperor. The phrase 'a time, times, and half a time' occurs again in Revelation 12:14, where the believing remnant are seen preserved by God in the wilderness. In Revelation chapter 13 a fuller prophecy is given about this Roman world ruler, including 666 – the number of his name. Revelation 13:5 echoes Daniel 7:25 and defines "a time, times, and half a time" as 42 months. Revelation 11:2-3 state 42 months also as 1,260 days, which equate to 3½ Jewish years. And from Daniel 9:27 we find out that this is the second half of that final 7 year period and that it commences when this same Roman Emperor breaks his covenant with the nation and stops the sacrifices.

#### **What will happen at the time-of-the-end?**

In verse 7, the Lord expanded on His answer and said: "all these things would be finished when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end". From 8:19 we learn that this end time is the end of God's indignation against Israel, when He finally ends all their transgression and atones for their iniquity so that He can introduce everlasting righteousness, see 9:24. Daniel heard this explanation, but didn't understand so he responded in verse 8: "O my lord, what [is] the outcome of these things?" In reply, verse 9, he was told to be content with the revelations already given to him. So the verse 4 instruction is emphasized again: "the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end". Daniel's prophetic announcements were symbolically sealed (12:9), indicating that they were authoritative

and could not be altered, until the day of their (future) fulfilment. But in Revelation chapters 5–8, the seals of the scroll of judgment are broken, indicating that time had arrived.

### **Daniel didn't understand his own revelation**

Sometimes, as in 10:14, Daniel is given to understand. At other times, as here and in 8:26, he's not. Peter in 1 Peter 1:10-13 explains: "the prophets who prophesied ... searched and inquired carefully, enquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but [Christians], in the things that have now been announced through ... the [Gospel] ... by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven". Peter exhorts us: "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ", verse 13. But Daniel was told to go his way in the knowledge that there'll be that final resolution to the nation's sins that he'd confessed in prayer to God in 9:3-19 when he'd pleaded: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name". From 12:10 we learn that suffering will refine the righteous remnant of the nation to become wise, but the wicked will continue in their evil. This repeats 11:35: "some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time". Zechariah 13:1-2 provides the answer to how this will happen: "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. And on that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more. And also I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness".

In verse 11 Daniel is told what the wise shall understand. As we commented about verse 4, they'll have special insight into the meaning of the 1,290 days. God counts the days for them from when temple worship is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up. Not only will something special happen one month on from when the Great Tribulation ends, but the Lord said in verse 12: "Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days". Isaiah 33:17 and 20-22 instructs what these blessings are: "Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty ... your eyes will see Jerusalem [and] the LORD in majesty [in Zion] ... for the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; he will save us".

### **The Abomination of Desolation**

I've already mentioned that the Lord Jesus stated in Matthew 24:15 that the remnant must react quickly to the appearance of the abomination of desolation spoken about in Daniel 12:11. In 11:31, it referred to what Antiochus Epiphanes did when he overthrew Temple worship in Jerusalem and installed a statue of Olympian Zeus in the sanctuary in 167 BC. But here, 12:11 states there'll be another "abomination of desolation" set up in the future Temple, and which is a prominent feature of the 70th week prophecy, see 9:27. There isn't time to go into detail about this future "abomination of desolation", except to say that Revelation 13:14-15 mention an image of the future Roman Emperor.

### **Daniel's reward in the Kingdom**

In verse 13, the Lord told Daniel: "Go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days". Daniel's job was now complete. He would soon die but at the Rapture (in the Resurrection), he'll stand in glory and take part in the kingdom. He's one of those the Lord insisted "will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven", Matthew 8:11. Daniel had served his God in the very difficult circumstances of exile; and in high government positions throughout the first two major Gentile world powers. He's an outstanding example of faithfulness for believers of any dispensation, see Ezekiel 14:14 and 20 and 28:3.

### **Review of the prophecies in Daniel 7-12**

Let's finish today (and our series) with a brief review of the main points in these prophecies:

1. First of all, these prophecies are mainly about periods of world rule called "The Times of the Gentiles" by the Lord Jesus Himself in Luke 21:24. This period was first prophesied in chapter 2, where these Gentile world rulers were symbolised by the metals of the image. These metals represented God's view of each system of rule. Nebuchadnezzar himself was the head of gold. As dominant world powers they did supersede each other, but they continue to exist throughout history, in some form or other, until they're ultimately replaced by the everlasting Messianic kingdom, 2:44-45.
2. Chapter 7 gives an overview of the Gentile supremacy from Daniel's time until the time of the end of the age. It's an advance from chapter 2 and showed that God symbolically viewed these world powers as grotesque

beasts. Their lack of moral justice earned them this description. Chapter 7 concentrated on the ferocious character of the fourth empire (which will be a revival of what we now know was the Roman Empire). It's pictured as a beast with ten horns, which was terrifying, dreadful, exceedingly strong, and so different from the previous three, 7:7 and 19-26. Again all these kings are eventually replaced with the everlasting kingdom of the Son of Man.

3. Chapter 8 describes the course and duration of the second and third empires in even greater detail than chapters 2 and 7. The angel Gabriel gave the interpretation about the animals and their horns, which symbolized the military and political power of the kingdoms, specifically named as Medo-Persia and Greece. He also told how these world empires would impact upon the national life of Israel.
4. Chapter 9 is a special prophecy about Seventy Weeks of 7 years concerning Daniel's people and their city, that is, the Jews and Jerusalem. 69 weeks of the prophecy came to an end when the Lord Jesus was crucified. God's prophetic clock has stopped but will be restarted sometime in the future after the rapture of the church to heaven. Then the 70th week will start and there'll be great tribulation for the nation.
5. Chapter 10 is about the spiritual battles associated with these prophecies. The unseen struggle between the holy angels and the fallen angels parallels the political and social conditions of the world during the Times of the Gentiles. There are angelic influences for good and for evil. Satan and his forces seek only to bring down God's counsels and purposes relative to mankind in general. But we're told in 10:7 that Christ overcomes and triumphs.
6. Chapter 11 is really an accurate summary of actual (now) historical events, and of future contests, between successive Kings of the North (Syria) and the contemporaneous Kings of the South (Egypt). Israel, lying as it did between them, was very often the battleground for the wars between these two nations. Specifically, as to the future, Antichrist will be accepted and the Jews will become apostate as a nation. During the Great Tribulation, the Jews and Antichrist will be severely attacked by both the final King of the South and the final King of the North.
7. And so chapter 12 brings together all of these prophecies and their conclusion for the nation of Israel.

Finally, there are many more scriptural references given in the transcripts of these talks. Please send for them, if you're interested. Or you can ask for a free copy of an exposition of Daniel, which goes into these prophecies in even greater detail.

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