

A Time of Trouble and A Time of Triumph

Scripture Text: Daniel 11:36-12:3

Introduction

We live in a time of trouble. Wicked people do wicked things. Since Cain murdered his brother Able, mankind has had people who hurt others. The level of hatred and the extent of destruction has only increased over time. Men with evil in their heart will find ways to carry out acts of evil regardless of what method they choose. We just saw an incredible act of hatred and destruction this past week that happened in Las Vegas. Our hearts and prayers go out to the victims and their families who were impacted by this senseless tragedy. Some have responded with such questions as, “What is happening in the world?” Why do people do such terrible things to other people? How should we respond to this? Where was God in all of this? We will be looking for answers and ways to respond to this, but know this, God does care! God is still in control. People doing evil things have come and gone and will still come until the end of all things. In a way, Daniel’s last vision in the book is about some wicked men in history, and especially one very bad person. In fact, throughout the book we have seen many evil men and evil things, but the same theme throughout the book is this: *God is sovereign over all things!*

Chapters ten through twelve of Daniel includes conflicts on earth between various powers that have happened and will continue until the end of time when God ultimately and decisively judges all wickedness. Chapter eleven is incredibly detailed even though the vision was received hundreds of years before the events happened. It includes detailed prophecies about Persia, Greece and two main kingdoms that influenced Israel; but, much of it, verses twenty-one through thirty-five, tells us of one wicked king from the who caused great suffering for God’s people. This king, Antiochus IV, required the Jewish people to reject God and His Law, he burned copies of scripture, he ended sacrifice at the Temple, and he defiled the Temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar and setting up an idol to Zeus in the Temple. When the Jewish people revolted, he then massacred eighty thousand men, women, and children. Daniel predicted these events and they happened. Today, the Jewish people celebrate Hanukkah to remember the time they defeated Antiochus IV and took back the Temple. Toward the end of Daniel’s vision, however, it seems to shift focus and address another king and another situation. The remainder of the chapter seems to deal with another person who has not yet come.

An More Contemptible Person Shall Come

For the atrocities he caused, Daniel referred to Antiochus IV as a *contemptible* person. He was despicable and he was despised. However, many people believe the rest of chapter eleven, starting at verse thirty-six, seem to speak of another “king” who will be larger and more evil than Antiochus IV. Who is this person? Like Antiochus IV, we have already been introduced to this person. Look at the following verses.

Daniel 11:36–37 ³⁶ *And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the*

God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done.³⁷ He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.

Though Antiochus IV was powerful, he was only able to do as he wills up to a point. Every human person is only able to do what God allows! This person will “do as he wills”. He will also “exalt himself...above every god”. Even though Antiochus IV exalted himself, just as other men in the past and present have done, he still worshipped Zeus. Remember, he put an idol of Zeus in the Jewish Temple to be worshipped. The person described in these verses seems to exalt himself to the point of being worshipped. He will even “speak astonishing things against God”, blaspheming God. Daniel introduced us to this person as the “little horn” in chapter seven and the prince who will come to destroy Jerusalem and the sanctuary in chapter nine. The New Testament refers to this more contemptible person as “the man of lawlessness” and “the son of destruction” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–12), and “the beast” (Revelation 13:1-8). We also know this person as the “Antichrist” (1 John 2:18,22). But, even though this evil person Daniel reveals in this passage will come and do much evil, it has been decreed, a hint to us that God is still the One in control. But wait, there is more. Look at the following verses.

Daniel 11:40–41 ⁴⁰ *At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through.* ⁴¹ *He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites.*

During the time of this king who we believe to be the Antichrist, there will be a “great battle” and he will kill many. This time refers to the end of the present age. There will be a major battle where armies will come from the north and the south to attack this powerful ruler in the land of Israel (*the glorious land*). Some will escape from his hand, possibly because of their connection with Israel or because they are out of his way, but many will die at his hands. However, in God’s sovereign rule, even the Antichrist will come to an end. Look at the following verse.

Daniel 11:45 *And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.*

The Antichrist’s blasphemous reign of terror will eventually come to an end. It will happen somewhere between the glorious holy mountain, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and the sea. The Book of Revelation indicates more specifically that the valley of Megiddo will be the place of this final conflict in the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:13–16). The point is this, the Antichrist will come as God has declared it, but he will come to a decisive end with no one to help him.

A Great Tribulation Shall Come

For many people, their present struggles are their worst struggles. Our memories of pain and suffering become dull when new and intense sufferings occur. Certainly there have been periods of intense suffering in the world. In fact, the Church has endured very intense periods of suffering as she has been watered by the blood of martyrs. The Jewish people have also endured very intense persecutions. According to scripture, there will come a “time of trouble” that is unparalleled to anything we or anyone has ever seen. In the next chapter, chapter twelve, Daniel gives us a preview into a great period of persecution that occurs “at that time” when the Antichrist is on the earth. No matter how bad things have been or are today, we know from scripture that it will get worse towards the end. Look at the following verse.

Daniel 12:1 *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.*

At that time refers to the period of time mentioned at the end of chapter eleven. God’s people would not be left alone in the trials of persecution in the future. The angel Michael would be there to deliver Israel, almost like a divine protector of God’s people. A time of trouble unlike any other is indeed a desperate time. Jesus spoke of this “time of trouble”, but Jesus called it something else. Look at the following verses.

Matthew 24:21–22 ²¹ *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.* ²² *And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.*

Again, God does not reveal these things to discourage but to give us hope. For where there will be a great tribulation, there will also be a great deliverance. God’s people will be delivered. Those whose names are written in God’s book will be saved. This is God’s book of salvation. If your name is written in this book, then you will be saved. Is your name written in God’s book of life? But, is there more? Yes, there is!

A Glorious Resurrection Shall Come

What happens after the great tribulation? Are things just going to get very bad and that’s it? Is there any hope? Keep in mind the purpose for which God gave Daniel this vision. God did not give Daniel a vision into the future so that we can sit here and debate the prophecy and what the end of days will look like. God gave Daniel and His people this vision in order to give them hope. So, what is that hope? What does it look like? After the time of trouble that Daniel reveals in this vision, there will be a glorious resurrection sometime in the future. Those who were faithful in life, everyone whose name shall be found written in God’s book, will rise to everlasting life in glory, Those whose names are not recorded in God’s book will rise to shame and everlasting contempt. Surprisingly, Daniel revealed this. But, this is the Old Testament! Those who say the Old Testament does not speak of the resurrection are not correct. It does! Look at the following verses.

Job 19:25–27 ²⁵ *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶ And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!*

Job revealed to us that not only does our Redeemer live, but so shall we live with Him after our bodies have been destroyed, e.g. death. The prophet Isaiah also prophesied about the resurrection. Look at the following verse.

Isaiah 26:19 *Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.*

Isaiah plainly tells us the the “dead shall live” again; “their bodies shall rise”. God has revealed the glorious hope for His people all along. So, we turn to the prophet Daniel, who also received a vision of our future resurrection. In fact, God gave Daniel a vision of two types of resurrection, one to glory and one to shame. Look at the following verses.

Daniel 12:2-3 ² *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. ³ And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.*

Daniel wrote about “those who sleep in the dust of the earth”, referring to those who physically died and were buried. But death is not the final chapter of our lives. Evil dictators who persecute and kill us are not the end of our story. Even though death is coming for all, there is another day coming There is a resurrection coming. Notice that the fate of the people will be everlasting. It will be forever. Either people will be raised to life that never ends, or they will be raised to shame and contempt that never ends. This makes present faithfulness worthwhile for the saints, even if it costs them their lives, something better awaits them. Their ultimate outcome will be that they shine brightly like the stars forever and ever. Again, Jesus spoke of this day. Look at the following.

John 5:28–29 ²⁸ *Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.*

So, there is our hope. Yes, times of trouble will come, but a time of triumph is also coming. One day, our mortal bodies will be reunited with our immortal spirit. We will all be raised from the dead. The question is this, “Which resurrection will you experience?” Will it be a resurrection to life or a resurrection to shame, contempt, and judgement? Will you be one of those who hears Jesus’ voice at the end of all things and goes to live forever with Him in everlasting life? Will you be one of those who hears Jesus voice at the end of all things and goes on to everlasting contempt and separation? The choice is yours. What have you chosen?

Conclusion

In closing, Daniel's final vision reminds us of the awesome truth of scripture. We should be amazed by the incredible accuracy of God's Word. We should also be amazed by God's gift of revelation, and the hope and encouragement He gives through His Word. It is times like this that we need to turn to God and His Word for comfort. That is why scripture was given to us. Paul reminds us of this in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 15:4 *For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

The Bible is God's written words that are meant to give us encouragement and hope. We should look to Scripture to see the hope that God has promised us and remember it in the times of trouble. If we are in Christ, we are victorious! This is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!