

The End of All Things

Scripture Text: Daniel 12:4-13

Introduction

People are fascinated about the end of things. We want to know how things will end. We work toward finishing something. We want the bad things in this life to finally come to an end. In the Lord of the Rings trilogy, there is a fellowship of friends who are on a mission to defeat a great evil that is threatening their world. Through many adventures and set backs, the group comes to a final battle where two of the characters, Frodo and Sam, cast the ring of power into a volcano and finally destroy the great evil. It was the end of all things, and Frodo was glad to be rid of a great burden he had carried for so long. He was also glad to have his close friend, Sam, with him at the end. It really looked like the end of all things, but there was another “ending”, one where Frodo and Sam were with the rest of the fellowship. They even found themselves back home, where life was good and they were safe from all the evil that they had fought so long. The end of all things was actually the beginning of something new. That kind of describes this great journey we have embarked through the book of Daniel. We have been with Daniel through many adventures and setbacks and are now at the end of all things.

At the end of the book, Daniel was about eighty-five years old. He had lived to see his people begin to return home. Even though things were looking good for his people, Daniel was concerned about their future. That is the context around his fourth and final recorded vision. In chapter ten, we read that Daniel was at the Tigris river, away from the city, perhaps to spend some uninterrupted time with the Lord. He had been praying and fasting for three weeks when he saw a heavenly being hovering over the river, who was either an angel of God, God Himself, or maybe even the pre-incarnate Christ. The man told Daniel that he was greatly loved and that he should not fear. Daniel even got a glimpse of the spiritual battle around him. Then, Daniel received a vision of the future, which we read in chapter eleven. That vision revealed details about the centuries of conflict immediately after Daniel until the end times, focusing mainly on two individuals. One was Antiochus IV, a king from the north who persecuted the Jewish people about a hundred and fifty years before Christ. The other is believed to be the Antichrist, a wicked person who will persecute God’s people right before the end of all things.

God’s Word Has Been Preserved For Us

When we were in chapter eleven, I mentioned how amazing it is that God revealed such detail about things that had not even happened at the time they were written. We can look back to those things and receive much encouragement from God’s Word, that He has a plan and that things happen just as He declared. In this final passage of the book, Daniel was instructed to “shut up the words and seal the book”. Why would God tell Daniel to do this? Was this to make the vision a secret? Let us look at verse four.

Daniel 12:4 *But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.*

It is possible to read this as to keep the vision a secret. There may be another way to look at this. In the ancient Near East the custom was to “seal” an important document by marking it by the parties involved and the recording scribe. A sealed text was not to be tampered with or changed. Then the original document was duplicated and placed in a safe place where it could be preserved. One way to view this verse is that God was telling Daniel to *preserve* the vision for future generations, *until the time of the end*. This makes sense because many will roam around seeking an answer to the things that will be coming, and God’s Word has at least part of the answer. Perhaps the searching for knowledge mentioned here is people trying to comprehend the visions more accurately. For many years people have come up with all sorts of theories concerning the end times. God has revealed some of what is going to happen. “Sealing the book” would ensure the prophecy would be available to those who would live during the terrible times mentioned in the prophecy. Those who know the truth of God’s Word know where to find wisdom, though those around them run to and fro, seeking knowledge in vain.

God Has A Definite Plan For The End

One thing we are reminded throughout Daniel is that God is not surprised by any event in human history. More than that, God has a definite plan for His creation. In this final part of the vision, Daniel goes back to the river scene that we first saw at the beginning of chapter ten. In this scene, we are reintroduced to the heavenly being hovering over the river, who is now accompanied by two more persons. Look at the following verses.

Daniel 12:5–6 ⁵ *Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. ⁶ And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, “How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?”*

Two beings, presumably angels, suddenly appear standing on opposite banks of the Tigris River. We also see “the man clothed in linen”, who many believe is God or the pre-incarnate Christ. This heavenly being is hovering above the waters of the river, while the other two are standing on the banks of the river. It appears to be a scene of two heavenly angels standing before the Lord who is exalted above them all. One of the angels asked the man in linen, “How long will it be until the time of distress happens that was prophesied in the vision?” One thing this shows us is that the angels in heaven are interested in the affairs of humans, as well as the future things. It also shows that angels do not know everything. Only God has a perfect knowledge of all things, past, present and future. The man dressed in linen answered the angel’s question.

Daniel 12:7 *And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.*

The man in linen raised both his hands before declaring the answer to the question. Raising a hand in an oath was the customary practice of the time, but raising both hands and swearing to keep the oath in the name of the eternal God gives the *greatest possible assurance* that the words spoken are true. The time of the great tribulation would be a time, times, and half a time. Since that is probably very clear to most of us, let us move on! Actually, the same answer was given back in chapter seven about the same prophesied end-time events (Daniel 7:24–25). This could be an undefined period of time, or it could be, as some suggest, the half part of the last week in Daniel’s vision of Seventy Sevens, e.g. three and one-half years. Look at the following verse.

Daniel 9:27 *And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.*

The sovereign God of the universe was promising directly and emphatically that the Antichrist’s horrors perpetrated upon God’s people and the whole world will last but a brief time. Even when trouble happens in our lives, God is sovereignly controlling the extent and amount of time and will bring it to an end.

God Gives Understanding to The Wise

Some people approach the end time prophecies as a puzzle to solve. Many have all sorts of theories about what is going to happen. Some have gone so far as to say when certain things will happen. These have usually been incorrect. I do not think God expects us to make all sorts of theories about the end times and when certain things will happen. Jesus said that there were certain things that even He did not know, things that only the Father knew (Matthew 24:36). And Daniel admitted that he did not understand. This could be troubling, as Daniel was God’s prophet. If he did not understand what God was saying, how can we? Therefore, Daniel asked for more information.

Daniel 12:8 *I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?”*

Maybe Daniel understood some things about what had been revealed to him, but he did not fully understand all that he had received. This should encourage us! Being a person of faith does not mean you understand everything perfectly. If someone says they understand exactly what the prophecies in scripture say, that should raise a huge red flag. If we did understand everything perfectly, then where would our faith be? To live by faith means we have unanswered questions. Maybe things like the prophecies are not meant to be understood until *after the fact*. Maybe some things are the secrets of God that He will reveal, if He chooses, at the time He desires. Either way, Daniel followed up with his own question, “What shall be the outcome of these things?” Perhaps he was concerned with Israel’s fate. Maybe he was concerned about the end-time events the angel had revealed—the Antichrist’s activities, the great tribulation, and Israel’s persecution and deliverance. To this question, the man in linen responded.

Daniel 12:9–12 ⁹ He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. ¹¹ And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. ¹² Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days.”

The answer to the question has two parts. The 1,290 days is approximately three and a half years, so this could be the same as the “time, times, and half a time” that was mentioned earlier and the half-week of the Seventy Sevens. The significance of the 1,335 days is unclear. It may imply that there would be an additional forty-five-day period before the complete fulfillment of the vision. It is possible that we just do not know exactly what these days are. These specific days do say one thing: God has predetermined the end to the very day. In this time, the Jewish nation will be shattered, but God will vindicate them. This emphasizes the need for the saints to persevere faithfully, even when we do not fully understand all that God has chosen to reveal to us.

God’s People Will Stand Victorious At The End

Regardless of what the days mean, one thing we know is that God’s people will remain faithful till the end. God’s people are to go on living faithfully in this corrupt world, confident of the inheritance that is stored up for them at the end of the days. That is the encouragement Daniel receives at the end of this vision and book. Look at the following.

Daniel 12:13 *But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.*

Daniel was told to “go your way” twice, here and in verse nine. This is not a rebuke but simply indicates the prophet should go on with his life and not be concerned with his lack of knowledge. The vision was about the far distant future. Daniel was assured that these prophecies would be preserved for those who will need them, those who live at “the time of the end”. God had revealed many wonderful truths to Daniel over the years. The prophet was now a very old man, and he was instructed to cease being anxious about these matters and be satisfied with what he had been told for as long as he lived. Go on, for you will die! But it is Ok, you will live again, if you are wise and follow Christ.

Conclusion

In closing, Daniel stresses God’s sovereignty over world history. History unfolds as part of God’s plans and is moving toward God’s predetermined goals. God is in control and He has set an end for all things. God’s goals for human history include the deliverance of His people, the resurrection, and the establishment of His everlasting kingdom. God calls His people of every time to perseverance and hope. God calls us to live out our faith in a hostile world whatever the cost. Our hope is not found in this earth, but in our Lord and Savior Who has saved us. This is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!