

The Book of Daniel

Chapter Twelve



Chapter 12 provides the completion of the vision that was prefaced in Chapter 10 and provided in Chapter 11. As discussed in Chapter 11, some or all of the remainder of this vision could be considered “telescoping”, meaning that the prophet is looking at two different events through the same lens, even though separated by decades, hundreds, or thousands of years. Our conclusions are meant to be suggestions for prayerful consideration and further study.

12:1 – A Time of Great Difficulty

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”

Though separated as a new chapter, this text is a continuation of all that was discussed in Chapters 10 and 11, most recently speaking about the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and his downfall.

Who is Michael and what is significant about him? **He is the archangel which appeared to have charge over Israel (see also Daniel 10:13, 21, Jude 1:9, Revelation 12).**

This prophecy predicts a time of unprecedented trials for God’s people. This is probably speaking of the whole series of persecutions against the Jews under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. Jesus used similar phraseology in Matt 24:21. It could also refer to a “Great Tribulation” which some believe is yet to come.

At the time of this tribulation, some of the Jews would be delivered. Truly, the Jews were delivered by the Maccabees and experienced approximately 100 years of independence thereafter. However, it came at great loss of life. Many righteous (and some wicked) died in the battle for Jewish independence.

The book referenced is most likely a reference to the book mentioned in Daniel 10:21 because it is the only book recently mentioned in Daniel’s prophecy and would be most prevalent in the Old Testament reader’s mind at this point. If it were the Book of Life which contains the name of the saints of God (Revelation 20:15), it would likely have been introduced as such. The book referred to in Daniel 10:21 seemed to contain the description of human history. Therefore, those who God ordained to survive the deadly reign of Antiochus would survive, as the book said.

12:2-3 – A Reconciling of the Loss

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame [and] everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

This passage clearly seems to be a telescoping from the time of this battle into the distant future, yet to come. Define some of the important terms in this passage below.

Many of them – **likely a reference to Daniel’s people, the Jews. Remember, they are the focus of this vision.**

Sleep – **a reference to death (1 Thess 4:14, 1 Cor. 15:20)**

Some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt – **a reference to the separation between the saved and the lost at the eternal judgment following a universal resurrection. (see Acts 24:15).**

The reference to those who are wise appears to be a Hebrew parallelism used to express one idea. The wise are those who turn many to righteousness, allowing all of them to have a better resurrection. Those engaged in the work of evangelism and sanctification shine brightly in the resurrection. (see Proverbs 9:10, Matthew 13:43, Daniel 11:33, John 4:36, and Romans 8:18)

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12:4 – Daniel’s Instruction

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, [even] to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”

Daniel was told to “shut up”, that is to conceal, make hidden or keep secret this vision he received. The point was that this vision was not to be shared, or understood yet. To seal is to make an end of something. This was to be the last thing Daniel recorded in his prophecy. He was to affix his “seal” upon the book, so that men would know this is where he stopped recording the vision. In comparing this instruction with John’s instruction in Revelation 22:10-13, we understand that Daniel was to keep this revelation hidden for a while. It is unknown whether this meant a delayed publication of this vision or perhaps a delayed understanding of this vision. A delayed publication may have been possible through the Magi, the order of wise men which Daniel and his three friends had great influence over. Remember that these Magi came to the birth of the Messiah.

The reference to many running about and increasing knowledge probably means that many will study this passage and understanding will increase over time. It was not Daniel’s lot to understand it, but only to receive the vision. (see Habakkuk 2:2-3 and 1 Peter 1:10-12)

12:5-7 – Daniel’s Question

“Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And [one] said to the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, How long [shall it be to] the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that [it shall be] for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these [things] shall be finished.”

After the receipt of this vision, Daniel makes note that there are three others present, the “other two” on each side of the river and the one upon the river. Why three? (see Deuteronomy 19:15 and 2 Corinthians 13:1) **There are three witnesses to this oath. This is a clue that God wants to make it completely clear that this promise WILL be fulfilled.**

The one who is clothed in linen, standing upon the waters may likely be a pre-incarnate vision of Christ. In Christ’s previous appearance to Daniel at the beginning of this vision, He was dressed in linen (see Daniel 10:5-6, also Revelation 19:14). He also walked upon water on the Sea of Galilee during His ministry.

Daniel’s question was how long it would be until the end of these wonders. This isn’t the first time Daniel asked this question (see Daniel 8:13-14). Others also asked the Lord, “how long?” (see Revelation 6:9-11)

The extension of both the right and left hands toward heaven appears to be the sign of an absolute oath. Why would the Lord do this? **It is likely because He wants it to be absolutely clear that this was a solemn promise. (see Genesis 14:21-24 and Deuteronomy 32:40) He would only let these things endure for the period of time that He would allow. By standing on the river, He was demonstrating His awesome power over all things, including nature itself.**

What is the time, times and a half time? It is likely a reference to 3.5 years (also 42 months or 1,260 days). The time between the declaration that the morning and evening offerings should cease and the rededication of the temple was around 3.5 years. (see Daniel 7:23-27 and Revelation 12)

To “scatter the power of the holy people” means to “shatter the hand of the holy people”. In Daniel 8:21-24, Antiochus Epiphanes is described as one who did much destruction against the Jews. Remember though, that at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, the events ended by a rising up of the Jews against the Greeks.

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12:8-9 – No More Answers

“And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what [shall be] the end of these [things]? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words [are] closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”

We shouldn't feel bad if we don't completely understand the answer given. Daniel didn't understand it either and asked for additional clarification. However, it was not Daniel's lot to understand, but to receive and deliver the vision for the benefit of future generations. (see Acts 1:6-7)

The Lord made it clear that understanding would not be granted until it was the appropriate time. One might consider that if these events had already transpired, they should be a bit clearer to us. However, my understanding of history is very limited and additional study, research, and prayer may bring additional explanation.

12:10 – Things Shall Continue

“Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.”

The first reference in this passage is undoubtedly to the sanctification of God's saints. This is very consistent with Daniel 11:35, which speaks of the purification of those who have insight, meaning righteous Jews who would be martyred as they sought to remain loyal to the Lord. These trials refined, purged, and made them pure to the “time of the end”. This latter phrase seems to imply a distinction between this time of trial and the “time of the end”, which is clearly referenced in Daniel 11:40 and 12:9.

The Lord has a desire to cleanse and purify His people, regardless of whether they are an Old Testament or New Testament saint. (see Titus 2:14 and Revelation 7:13-14)

Even though God is doing a good work among his saints, the wickedness of the wicked will continue unabated. This language is somewhat consistent with what we read in Revelation 22:11, *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”*

Despite God's clear prophetic indication of what would happen, none of the wicked will understand or believe God's Word, but the wise will understand and grow strong in faith. (see 1 Corinthians 2:14)

12:11-12 – From Good to Better

“And from the time [that] the daily [sacrifice] shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, [there shall be] a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed [is] he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.”

The initiating event for this prophecy is the abomination that makes desolate. It appears to be a reference to an idolatrous desecration of the temple that results in a decay or desolation of true temple worship. We know that the statue of Jupiter was erected in the Holy of Holies in the temple on the 15th day of Chislev, 168 BC and the offensive sacrifice of swine was made on the 25th of Chislev in the same year. The command to stop the daily sacrifice likely took place some time earlier. We don't know that date with any specificity. The Holy of Holies was rededicated exactly three years from the date the offensive sacrifice was made: Chislev 25, 165 BC. We calculated the number of days between the 15th of Chislev, 168 BC and the 25th of Chislev, 165 BC as 1,076 days back in Chapter Eight. The remaining 214 days may be the gap between the end of the morning and evening sacrifice and the erection of the statute of Jupiter. Together, this could comprise the 1,290 days.

Assuming that there is a gap between the cessation of the daily sacrifices and the erection of the statute of Jupiter makes this passage even more confusing because the language is such that it appears to assume they are the same. These passages demonstrate why many premillennialists believe sacrifices will be initiated again in Jerusalem, to allow for the literal fulfillment of this prophecy in the future.

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In regard to the 1,335 days, it terminates 45 days after the 1,290 days. This is roughly consistent with what we know about the rededication of the temple and the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. We do not know the exact date of his death, but it is said to have occurred in 164 BC. The rededication of the temple occurred at the end of November/early December 165 BC. If the rededication of the temple is the end of the 1,290 days, the 1,335 days occurred in early 164 BC, which may have been the date of Antiochus' death. This date would surely be a cause for rejoicing for the Jews because their oppressor had died.

12:13 – The End of Daniel

“But go thou thy way till the end [be]: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.”

Daniel was told that he would not see the fulfillment of all these things but would die (rest) and then receive his allotted portion (stand in his lot) at the end of days. Though dead, he yet speaks and grace continues to be ministered to us by his faithful service during his lifetime.