



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Daniel 12:1-13

Daniel

"The End of Days"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Thank you, Mark, and good morning. We are at the end of our study in the book of Daniel, a study I've thoroughly enjoyed: great book. And we come now to the 12th chapter, which is a relatively short chapter when you consider how long chapter 11 was, and some of the others; so we're going to read all 13 verses. If you'll remember, this is part of a section beginning with chapter 10, which is the preface or the prelude – and this is the postlude or the end of 12, chapter 12 – and in between chapter 11 is the great vision that was given to Daniel. He was standing on the bank of the Tigris River when the angel appeared to him. Gabriel explains this vision that he's given that gives us a sweep of human history from the time of the Persians all the way to the time of the future Antichrist, and it ends with Antichrist and his defeat. But a bit of the vision continues on into chapter, the first few verses, in which Gabriel explains things to him. So we come to the end with Gabriel speaking to Daniel in verse 1 of chapter 12.

"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase." Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the

river and the other on that bank of the river. And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be until the end of these wonders?" I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed. As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?" He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days! But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age."

It's a magnificent conclusion to the book: great hope for Daniel and for all of God's people at the end of the age. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for this great text of Scripture. We thank you for all of your Word. The whole of the Bible, Father, is your inerrant Word, your revelation, all 66 books. And this book of Daniel as a great part of that, because like so many of those books of the Bible, so many portions of Scripture is about the future.

The Bible's an amazing book, Father. It tells us our history: human history, personal history – past, present, and future – that we were dead in our transgressions and sins. That's where we began under judgment, but you saved us through the blood of your Son. And, presently, we who have believed in him are secure. We're in his hand; we're in your hand. We are being protected and guided, even in the midst of the storms of this world and things we don't always understand. Nevertheless, we know we're secure presently in Christ, and then we have a glorious future to come.

We are saved: past, present, and future; that's glorious. And you give us a lot of instruction just in this passage, this 12th chapter of Daniel, about our future and the resurrection to come, the glory to come, shining his lights for eternity. We can barely imagine what that must be like, but we know that's our future and that's the glory you have for us; and you bless us with this revelation from this chapter, but from so many

portions of this great book, this unique book. We thank you for it and pray that the Spirit of God would open our hearts to receive the things that have been read; and as we consider the text, that we'll be illuminated in our mind to understand them and really go beyond anything that is said in our application of it.

I pray that the Spirit of God would do that, would lead each one of us into a deeper, fuller personal understanding of how all of this applies to us. But it certainly does apply, and applies in one general way in that we are to have prospect of our life and know that this life isn't all there is, that it's just really a brief moment of our existent, which is eternal; and we should be living for that glorious eternity. So may that be the effect of our time together. Bless us in that way and bless us materially.

We live in dangerous times. We live in the flu season and we live at a time when this season of the year when the air is full of viruses and microbes, and we can catch things; and some of us have. And we pray for them that you'd give them healing. And we pray for the rest of us that you'd protect us. Every breath of life we take is a gift from you, and you can filter it out and keep us safe. And we ask that you do that; but your will be done. And we pray for those that are sick and those of us who may become sick that you'd bless us with healing, and bless them with healing and encouragement. And we pray for encouragement in the vicissitudes of life, the changing experiences of life.

Someday, all of us – if you don't return before that time – all of us will perish and we'll go to the grave. But that's not the end; we'll rise, and we look forward to that, and we thank you for the hope that we have of the resurrection. We thank you for all that we have in Christ. It's in his name we pray. Amen.

[Message] A question that's often asked; you've probably asked it. If you haven't asked it, you no doubt wondered it, and that is, "Are we living in the last days?" As I say, we often ask that and wonder about it. We do that when we're reading our newspaper sometimes, but particularly when we're studying a book like Daniel. It's a book that reveals the grand sweep of human history and visions that conclude with the end of days and leave us wondering if we are there or near the end.

The Bible doesn't tell us. It wasn't revealed to Daniel, though he must have wondered about it. He was told about the future, but not that; not the date that these events would occur. What was revealed to Daniel, and it's one of the important lessons of the last chapter of the book is how we are to live in the present as we

approach the end of days. That's where the chapter begins. In the final days of history, the first three verses are actually the conclusion of the last vision of the book which is found in chapter 11.

At the time of those events, during the time of the Antichrist, Michael who is called the great prince, the protector of Israel, will arise. And we find further illumination on all of this in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 12:7-9, we have the record of what will happen when he does arise. John writes that there will be war in heaven: Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. Michael will be victorious. Satan will be thrown down to the earth where he will continue the war by attacking God's people.

Gabriel describes it as a time of distress. It will be the Great Tribulation which will continue for three-and-a-half years. That's the length of time that's given in our text. In verse 7, a time, times, and half a time. And that's the time that's given in Revelation 12:14. It will be unlike any time in the history of the world; that's what Gabriel says. It will be distress such has never occurred since there was a nation until that time.

The world has experienced tribulation; it's experienced lots of tribulation, intense tribulation. The 20th century certainly witnessed a lot of that where we had two World Wars, genocides. But what the angel is saying is none of that is as terrible as this, as terrible as what is to come.

And the Lord himself confirmed that. Jesus said as much in Matthew 24:21, "There will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now." And you might think, "Well, no, not since then, 2,000 years ago." But since then, and particularly in the 20th century, we've had things that compare to those tragedies and wars and all in the past. But he ends the sentence by saying, "Since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will."

So what's coming is unique. As bad as things have been, they aren't as bad as what will come. In fact, he said, "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short."

And that's what Gabriel reveals here. "At that time," he says, "your people, everyone who is found in the book will be rescued." The book; that's the Book of Life, which is referred to in Revelation 17:8 where, "The names have been written," John says, "from the foundation of the earth," from the very beginning; really, from

all eternity. They're the ones that Jesus calls the elect. They are believers. They're chosen ones who believe.

The idea of the book with names written in it comes from the ancient practice of keeping a record of all the citizens of a city. They'd be registered in an official book, and those who had citizenship, whose names were in the city register or in the book enjoyed the privileges and protection of that town or city. And that's true of every saint; that's true of every believer, everyone who's name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We are citizens of heaven and we are under the constant care of the government of heaven.

Here, it is the elective Israel alive in those days who are referred to, and who will be rescued from the persecution of Satan and Antichrist. It will happen at the end at Christ's coming. It will be not only a physical deliverance, but a spiritual deliverance for many; because while many Jews will believe during the tribulation, many won't. They won't believe until the end when the Lord returns and the Lord appears in the air.

Zechariah tells us about that. In fact, it's interesting. Zechariah sort of fills in some of the blanks of Daniel, chapter 12, and so we can bring in a lot of what he says to get a fuller understanding of the things that Daniel is told and what he saw in the vision. But in Zechariah 12:10, we read of Israel's conversion. It is at that time that the prophet says – or, actually, it's the Lord who's speaking in the vision – that he will pour out his Spirit on the house of David, this Spirit of grace, and that will cause a response.

Now, as I reflect upon that, I'm often – I shouldn't say amazed; I shouldn't be amazed – but I'm impressed by the consistency of Scripture between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The teaching of Moses, and Isaiah, and Ezekiel, and Zechariah, and Daniel is consistent with the teaching of our Lord and the apostles. Paul talks about grace, and he talks about the fact that God must act first before we act. Our act is a response really to his grace.

God always takes the initiative in salvation and sanctification in our life in everything. And you see, for example, in Ephesians, chapter 2, where he speaks about our condition. There, he reminds the Ephesians of their condition: "You were dead in your transgressions and sins. You were unable to do anything. You were spiritually

unable, like a dead person; you were spiritually dead. But God," he goes on to say, "being rich in mercy has made us alive together with Christ."

We're dead, but God intervenes and he gives life. It's what John talks about, or what our Lord talks about in John, chapter 6, which many of you studied this morning in adult Sunday School class. We find it here; we find it in Zechariah. The Lord is saying, "I'm going to pour out my Spirit, the Spirit of grace," and it's going to cause a response. "They will look," as a result of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. "They will look upon me whom they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over him."

Israel will see Christ. Spiritually in the Scriptures through the eyes of faith, they will also see him physically as he appears, and they'll put the two together because the Spirit of God will be pour out upon them. He'll quicken them; he'll give them illumination; he'll give them insight. They will see things that they had not seen before, they will realize that they had crucified their Messiah, and they'll repent with tears. This is part of the triumphant conclusion to history that this final vision of the book of Daniel promises, the conversion and the rescue of Israel, as well as multitudes of Gentiles; because if you go back to Revelation, chapter 7, where you have the 144,000 servants of the Lord, the servants of Israel, you also have this innumerable multitude of saints, of those who are saved out of the great tribulation.

They're Gentiles; probably the recipients of the great ministry of those 144,000 and others. But many will be converted during that time. That's the promise of rescue from the great tribulation. But those who died during the tribulation will also be rescued, rescued from the grave, as will all of God's people. That's the promise of verse 2, one of the greatest promises of Scripture, the promise of the resurrection of the dead. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

Sleep is a description of death, not because the soul sleeps at death, but because the body is inactive, as in physical sleep, and so there's an analogy between the two. As the body rises from sleep, the body will rise from death. Believers will rise to glory, to everlasting life we're told. Unbelievers will rise to eternal judgment, everlasting contempt, shame, misery. Now that's pretty clear, I think. That leaves little room for some of the common ideas that are present today, such as the doctrine of universalism, or even annihilationism.

Not all are saved in the end and the soul does not cease to exist at death. We are eternal beings. Every human being is an eternal beings, unbelievers alike; and unbelievers will be raised at the end, and they'll be raised to eternal, endless punishment. It's a terrible thing. It's not something we gloat about, it's a terrible thing; it's a frightening truth. But the hope that's given here is that for believers, there will be the resurrection of the body to eternal life.

This life is not all there is. It's so easy to become enamored of this world and all that's around us, and the daily nature of it. It's difficult to not just live for this moment, live within the moment and just think about tomorrow, or next year, or retirement, or whatever. All those things are fine to think about. But the danger is we fail to remember that this life is brief and this world, as John tells us in his first epistle, is presently passing away. It's not going to last.

This life isn't all there is. It's an alluring place and it's easy to become enamored of it. But this life is not all there is; this world is not all there is. We have eternal life, and we have something glorious before us; and in verse 3, the glory of it is described: a fascinating description, a magnificent description. Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven like the stars forever and ever. We're going to shine like stars.

Now, those who do are described as, "Those who lead many to righteousness." And I take this to be in the context of the great tribulation and what we know from the rest of Scripture, from Revelation, chapter 7, that these are the evangelists, the 144,000 servants of the Lord as they're called there. I take that to mean that they're people who'll go out and preach the gospel in those terrible days. They will lead many to Christ in the righteousness that is through faith.

That's the righteousness that's referred to there. It's the alien righteousness of justification. Many of them will do a great work and many will suffer for their service, but they will lose nothing in this life for Christ that he will not more than make up for in the kingdom to come. They will shine; they will be glorious.

And that's true for all of us. You and I cannot serve the Lord, and in that service, lose anything, sacrifice anything as we stand for him that the Lord will not more than make up for in the world to come, and with blessings that eclipse anything we can imagine in this life. Whatever we can hold onto in this world, we can just hold onto it for a little while; and either it's taken from us or we're taken from it; it's all

temporal. What we have in our service for the Lord and what Daniel's promised here at the end is eternal blessing, and that's a hope we have.

All of these promises: the promise of the resurrection of the body and the bright, glorious future we have, are given for encouragement: encouragement to Daniel, encouragement for us and for others. For God's people, encouragement for the present, encouragement to live life well for him in the present. These promises here give perspective on how we are to live in the present until the end comes, whether it's the Lord's return or our death. But they give perspective on how we live our life; and it's given perspective to God's people down through the ages, the hope of eternal life, the hope of the resurrection to come.

Martin Luther is a good example of that. He was not only a great reformer who shook the world with the gospel, but he was also a good family man who enjoyed home life. If you've ever studied his life, you know that that's a big part of a biography on Martin Luther is his love of hearth and home. He loved his wife and his children, and that was really the great joy of his life. So when his daughter, Magdalena, died at the age of 14, he was crushed, just devastated by her death, as you can imagine.

I remember my grandmother many, many years ago telling me she had lost a child. Lost her son, Sammy, when he was about two or three-years-old, and then she lost her husband some years later. She said, "The hardest thing for a mother is to lose a child and the hardest thing for a father is to lose a child." And some of you have suffered that. Luther suffered that; Calvin suffered that; Whitfield suffered that. They lost their children in infancy.

In the case of Luther when Magdalena was 14, he loved that particular daughter especially. But while he was crushed by it, he was not destroyed by the tragedy. Through his tears he said, "Lena, you will rise and shine like a star, yea, like the sun." That's the promise that Daniel gives here, and it's the promise that Jesus gave in Matthew 13 that the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom to come. So when his daughter's coffin was being nailed shut, he could again cry out, "Hammer away; she will rise again," and so will we. It's not an empty hope, it's a great hope, and it's true, because it's based on Scripture.

You and I have never seen a resurrection; we won't see a resurrection. Resurrections are not part of our experience. There's so much that is promised us

that's not part of our experience. Heaven's not part of our experience. Shining like a light or like a star is a beautiful metaphor, but it's an analogy. We don't know what it's like. We can get a sense of the glory of that, but we know these things by faith, and we believe in the resurrection by faith. That's how we live our life, by faith; we believe God's Word.

But God's Word is reliable, and the book of Daniel demonstrates that in all the prophecies that are given throughout that ancient book that have been fulfilled already. This is a reliable book, and so we know that this is no empty hope because the Word of God is sure and certain. We know that by faith, and we're to live by faith, and we're to trust in these things.

Again, it is part of the triumphant end of Daniel's vision and what gives us encouragement to live well in these days. But then we read in verse 4 that Daniel is told to seal it all up. "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time ; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."

That seems a little odd to us to seal up the book because it seems to make the book inaccessible to people. No one can read this book if it's sealed up. But that's not the meaning. The purpose of sealing documents was to preserve them. Typically, a copy was made, then the original document was sealed and stored in a safe place.

That's the idea here, and the idea is these words would be preserved until the end times when they will be needed by those who are alive when all of these things begin to happen; and then the seal will be broken and the events of the last days will begin to happen, just as events begin to unfold in the book of Revelation when the book, the seals of the book in chapter 6 are broken and then the events begin to happen; that's the idea here. And then these words will be a great comfort to the people who will read them and believe because they reveal that God's plan and purpose in all of these events are there before them. They read them in this book of Daniel as they're undergoing them, and they know that the end is glorious; the end is one of ultimate victory. It'd be a great encouragement for those people, that generation to come.

One thing that will characterize those last days is the increase in knowledge. Notice that statement there at the end: "Many will go back-and-forth and knowledge will increase." And if one thing characterizes the age in which we are living, it is that;

knowledge is increasing exponentially, and I guess, as it has never before. There's a knowledge explosion with the development of the computer and how it is continually refined, and knowledge just keeps increasing and increasing, daily almost.

Knowledge is great; knowledge is valuable; knowledge, though, is not wisdom. Wisdom is the skillful use of knowledge, and we have little of that today, little wisdom. I don't know that mankind has ever had much wisdom. Wisdom is a rare commodity. It's a very valuable thing as the Proverbs explained. Men so often use their knowledge, their great knowledge, to evil, and evil end and great evil, as well as using it for helpful purposes.

That's another characteristic of the last days. In verse 10, it stated that the wicked will act wickedly. I look at that and I think, "Well, that's an odd statement. Of course, the wicked act wickedly; they're wicked, and that's how wicked people act."

But the point, I think, is in saying the wicked act wickedly means the wicked people will act especially wickedly. Wickedness, evil, will only increase in those future days. With the increase in knowledge, there will be an increase in sin.

That's inevitable with the natural man, with unbelieving man. And the reason for that is because he begins in the wrong place; his mind is bent in the wrong direction. So because he begins in the wrong place, he ends up in the wrong place. He begins with unbelief, and that affects everything: all of his thoughts, all of his ways of looking at life. His mind is darkened, his understanding distorted, and his perspective is biased. That's true of every unbeliever.

Solomon wrote long ago in the book of Proverbs, Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." That speaks directly to our secular age, which gives no thought to God in anything.

Well, if as Psalm 36 says, "God is the fountain of life and source of light, the source of knowledge, the source of understanding of how to put knowledge together correctly." Then if men shut him out of their thoughts, they shut out the light, they shut out a correct understanding of things; and that's characteristic of our day.

Again, we don't know when the seal will be broken and the end of days will begin, but it certainly seems that the world has never been so set for that to happen as it is in these days in which we live. Even so, we are notoriously inadequate in

figuring out these things. And there's a long history in the history of the church of people who have set dates, even up to fairly recent times within the past few years of people confidently setting a date for the Lord's return and for all this to begin, and it doesn't happen. And history is also full of unexpected turns in things that go in a different direction than we had ever thought they would. We had no concept of that, and then suddenly, things are completely different.

We may be living in a time of despair and revival occurs; or something occurs to change everything. We don't know what's coming, what turn may come in the next year, or decade, or whatever. All that I'm saying here is we can't predict what is going to take place in the near future. We don't know that the end is upon us; it's an unusual time in which we live. But things could go on like this for 1,000 years or more; we just don't know.

We're always to be looking for the Lord's return, but also planning for tomorrow. The end will come, we know that. The Word of God is plain and clear about that; when it will come we do not know. So, I guess, to be practical, don't cash in your IRA yet, you need to plan for the future.

Now, the concluding verses record some confusion about all of this for Daniel and the angels who gave him the revelation. Two of them were standing on either side of the Tigris River, and a third person was standing above in the air. He is – this third person – dressed in linen. He's the person we saw a couple of weeks ago in chapter 10 whose eyes were like flaming torches. It's the Lord, the Son of Man from chapter 7. He is the one the angels look to for understanding in and of itself.

There's some debate about who that person in chapter 10 is, but this seems to set him apart even more from the angels. They look to him for understanding. They ask him, "How long will it be until the end of these wonders?"

That question isn't, "When will the end days begin?" but, "How long will they last once they begin? How long will it be until the end of these wonders, until they are concluded?" And the answer is given in verse 7. He lifts his hands toward heaven and swears that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, or three-and-a-half years.

It will be a very hard three-and-a-half years. The Lord says that during that time, the forces of Antichrist will finish shadowing the power of the holy people. In other words, they will completely break Israel so the Jewish people will be completely

helpless – I assume on the verge of extinction, annihilation – and that's when, at that most helpless moment, they will cry to the Lord for help, repent, and receive Jesus as their Messiah.

According to Zechariah 14, all the nations will gather against Jerusalem and capture the city. But the prophet says, "The Lord will fight against them." Christ will return. His feet, as Zechariah explains or prophecies, will stand on the Mount of Olives, the Mount will split, Christ will destroy the enemy and he'll deliver his people. And Zechariah says, "The Lord will be king over all the earth."

Daniel doesn't say that, but he does reveal that the wicked will triumph only for a limited duration. So as terrible as it will be, it won't last, and that will give people hope. That will give those who read this, who are conversant with this passage in those days great hope to know this terrible time will not go on forever, it will end, and it will end shortly. And that's the hope that we all have. We can apply that to ourselves.

We live in an age when indifference to the things of God is the norm. God and the things of God aren't debated among people; they're not even considered; they're just ignored. And there are times in which evil is everywhere, and evil seems to be increasing. But wickedness won't last. God is in control, as we've noticed all through our studies in the book of Daniel. He is absolutely sovereign over our lives individually and over the whole course of history, "And the Lord," Zechariah said, "will be king over all the earth."

That is the goal of human history. That is the direction to which God is moving everything: the kingdom of God on earth. His plan is perfect; his plan will prevail. So, what are we to do in light of that? Well, we're to trust in him; we're to believe his Word; and we are, in light of that, to persevere to the end. That's what encourages us to persevere in faith, to continue believing.

Now, if all of that seems clear to us – with the help of Zechariah, and the help of the apostle Paul in First and Second Thessalonians, and the help of the apostle John with the book of Revelation – of all that as we bring it all into our study here, makes things clear to us. It didn't seem clear to Daniel. He was puzzled and he asked the Lord in verse 8, "What will be the outcome of these events?" The Lord answered Daniel very directly, very personally. He said to Daniel, "Go your way, Daniel."

Now, that's not a rebuke, but also, it's not the answer that Daniel was seeking. "Go your way, Daniel." He wants a fuller explanation of things, like we all do, but that wasn't given. Daniel wasn't given the answer he was looking for; things weren't explained. The outcome events weren't explained, at least the way he had been seeking to know. These things were sealed up until the end time, until the time when the seal would be broken and all of this would take place.

In the meantime, Daniel was to go about his life as he had: "Go your way, Daniel. Keep living as you've been living, your way, which is a faithful way. Keep living faithfully in evil times, but knowing that there will be an end to them, and it will be a triumphant end."

What Daniel is told about those days is there'll be evil: evil will increase, people will increase in that evil. But they'll also be purified we're told. It's a time of terrible testing. Some will be brought to faith, some will be brought in their faith to maturity, but others will be hardened in their unbelief.

The Antichrist, we know, will abolish worship and there'll be great persecution. So in verse 10 he says, "Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly." They'll become even more wicked and hardened in their wickedness. And the Lord has said that will last for a certain period of time: time, times, and half a time.

And then here at the end, it gives some very specific figures; he says that it will last for 1,290 days. That's three-and-a-half years according to the prophetic year of 360 days. But, also, that adds; this figure adds 30 days to that, which raises a question. What's the purpose of the 30 extra days that have been added in this figure?

Well, it may be that this is just a general figure and nothing much is to be made out of it. It's just a general way of speaking of three-and-a-half years by describing it as 1,290 days. Or, as it's been suggested, the 30 days will be a time in which the nations will be judged by the Lord at his return.

Perhaps; perhaps that's the explanation of that extra 30 days. But then the Lord adds in verse 12 how blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days; and that's another 45 extra days. What will happen in that time? And, again, we're not told; we can only speculate. I think reasonable speculation has been made, and one suggestion is that in that time will be the official inauguration of the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth. The 45 days will be the time needed to set up the

government, and establish the borders of the kingdom, and make appointments for government, all of that. Again, that's perhaps; that's a reasonable suggestion.

Then, maybe, these are just inconvenient facts that defy our interpretation, at least our interpretation at this time. We are never – and I'm speaking as a Bible teacher, one who spends the week interpreting things, trying to understand texts of Scripture. By this point in my life, I realize I'm not going to understand everything perfectly; and there are things I teach that probably aren't correct. I try to teach correctly, but there are some passages that just you have very good people on both sides of the issue. Maybe there's two, three, four very convincing interpretations.

And we don't understand everything and we're not going to understand everything in this life. So, perhaps, this is an example of that. We really don't know the meaning of these figures that are given and why they're there; and we won't know that until the time comes and it all unfolds, and then it will make sense to us. But that shouldn't disturb us because God has sketched out – and I use that word "sketched" purposely. God has sketched out a broad outline of the future for us, but he hasn't given us all of the details, nor explained all of those details to us. So we have some general truth here, and how it all fits together we really don't know.

So Daniel was not to be disturbed by what he didn't understand. Over his long life, he had received a lot of revelation. He had looked into the future and he'd seen things that no one else had seen. He knew much, but the visions were now over. Daniel was an old man; his life was near its end. So the book ends with hope and with counsel, verse 13: "But as for you, go your way to the end, then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age."

Now that's Daniel's hope; that's our hope. That's the hope of every believer in Jesus Christ. The moment we leave this world we enter heaven, which is our Sabbath rest. We rest, followed by the resurrection at some future day, and then the kingdom to come.

Are we close to that time? Are we close to the end of days? Are we close to the kingdom to come? We wonder. We can't help but wonder. In fact, it's a good thing to wonder about; it's a good thing to think about, to think about the return of the Lord, to think about the glory to come. That should be on our mind; that should be of great interest to us. But the time of it, when it's going to happen is something we can't know.

We know this: the end is nearer today than it was yesterday, it is coming, and it is certain. The Lord's return and the rapture of the church is something that we may or may not experience. We should look for that; we should hope for that. But we also know that until then, we've got to live today. Until that future day, we have to live in the present, and we have to live in the present every day, and live as Daniel was instructed to live: "But as for you, go your way to the end." In other words, go on living as you have lived, as a faithful person. Live in the present to God's glory.

It's one of the important lessons of this chapter. His assignment was to continue on in the faith to persevere in faith and not waver in his stand for the Lord. He was to do now what he would do and what we will do for all eternity, and that is shine like a star for Christ. That's our task, to represent Christ in this world in both word and deed, to be able to explain the hope that's in us to those who ask and to those who are drawn to us. That's what Peter tells us to do in 1 Peter 3:15.

We're also to not only explain it, but live it. Our life should be an exhibit of that; it should shine. The character of Christ should shine through our lives in the way we behave. It ought to reflect in our behavior, our demeanor, the hope that we have, the hope that world lacks; and that itself should be something that draws people to us is a kind of advertisement for the gospel itself just in the hopeful way we live our lives. That's how Daniel was to live; that's how Daniel did live.

He was just a boy when he was taken from his home in the beautiful land. He never saw it again. It was a national calamity; Jerusalem fell. Eventually, Jerusalem was destroyed, the whole land was devastated. It seemed that all was lost when he was led as a captive into Babylon through the Gate of Ishtar. Everything around him seemed to announce the defeat of the Lord and the triumph of paganism. But his faith was not shaken.

Daniel and his friends, they knew that all of that that they saw, all of the pomp, all of the glory of it, the size of it, the splendid colors and richness of it – all of that was an elaborate lie. God was on his throne, not Marduk, not any of the gods of Babylon, or Greece, or anywhere. God, the Lord God, was on his throne. They knew that; they obeyed him; they didn't compromise their faith; and as a result of that, God used them greatly. They became lights in the darkness, they brought the gospel into the heart of paganism through the things they said and the things they did, and they

were great servants of those around them. They were great servants of those pagans. They served others in the land of exile.

Daniel held positions of trust under Nebuchadnezzar and Darius. He saw the fall of Babylon and the rise of Persia. His life was productive to the end and a witness to the pagans. But he lived with hope in his future and the future of God's people; and that's the way we're to live. We're to live with that hope.

Trials will come to us; they did to Daniel. They will come to Israel in the last days; but those trials are temporary. What Israel will experience is stated here to be temporary. And our trials and our life are temporary. What is forever is what is promised here in the last verse: rest and resurrection, the glory to come.

When we really believe that and we look forward to it, it affects our lives. We live responsibly in the present; we work hard for our employers; we live and work as unto the Lord. We do all of the things, whether they be great things or seemingly small and insignificant things; we do all of it for his glory. We fix our confidence on him and his promises in spite of the losses that we may have in this world, whether they're losses in finance, or in family, or in health, or whatever. We know that these trials purify, and they're temporary.

Someday, we will, like Daniel, enter into rest; and then all of the difficulties of life, all of the experiences that have weighed us down and crushed us will be past and forgotten forever. As the poet put it: "When the shore is won at last, who will count the billows of the past?" And every believer in Jesus Christ is sure to reach the shore of heaven, then all our questions will be answered. We'll understand what these extra numbers mean in that and many, many other things, and all of our trials and sorrows will seem small and distant.

We won't count the billows of the past; we'll forget all of that. We won't agonize over the waves and the trials that beat us down in this life. Everything will be made right; that's our hope. The kingdom will come and we will shine like the stars forever, and much brighter.

That's a great thought. What a great thought that is. What a great way to end the book with such hope and such glory. Well, that's the hope of all whose names are written in the Book of Life. Is your name written in that book? It can only be there through faith, by believing in Jesus Christ.

If you're here without him, look to him; believe in him who became a man and died for sinners. He died so that all who believe in him would be saved and saved forever. Have your name written in that book; have that hope of eternal life and that glory to come. May God help you to do that. Encourage all of us with the glorious future that's ours. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for your goodness, and your grace, and your mercy; and we thank you for the studies we've had in this book. We thank you for the great future that's our. Help us to understand these things better and to live in light of them. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, and it's in his name we pray. Amen.