

Main Idea: In the final chapter of Daniel, we discover two inevitables related to the end times. God doesn't tell us *when* the race will end, but He spells out two "inevitables."

- I. We know that certain events are inevitable (1-4).
 - A. The worst is yet to come (1).
 1. There will be a time of distress.
 2. There will be a time of deliverance.
 - B. The best is yet to come (2-4).
 1. Some will rise to everlasting life.
 - The wise will rise.
 - Those who lead many to righteousness will rise.
 - They will enjoy an eternity too wonderful for words.
 2. Some will rise to everlasting contempt.
- II. We know that a certain tension is inevitable (5-13).
 - A. God wants us to know *what* not *when* (5-7).
 1. It will be for three and one-half times.
 2. It will include the breaking of the power of the holy people.
 - B. God says we won't know *when* until *then* (8-13).

Why?

 1. He wants His people to be pure (8-10).
 2. He wants His people to persevere (11-12).
 3. He wants His people to live in light of the inevitable (13).
 - Death is coming.
 - Death is not the end.

Take Inventory: Am I living in light of what is coming?

Scripture Reading: Revelation 22:12-21

When I think of the text before us, I think of something I experienced in my past that gives me a framework for interpreting this text. It's running.

I've run in two kinds of races before. The first, which is the most common, is where runners line up on a starting line and head for the finished line. Every runner knows ahead of time where the finish line is, a fact he uses to his advantage as he paces himself in the race.

There's a second kind of race, one which I have participated in one time in my life. In that race, the participants did not know where the finish line would be. That fact was in the hands of the coach alone. Let me explain.

When I was in High School, in a fund raising effort, eleven members of our track team ran a 24 hour relay race. We started on a Friday at 1:00 with the ambition to run until Saturday at 1:00, each runner taking the baton for one mile increments. We set up a campsite by the quarter mile track, so that ten runners would watch and cheer while the eleventh runner ventured his four laps, and passed the stick to the next fellow. Each runner ran approximately 1 mile per hour for 24 hours.

The interesting thing about this type of race is that only one person knew for sure when the race would end. The coach. The coach held the official watch, and only the coach had the authority to fire the gun to start the race. Likewise, only the coach had the authority to fire the gun the second time to signal that time was up and the race was over.

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For an earlier development of this passage, see the Daniel series at WBC in 1996.

Oh, we runners had watches, too. We knew roughly when the race would end, but only one person knew exactly when it would end. The one with the official clock.

Do you know how the race ended that day? I'll tell you...at the end of this message.

But first, I want us to consider another race that we're all in. This race isn't like a hundred yard dash, or even a marathon. It's like the race I was in in High School, for there's only one person who has the authority to say, "The race is over." There's only one person who holds the watch. We run. We know the race will end, but we don't know when.

That's what we discover as we ponder the message of Daniel 12. We can be grateful that the One who holds the clock has given us everything we need so we can run this race well to the very end, all to His glory.

This is good news! The One who so loved us that He came on a love mission to rescue us from eternal condemnation has also given us exactly what He wants us to know so we can please Him to the end.

And in Daniel 12, God makes it very clear that the end of the race *is* coming. And while He doesn't tell us *when* it will end, He does spell out for us two end-time "inevitables."

I. We know that certain events are inevitable (1-4).

This is our last message in our journey through the book of Daniel. To sum up the book of Daniel in one sentence, here's what the twelve chapters have clearly revealed...

The kingdoms of this world will be replaced by the Kingdom of God.

When will that happen? We don't know. But what God has told us in verses 1-4 is that there will be two inevitable events associated with the end times. The first is not pleasant to consider.

A. The worst is yet to come (1). Verse 1 begins, "At that time." At what time? As we read verse 1, we must remember the context. We are in the final segment of a vision that God gave to the prophet, the record of which began back in chapter 10. Daniel was standing by the Tigris river when an angel came to him with a message from God concerning future events.

What has Daniel learned so far in the vision? We're told in chapter 10 that he learned that there is an angelic battle that is raging, unseen to us, which influences what's happening on the world scene.

In chapter 11, he learned that in the future there would be four Persian kings, followed by a mighty Greek king, and then a divided Greek kingdom (11:1-4). A series of battles would take place between the northern and southern divisions (11:5-20), until a wicked blasphemer would hit the scene (11:21-35; history verifies this man was Antiochus IV Epiphanes). The last thing the angel told Daniel in chapter eleven was that there was coming an ultimate, dictator, a man with an anti-semitic agenda, a figure who would be God, a character the Bible elsewhere identifies as the Antichrist.

With all this revelation running through Daniel's mind, he must have wondered, "What does all this mean for God's people? With the rise of all of these future, pagan rulers, and namely, this coming God-hater, what's going to happen to my people?"

The answer that Daniel received was two-part, and the first part was sobering. He learned that for his people, the worst was yet to come.

Here's what Daniel heard. Verse 1, "At that time [the time of the coming Antichrist] Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress [AV, 'a time of trouble'] such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered."

Throughout history, God's people (which Daniel knew to be *the believing descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*) have suffered incredibly. But the worst is yet to come. We learn two realities from the angel's words in verse 1, as it relates to the future of the Jews.

1. *There will be a time of distress.* Apparently, God has given Michael, the archangel, the responsibility for protecting the nation of Israel. In Jude 9 we're told that Michael contended with the devil over the body of Moses. The day is coming when Michael will arise, and allow the Jewish people to undergo a time of adversity unlike any previous period in history. The Bible calls it the Great Tribulation.

As early as Deuteronomy 4:30, God predicted that in the "latter days" the children of Israel would be "in tribulation." Later, Jeremiah the prophet wept over that coming day (30:7), "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even them time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it."

Jesus described this coming adversity, and said it would begin with "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet (Matt 24:15)." The Lord graphically described the period in these words (Matt 24:21-22): "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

We need to ponder this, my friend. In this eat, drink, and be merry age, we need to realize there is coming a time of distress. A large scale slaughter is coming in which the God-hater will unleash his fury against God's chosen.

Thankfully, we learn of a second reality in verse 1.

2. *There will be a time of deliverance.* "And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book (AV)." After the time of distress there will be a time of deliverance. For whom? The angel told Daniel, "At that time, *your people* shall be delivered." Who were Daniel's people? The Jews. But not all of them, only those names are "found written in the book."

God knows His people. He keeps track of them. He has written the name of His people in a Book. He perseveres in behalf of those who are in the Book, and the same persevere after Him. What an encouragement this was to Daniel! To hear the angel say, "Daniel, God is not through with His people. He will fulfill the promises He made to Abraham."

By the way, though I believe this text is speaking particularly concerning the believing Jewish remnant, there's a relevant question we each must ponder. Is *my* name written in the Book?

Jesus said in Luke 10:20, "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

One of the most heart-stopping passages in the Bible is Revelation 20:11-15. "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled

from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Last week Brodie was baptized and added to the membership of this church. His name now appears in the church membership list, which includes some significant benefits of spiritual protection and responsibility in this life.

But we’re talking about another book, one kept in heaven and read by God Himself. My friend, are you sure that your name is written in the book of life?

You say, “How can I know?”

Jesus tells us in John 5:24 (NKJV), “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

Those who hear Jesus’ word and believe in the One who sent Him *have everlasting life*. When the book is opened in that day, the reply will be, “Your name is here. Come and enjoy the One who put it there forever and forever!”

There are two inevitable events. The first, the worst is yet to come. The second?

B. The best is yet to come (2-4). What’s that? In a word, *resurrection*. Verse 1 reveals that God will deliver His people. “At that time your people...will be delivered.”

Does that mean the Lord will deliver them *from* the suffering and death that accompanies this “time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then”?

No. I rather think it means He will deliver them *through* suffering and death, for there will be many martyrs at the hands of the beast in the tribulation. We read about them in the book of Revelation. They will die, but God will deliver them. And verse 2 tells us how He will do it. Through *resurrection*.

God’s Word teaches that every person will one day experience resurrection. Because of Adam, all die, but death is not the end. Death is merely a change of location. Death will be followed by resurrection.

Please don’t misunderstand me. This is not universalism, the teaching that says that everyone, after dying, goes to be with God. No, there are clearly two distinct types of resurrection, according to verses 2-4.

1. Some will rise to everlasting life. Verse 2 states, “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth [that is, they’ve died and their bodies returned to dust] will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”

There are two groups distinguished here. Notice three things about the first group.

•The wise will rise. Verse 3 says, “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens², and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

² AV, “And they that be wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament.”

The Bible does not teach annihilation, that when a person dies, he ceases to exist. Rather, death merely moves us into the next phase of our existence. And the wise are those who prepare in this life for the next phase of their existence, which will be eternal. In other words, the wise live in light of the coming resurrection.

Like Job did, who said in Job 19:25-26 (ESV), “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.”

In his suffering Job affirmed the resurrection. He knew his Redeemer was coming, and he knew that worms would destroy his body. But he also knew that after that, He would see God.

God made this prediction in Hosea 13:14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death."

So the wise will rise. We next learn something else.

- Those who lead many to righteousness will rise. The end of verse 3 reveals this (in the AV), "And they that turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars forever and ever."

Here's what happens when we're truly gripped by the reality of the coming resurrection. We'll want to help others get ready. As verse 3 puts it, we'll want to lead many to righteousness.

I think of my neighbors, and yours, and of the people all around us in this community. What did we do this past week for the express purpose of leading them to righteousness? Which is another way of saying, leading them to Christ, for Christ is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30). Did we talk with anyone this week about Jesus? Did we spend time pleading for their souls in prayer, asking the Lord to use us to lead them to righteousness?

This is what belief in the resurrection produces. Evangelism. Evangelism is a prime indicator of whether or not we are living in light of the coming resurrection.

Here's what will happen to those who are. Thirdly...

- They will enjoy an eternity too wonderful for words. The Bible doesn't give us much detail about the resurrected, eternal state. Perhaps the obvious reason is because it's beyond the capacity of human language. So rather than describe it, the angel gave Daniel a picture. Those resurrected will shine like the brightness of the heavens, like the stars forever and ever.

On Good Friday, the Lord Jesus experienced horror and agony we cannot fathom. But He persevered, enduring the wrath of God to rescue unworthy sinners. What kept Him going? “Who for the joy set before him endured the cross,” says Hebrews 12:2. He knew Sunday was coming.

Brothers and sisters, resurrection day is coming for us too. You who have lost a loved one recently, be assured that death is not the end. The resurrection is coming. And when you wake up in the morning, and look in the mirror, and see a body that's aging and wearing out, remember this. The resurrection is coming. This is our certain hope.

But wait. The resurrection is not a message of hope for everyone. We're told here of a second group.

2. *Some will rise to everlasting contempt.* Notice verse 2 again, “Many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, *others to shame and everlasting contempt.*”

So what will happen to those who do not know the Savior, Jesus Christ? They too will be raised. They too will receive a resurrected body, but oh, how different! The body they will receive will be suited for an eternity of shame and contempt.

Imagine an eternity of shame. Some of us remember, as though it happened yesterday, some foolish deed we committed years ago, and we feel shame every time we remember. My friend, 30 billion years will not diminish the eternal shame experienced by those who did not accept God's remedy for their shame in this life.

Remember the account of the rich man and the beggar, Lazarus? (see Luke 16:19ff) After he died, the rich man longed for relief from his suffering. He called to Abraham for help. But it was too late. Abraham told him (26), "A great chasm has been fixed so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us."

My friend, stop and ponder this message the angel revealed to Daniel. For God's people, the worst is yet to come, but on the other hand, because of the resurrection, the best is yet to come! These are two inevitable events that are non-negotiable for the people of God.

And for those who aren't God's people? This life is as good as it gets, followed by an eternity of shame and contempt.

How shall we respond to this knowledge? Notice what Daniel was told in verse 4 "But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

Daniel learned that this information wasn't for him. It was for those who would be living at the time of the end. Many would benefit from what he wrote down, would increase knowledge, and thus be fortified to face the nearly overwhelming realities Daniel recorded.

That brings us to a second inevitable.

II. We know that a certain tension is inevitable (5-13).

Frankly, we don't know when the race is going to end. But from the dialogue that follows between Daniel and the angel in verses 5-13, we learn about living with an inevitable tension. Let's listen and then consider a couple of take-aways.

"Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. ⁶ One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?"

⁷ The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

⁸ I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?"

⁹ He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.

¹¹ “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. ¹² Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

¹³ “As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”

So what are we to make of this? I believe God is making two things clear for us pertaining to the inevitable tension of a God-pleasing life.

A. God wants us to know *what* not *when* (5-7). After the angel told Daniel in verse 4 to seal up the words of the scroll containing this prophetic vision "until the time of the end," Daniel witnessed a breathtaking spectacle.

In verse 5 he says he saw standing before him two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. Remember, Daniel is by the Tigris river, according to 10:4. One of figures spoke to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river. That is, he spoke to the angel that has been with Daniel since this episode began in chapter 10.

This is a curious scene. The angel has finished giving Daniel the vision, and now two other angelic beings have come to the river, and one asks, “How long until these things come to pass?”

Why did the angel ask that question? Is he just making conversation? No. Remember, angels are not omniscient for they are created beings. We’re told in 1 Peter 1:12 that angels desire to look into the things that pertain to our salvation. Perhaps this angel asked the question, not for his own benefit, but for Daniel’s, so Daniel could hear the answer to the question he no doubt pondered.

When will this happen?!

What Daniel learned is that God wants His people to know *what* not *when*. Look again at the answer the angel gave in verse 7. The man clothed in linen “lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven.” That’s significant. The typical procedure in taking an oath is to raise one hand.³ The raising of both hands indicates the certainty of what is about to be said.

The angel swore by Him who lives forever, “It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.”

Again, the answer pertains to *what*, not *when*, with two details about the coming day of trial.

1. It will be for three and one-half times. What does that mean?

One commentator points out, ““Three and a half” represents the idea of spiritual trial; (besides this certain symbolical meaning, there is doubtless an accurate chronological meaning, which is as yet to us uncertain): it is half of “seven,” the complete number, so a semi-perfect state, one of probation.”⁴

That’s a fitting statement. *Which is as yet to us uncertain.* We need to approach this text with humility.

³ Usually the right hand (compare Genesis 14:22; Exodus 6:8; Deuteronomy 32:40; Ezekiel 20:5; Revelation 10:5); Barns Notes on the Bible, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/daniel/12-7.htm>

⁴ Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary; <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/daniel/12-7.htm>

We do know this is the same phrase Daniel heard in an earlier vision in chapter seven, when God revealed this about the coming day of tribulation, in 7:25, “He [the Antichrist] will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints...The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.”

Some commentators say this is referring to a three and one-half year period of time when Antiochus took over the temple in the second century BC.⁵

But the phrase also appears in Revelation 12:14 indicating it’s also pointing, or *entirely* pointing, to something beyond John at the end of the first century AD. To a three-and-one-half year time period associated with the anti-Christ during the yet to come tribulation period.

So the angel asks *when*, but he’s not told when, rather, that something is coming that will be for a time, times, and half a time.

Notice a second detail in verse 7 pertaining to what, not when.

2. *It will include the breaking of the power of the holy people.* “When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.”

Some say the world will get better and better. That’s not the biblical view. In reality, it’s going to deteriorate to the point that even the power of God’s chosen, holy people will be broken.

John Walvoord believes this refers to what's going to happen to the Jewish people in the last half of the seven-year tribulation period. God wants the Jews to know ahead of time that the intense persecution facing them will not go on indefinitely, but has an end in sight. Three and one-half years.

While that may be the case, this *is* the case. God has revealed *what* will happen, but He doesn’t tell Daniel *when*. That's a tension with which He wanted Daniel, and us, to live.

A second lesson about this tension...

B. God says we won't know *when* until *then* (8-13). If we're confused by this vision in Daniel, we're in good company. Daniel himself was perplexed. Notice his admission in verse 8, "I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, 'My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?'"

That's a good thing to do. If you're lost, ask for directions. If you're confused, ask for help, like Daniel did. He received an interesting reply.

In verse 9 the angel told him (ESV), “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.”

That’s an odd sort of answer. *Go your way, Daniel.*

What was the angel saying? Basically, get on with life, Daniel. Part of a God-pleasing life is living with *unanswered questions*, and trusting God as you live with the tension.

To put it simply, the angel here is offering valuable counsel when it comes to prophecy. It’s so easy to leave a text like this and insist on nailing down your position on future events, and if you can’t nail it down, then retreating somewhere and spending days and weeks and months speculating what’s going to happen in the future.

⁵ See the Pulpit Commentary; <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/daniel/12-7.htm>

But the angel gave a better response. *Go your way, Daniel.* In other words, don't retreat. Don't make definitive charts. And don't become preoccupied with what you *don't* know. Get back to what you *do* know. You have a life to live for God, people to influence for Him, kingdom purposes to accomplish for His honor.

God says we won't know when until *then*. So why does God allow this tension? We learn three reasons in verses 8-13.

1. *He wants His people to be pure (8-10).* The tension is part of the purification process. Verse 10 says, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tested, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand."

Why does God allow His people to endure periods of suffering? Here's one reason, to refine them and make them pure, so they resemble His Son. Job testified to that in Job 23:10, "For He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold."

"That's right. Trials make a person better," says the optimist.

Not so the wicked, says the angel. They suffer *and continue to be wicked*, for *none of the wicked understand*. Since they refuse to accept God's grace, the wicked suffer and just keep becoming more wicked.

There's a second reason for the tension.

2. *He wants His people to persevere (11-12).* Consider verses 11-12, "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days."

What's this all about? I'm not sure. What does the angel mean by 1,290 days? Apparently, he has in mind the same three and one-half year period of persecution mentioned in verse 7. From the time the abomination that causes desolation by the Antichrist begins, there will be 1,290 days.

I take it that God has recorded these verses to encourage His people who will be living through the coming period of tribulation. This isn't for you, Daniel, but for *them*, to encourage them to take heart, to persevere, for the end is coming.

I think it's significant that the book of Daniel ends with an unanswered question. Daniel wanted to know *when*, but God did not tell him when. The angel told him back in verse 9, *go your way*, and then he repeated the command in verse 13, "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

3. *He wants His people to live in light of the inevitable (13).*

He didn't want Daniel to know when. He wanted Daniel, as He wants all who know Him by grace through faith, to *go your way*, the way I want you to live, knowing this. You will soon rest (that is, die), and after that you'll awake to everlasting life and shine like the brightness of the heavens.

Remember the 24-hour marathon relay race I told you about earlier? We runners knew the end of the race was getting close when we saw the coach keep looking at his watch and reaching for his gun. I happened to be on deck as the clock ticked closer and closer to the magic 1:00 hour. As the runner before me rounded the final curve, the coach told me, "Just take the stick and run as hard as you can. The race is almost over."

Which I did. What I didn't realize was this. "Almost over" to me meant a few seconds, so I sprinted like you would in a 100 yard dash. "Almost over" to the coach actually meant a couple of minutes! So I ran as hard as my weary legs would take me, thinking the race would surely end any moment. I ran 100 yards, but no gun sounded. 200 yards, still no gun. I continued down the backstretch and around the curve, still no gun. As I finished the quarter mile lap, I gasped for air and looked at the coach, who simply said, "Keep going. The race is almost over."

Of course, he was right. The race did end, finally, as I headed down the back side of the track on lap number two. The gun sounded. The race was over. The goal had been accomplished.

So it is in the race of life. God has the clock, not us. He hasn't told us when the race will end, but He has told us exactly what we need to know to get there. We need to take to heart what Daniel learned on that day twenty-five centuries ago.

- Death is coming. But...
- Death is not the end.

Take Inventory: Am I living in light of what is coming?

Let's spend some time reflecting on what we've heard. With our heads bowed before the Lord, let's ask ourselves some questions that have eternal significance.

Are you prepared for the inevitable? Do you know for sure which resurrection you will participate in? Will you rise to everlasting life, or to shame and everlasting contempt? God sent His Son, Jesus the Christ, to pay sin's penalty, which He did by living a perfect life, dying as a substitute for sinners, and then defeating the consequence of sin which is death by rising from the dead.

If Jesus Christ is your personal Savior and Lord, you will rise to everlasting life. If He is not, you will rise to everlasting contempt. My friend, call upon the Lord Jesus Christ today and you will be saved!

Another question. Have you been living in light of the inevitable? If Jesus did return today, are there things in your life which would displease Him? If so, why not confess and forsake them now?

It's inevitable that the worst is yet to come. It's inevitable that the best is yet to come. It's inevitable that Jesus is coming again. The question is this. Are we ready for the inevitable? May God help us to get ready.

Let's sing a song in which we express to the Lord our desire for His coming.

Hymn of Response: Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending (#241)