

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.

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 you to consider another race that we're all in, the race of world history. 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 investigate the message of Daniel 12. Thankfully, the One who holds the clock has given us valuable guidance on how to run this race. He's told us everything we need so we can persevere to the end of the race.

Proposition: 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 these two "inevitables."

- I. There are inevitable events (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.

***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.

2. Some will rise to everlasting contempt.
- II. There is an inevitable tension (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.

I. There are inevitable events (1-4).

This is our last message in our study in 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, "And 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 information 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 not pleasant. He learned that for his people, the worst was yet to come. Here's what Daniel heard (1), "And at that time [the time of the coming Antichrist] shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands 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."

Throughout history, the Jewish people 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 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 (Mt 24:15)." The Lord graphically described the period in these words (Mt 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."

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." 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 Israel. He will fulfill the promises He made to Abraham."

By the way, though I believe the text is speaking here particularly concerning the Jewish people, there's a relevant question we must ponder. Is *my* name written in the Book? Our eternity is at stake (see Rev 20:11-15).

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! V 1 reveals that God will deliver His people in the tribulation. Does that mean He will deliver them *from* suffering and death? No, I rather think it means He will deliver them *through* suffering and death. There will be many martyrs at the hands of the Beast in the Tribulation. They will die, but God will deliver them. And verse 2 tells us how He will do it--through resurrection.

Did you realize 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.* V 2 states (NIV), "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth [that is, they've died] will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." There are two groups distinguished here. Allow me to point out three observations about the effect of the resurrection on the first group.

•The wise will rise. V 3 begins, "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. The wise are those people who prepared in this life for the life to come. They lived in light of the coming resurrection.

Like Job did, who stated (Job 19:25-26), "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Job knew that the resurrection was coming. God made this prediction through Hosea (13:14), "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death." The wise will rise.

•Those who lead many to righteousness will rise. The end of v 3 reveals this, "And they that turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars forever and ever." Do you know what will happen when we're truly gripped by the fact that the resurrection is coming? We'll want to help others get ready! As v 3 puts it, we'll want to turn others to righteousness.

Are you investing your life in turning others to Jesus Christ? Did you talk with anyone this week about the Lord? Evangelism isn't optional. Here we learn that it's an indicator of whether or not we are living in light of the resurrection. Here's what will happen to those who are.

•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! Rather than describe it, the angel gave Daniel a picture. The resurrected will shine like the brightness of the heavens, like the stars forever and ever.

A few years ago, author and speaker, Tony Campolo, preached a message entitled, "It's Friday, but Sunday's coming!" On Good Friday, Jesus experienced horror and gloom and heartache, but He persevered. He knew Sunday was coming!

My friends, the day of resurrection is coming for us. You who have lost a loved one recently, be encouraged. Death is not the end. The resurrection is coming. When you wake up in the morning, and look in the mirror, and see a body that aging and wearing out, remember this. The resurrection is coming. What a hope we have!

But wait. The resurrection is not a message of hope for all. There's 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." Those who do not know Jesus Christ will be raised, too. They will receive a resurrected body, too, 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 you remember, as though it happened yesterday, some foolish deed you committed 30 years ago, and you are full of shame every time you remember. My friend, 30 billion years will not diminish the shame in eternity for those who rejected Christ 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 friends, I want you to 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. Perhaps you're wondering, "When will this happen?" A second inevitable...

II. There is an inevitable tension (5-13).

Frankly, we don't know when the "race" of human history will be over. But from the dialogue that follows between Daniel and the angel in verses 5-13, we learn two lessons about living with the inevitable tension.

A. God wants us to know *what* not *when* (5-7). In v 4, the angel told Daniel to seal up the words of the scroll containing this prophetic vision "until the time of the end." At that point, Daniel witnessed a breathtaking spectacle (5-6, NIV): "Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank [remember, Daniel is by the Tigris river; 10:4]. One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river [that is, to the angel that has been with Daniel], 'How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?'"

Here's the scene. The angel has finished giving Daniel the vision. Two other angelic beings come, and one asks, "How long until these terrors end?" Why did the angel ask that question to begin with? Perhaps he was curious--remember, angels are not omniscient for they are created beings (1 Pet 1:12 indicates that angels desire to look into the things that pertain to our salvation). Perhaps the angel asked the question for Daniel's benefit, so Daniel could hear the answer to the question he no doubt pondered. When?!

What Daniel learned is that God wants us to know *what* not *when*. The answer the angel gave doesn't tell us when, but instead elaborates on what will happen.

Notice verse 7, "The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven [the typical procedure in taking an oath is to raise one hand; the raising of both hands indicates the certainty of what he's about to say], 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.'"

Notice that here we're told *what*, not *when*--two details about the coming day of trial.

1. *It will be for three and one-half times.* What does that mean? It's the same phrase Daniel heard in an earlier vision, in chapter seven, when God revealed this about what would happen in the day of tribulation (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." Notice a second detail about this tribulation period from v 7.

2. *It will include the breaking of the power of the holy people.* 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 will not go on indefinitely, but has an end in sight--three and one-half years.

There's no question that what God has predicted will happen. But we don't know when. That's a tension with which we must 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 v 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 a question, like Daniel did. He received an interesting reply.

V 9 "And he said, Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." What kind of answer is that?! "Go your way, Daniel." What was the angel saying? Get on with life, Daniel. Part of life is living with *unanswered questions*, and trusting God in spite of the tension. To put it simply, the angel here is offering a needed reminder for those who would develop prophetic charts. God says we won't know when until *then*. 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. V 10 "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 suffer? Here's one reason, to refine them. Job could testify to that (23:10), "For He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold."

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 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 v 7. From the time the abomination that causes desolation by the Antichrist begins, there will be 1,290 days.

Apparently, God has recorded this to encourage His people who will be living through that harsh time. He's saying, "Take heart! The end is coming! Persevere!"

3. *He wants His people to live in light of the inevitable (13).* Isn't it interesting that the book of Daniel ends with an unanswered question. Daniel wanted to know, "When?", but God did not tell him when. He told him to go (back in v 9), and then repeated that command in v 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."

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 meant a couple of minutes! 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 lap which marked the quarter mile mark, I grimaced with pain and looked at the coach. His response, "Keep going. The race is almost over."

He was right. The race did end, finally (or I wouldn't be here today!). What a thrill it was while on the back side of the track on lap number two to hear the gun sound. The race was over! The race ended when the coach looked at his watch and said, "Time's up."

So it is in the race of life. God has the clock, we don't. 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 the message Daniel learned that day 25 centuries ago. Two inevitable truths:

- Death is coming. "Daniel, go, for you will rest, but remember this..."
- Death is not the end. "You will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

Response: Are you prepared for the inevitable? Are you sure? 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 you ready for the inevitable? May God help us to use this time of response to be prepared.

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

Hymn of Response: #242 "While We Are Waiting, Come"

Let's spend some time reflecting on the truth of God's Word. With our heads bowed before the Lord, let's ask 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? 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 be an embarrassment? If so, why not confess and forsake them now?

Time for Response in Prayer

We have a great hope! Death is not the end. Because Jesus died and rose again, we too can look forward to the resurrection. Ponder that truth as the choir sings, "I Rise in Christ."

Ministry in Music: "I Rise in Christ" (choir)

We serve a Risen Savior! That fact can make all the difference in the world in our lives today. Let's conclude by singing a song that affirms the difference it makes knowing that Jesus lives.

Song of Commitment: #213 "Because He Lives"