

TRIBULATION PROMISES  
DANIEL 12:1-3

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Life is filled with challenges. My family is reminded this week about the challenge of death, as we lost my wife's mother and Don's wife after a long bout with Alzheimer's.

Being that this is Mother's Day we are reminded today about the challenges, as well as the blessings, that come from being a mother. A theologian by the name of Michael Horton wrote some time ago (*Ordinary: Sustainable Faith in a Radical, Restless World*, 2014), **"...the burdens we place on women--- even from childhood--- make them anxious about life and drive them to expect dissatisfaction with the normal and everyday aspects of life that are so crucial for the development of deep roots, wisdom, and nurture for the whole family. Many of the things that mothers do in the home are not even measurable, much less stupendously satisfying on a daily basis. Much of it can be tedious, repetitive, and devoid of the intellectual stimulation found in adult company. In a myriad of ways, the daily calling of dying to self is felt more acutely by mothers. What they need is fewer guilt trips and expectations and more encouragement as they invest in ordinary tasks that yield long-term dividends. ... Successes are measured in years, not days or even months, and you can never be quite sure of all the things you did each day that made a difference."**

The challenges in life that we face because of our identification as Christians seem to be growing in this country, but they still pale in comparison to the persecution which Christians face in other parts of the world. According to the evangelical group Open Doors, 100 million Christians face interrogation, arrest, torture, and/or death each year because of their religious convictions. The Center for the Study of Global Christianity claims that 100,000 Christians have been killed on average every year for the past decade. While 30% of the world's population identifies as Christian, 80% of all acts of religious discrimination around the world are directed at Christians. One scholar estimates that 90% of all people who are killed on the basis of their religious beliefs are Christians. (Denison Forum 11/3/2017)

The passage before us this morning indicates that times are coming in the future when Christians will face even more intense persecution than they do now. But as these few verses describe this coming time of tribulation, they also provide general principles which can help us in the face of whatever challenges we may encounter in the present. More often the challenges that we face come not so much from persecution as from health challenges and family difficulties and people problems and financial stresses. They come from the challenge of trying to be a good mother.

Those times of tribulation--- the hardest times when things don't make sense--- should prompt the genuine believer to turn to God's Word. Daniel #12 vv. 1-3 is one passage that provides the necessary encouragement to handle those tough times. This passage is part of the last revelation given to Daniel by God during that godly statesman's lifetime.

This revelation describes the end times. We have seen in recent weeks that vv. 36-39 of #11 describe the character of the Antichrist, who will rule much of the world during that seven year period known as the Tribulation. Verses 40-45 describe the political activities of this ruler. Chapter 12 vv. 1-3 deal with the Antichrist's relationship to God's people during that time of tribulation.

The situation will look grim for God's people. Yet God is worthy of our trust because even in that most difficult time there are promises that He gives to which His people can cling. Those promises are also truths to which we can cling when we are faced with our own times of tribulation.

I.

The first promise in this passage is THE PROMISE OF GOD'S CARE. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. THE PROMISE OF GOD'S CARE) Consider v. 1: **"At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book."**

The term "that time" is referring to the time of the Tribulation, especially the last 3 ½ years of that seven year period. Jesus Himself referred to this verse when He said (MATTHEW 24:21) in Matthew #24, **"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be."** Jesus goes on to describe some of the bad things which will happen during this time, including the "abomination of desolation," referred to earlier in Daniel #11 v. 31.

Michael, "the great prince," referenced in v. 1 of our passage, was described back in #10 of Daniel. (PROJECTOR OFF) That chapter is part of the same vision which we are looking at now. In v. 13 of #10 the angel, perhaps Gabriel, tells Daniel, **"The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia..."** When we were studying that verse and the surrounding context, we got a glimpse into a spiritual conflict that was going on in the heavenly realm involving nations and the angels which watch over them.

This angel Michael appears again in the New Testament Book of Revelation. The setting for that appearance is this future Tribulation. Beginning in v. 7 of Revelation #12 (PROJECTOR ON--- REVELATION 12:7) the Apostle John describes the vision which he saw: **"Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon--- who is apparently Satan. And the dragon and his angels fought back,**

(REVELATION 12:8) **but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. (REVELATION 12:9) And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”**

A few verses later we have a description of what effect this will have upon people on the earth. (REVELATION 12:12) According to v. 12 of #12, **“But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”**

The objects of Satan’s wrath will be the Jews, a large percentage of whom will have become followers of Christ, and also Gentiles who have become Christians during the Tribulation. The instrumentality of Satan’s wrath will be the Antichrist and his government. The way in which Satan’s wrath will be displayed will be persecution and execution of those who follow Jesus.

This persecution will include the famous branding with the number 666. According to Revelation #13 vv. 16 & 17 (REVELATION 13:16-17A), **“Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark...”** If anyone wants to buy food so that his family can eat, he or she must get the mark. The wrath of Satan toward God will be displayed toward God’s people who refuse to go along with this program.

Not only is this a time of the display of Satan’s wrath, but also, at least nine times in the Book of Revelation, it is characterized as a time of God’s wrath. For God will display His judgment upon sin. (REVELATION 14:9) In Revelation #14 we are told, **“And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, (REVELATION 14:10) he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.’”** It is because of man’s rebellion and sin that God will bring upon the earth the display of his wrath in three series of judgments, described as seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls.

Although the object of these judgments is unrepentant man, believers will not be immune from many of the effects of these physical judgments. (PROJECTOR OFF) For example, the first series of judgments will involve war, famine, disease, and earthquakes. When unbelievers suffer from hunger, Christians probably will, too. When unbelievers’ homes fall down, probably some of the Christians’ homes will collapse, too.

But in the midst of this terrible time there is still a promise given that God cares for His people. There is reason for hope. The angel tells Daniel in v. 1 of our passage, **“Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise...”**

As we have seen previously, the archangel Michael has special responsibility for the nation of Israel. At the same time that this Tribulation reaches its greatest intensity, God's forces intervene. Michael and company will keep Israel from being completely destroyed. The reference to **“your people, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book”** is to saved Jews living in the last part of the Tribulation. Israel will be rescued, though some may be killed in the process. The Lord does allow some of His people to experience great suffering.

(PROJECTOR ON--- REVELATION 12:13) Revelation #12 vv. 13 & 14 tell us, **“And when the dragon [i.e. Satan] saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child [i.e., Christ. The woman who gave birth to Jesus is apparently Israel, the Jews]. (REVELATION 12:14) But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time [the same expression that we found used in Daniel 7:25 for the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation].”** Thus Israel will be protected by God.

The picture then looks like this, in my interpretation: After the rapture of the church when Christians rise up to join Christ in the air, the seven year Tribulation will begin. (PROJECTOR OFF) A great work of conversion will take place among the Jews as they recognize that Christ is the Messiah. After 3 ½ years the Antichrist will begin a terrible persecution of these Jews.

One of the things that will sustain them in these terribly tough times will be the assurance from God's Word that He still cares for them. The evidence of that will be some kind of divine provision for them in the wilderness of Israel. Perhaps that will involve supernatural provision of food like the manna God had for the Hebrews wandering in the wilderness in the Old Testament. Perhaps it will involve some kind of supernatural use of the elements of nature to keep the bad guys away. We are not specifically told.

That same promise that God cares for His children is what we need to remember when tough times come our way. We may not always be able to answer the question “Why?” but we can always trust in the promise that God does care for us. Tough times tempt us to give up or to give in.

(PROJECTOR ON--- 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13) In 1 Corinthians #10 v. 13 Paul writes, **“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”** That is a promise that is worth memorizing.

God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to take. Either that is true, or God is a liar. If it is indeed true, it means that God providentially keeps many trials and temptations away from us. It also means that He allows us to experience some

tough times. He allows us to encounter things like joblessness and cancer and false accusations and family difficulties. (PROJECTOR OFF)

But as the nineteenth century preacher Henry Ward Beecher once said, **“No physician ever weighed out medicine to his patients with half so much care as God weighs out to us every trial.”** God does care for His children.

I have read that before the advent of modern manufacturing techniques the colors painted on to some kinds of china and porcelain were burned into the clay. When a color was put on an object and fire was applied the first time, the heat obliterated all trace of color. So the process had to be repeated a second time and even a third time before the object was properly prepared.

So it is with God’s work with us. We survive the furnace of pain or persecution or temptation often only to find ourselves again put through the same, or a similar, test. But God does care for us. He wants to create in us a toughness and beauty of character that is a work appropriate for the Master who made us.

II.

Not only do we have the promise that God cares for us, but also v. 2 tells us that we have THE PROMISE OF GOD’S FUTURE. (PROJECTOR ON--- II. THE PROMISE OF GOD’S FUTURE) Our Heavenly Father has a tremendous future in store for His children. According to v. 2, **“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”**

Some have understood this verse to teach soul sleep--- that when a believer dies, his soul sleeps until he is resurrected again. Other Scripture teaches that this is not true. When a Christian dies, his soul passes immediately into the presence of Christ.

When Jesus was crucified, He was placed on a cross between two other criminals. They were not just thieves. The Jewish criminal system had a method for dealing with them. These other two guys were rebels against the Romans, who had probably killed people. It was only the Romans who were allowed to execute people. Initially these other two criminals mocked Jesus. But when one of them saw how Jesus endured the suffering, He expressed faith in Him. He called on Jesus to remember him when He came in His kingdom. Our Lord told the criminal on the cross (LUKE 23:43), **“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”** The implication is not that these guy is going to be sleeping. Rather the implication is that he is going to be having a wonderful existence, which will include a relationship with Jesus.

The Apostle Paul expressed a similar confidence that death for him would mean a meaningful relationship with Jesus and other people in heaven. It would not just mean a nap time. In 2 Corinthians #5 (2 CORINTHIANS 5:8) the Bible says, **“...we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”**

So what is pictured in Daniel #12 v. 2 is a physical resurrection from the dead. The bodies of the Old Testament saints may have been asleep. But their souls were, and are, very much alive. In the New Testament story of the Transfiguration some of the apostles saw Jesus interacting with Moses and Elijah. The souls of these saints--- and by that, I mean all genuine Old Testament believers--- will be reunited with some kind of restored human body.

This is actually only one of a number of references to physical resurrection from the dead in the Old Testament. Job 19 v. 26 and Isaiah 26 v. 19 are two other references to this doctrine. The prophet Isaiah spoke of this time. (ISAIAH 26:19) He wrote in #26 v. 19 of his book, **“Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise./ You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!/ For your dew is a dew of light,/ and the earth will give birth to the dead.”**

The question about v. 2 is: When does this resurrection from the dead take place? Revelation 20 vv. 4 & 5 provide help in determining that. The setting is the end of the seven year Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennium. (REVELATION 20:4A) Verse 4 says, **“Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, (REVELATION 20:4B) and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (REVELATION 20:5) The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.”**

So actually in Daniel 12 v. 2 there are two resurrections involved. At the end of the Tribulation and at the beginning of the Millennium those believers who died during the Tribulation will rise from the dead (PROJECTOR OFF) After the thousand year reign of Christ on earth, which is commonly referred to as the Millennium, unbelievers will rise from the dead to receive a final judgment.

First Thessalonians #4 says that saints from the present church age will experience a bodily resurrection at the rapture. This is often referred to as the rapture of the church. The term that is used for these Christians is “those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.”

Our text from Daniel 12, along with the reference from Isaiah 26, describe a resurrection from the dead for Old Testament believers. Verse 1 of Daniel 12 speaks about a time of great distress, apparently referring to what we more often know as the Tribulation. Verse 1 specifically speaks about the persecution which will come to the Jews. Verse 2 talks about a resurrection from the dead. So a reasonable conclusion is that this time at the end of the Tribulation may be when Old Testament believers rise from the dead.

Notice the result or purpose of the resurrection in verse 2. It is to everlasting life for believers. We are told in the New Testament that eternal life becomes ours at the moment that we trust Christ as our Savior. That is true. But we do not receive eternal, resurrection bodies until our resurrection from the dead.

Revelation #20 v. 4 mentions that these Tribulation saints will also be resurrected to rule with Christ during the Millennium. The resurrection of those who have not trusted Christ will be to judgment and sentencing to eternity in the lake of fire. But that will not actually occur until after the Millennium. In Revelation #20 vv. 11-15 this is called the Great White Throne Judgment.

Many Jews living during the Tribulation will be killed. The hope that will sustain their loved ones who survive will be the promise about God's plans for the future--- the assurance of a bodily resurrection. For us living today one of the greatest assurances that we have as we face death is the promise of God's plans for the future. We always have a reason for optimism. If we have trusted Jesus as our personal Savior, we too can look forward to a bodily resurrection from the dead.

The alternative for unbelievers is a resurrection to eternal punishment, which involves disgrace and everlasting contempt. Commentator Stephen Miller writes, **“So shocking will be the fate of the lost that onlookers must turn their faces away in horror (or disgust).”**

The fall of 1940 was a terrible time for the British. For 57 consecutive nights the Germans sent an average of 200 planes to bomb London. It was a trying time for the British prime minister Winston Churchill. (PROJECTOR ON--- CHURCHILL RUBBLE) Nevertheless he was often seen after those raids picking his way through the smoke and rubble to encourage his fellow countrymen.

After the war he was asked about what kept him going during those dark days. He replied that in the bomb shelter (CHURCHILL WAR ROOM) below Piccadilly Square, he planned the invasion of Germany. In difficult times what kept him going was a confidence in a new future. (PROJECTOR OFF)

When we are faced with joblessness, uncertain health, a rebellious child, financial problems, personality clashes at work, or temptations to addictions, we can still know that we have a future about which we can be optimistic. We also have the promise of God's care.

III.

Then thirdly we have THE PROMISE OF GOD'S RECOGNITION. (PROJECTOR ON--- THE PROMISE OF GOD'S RECOGNITION) Verse 3 says, **“And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”** Verse 1 speaks of tribulation. Verse 2 speaks of resurrection. Verse 3 speaks of glorification.

Jesus quoted this verse in Matthew #13 (MATTHEW 13:43) after talking about the eternal punishment of unbelievers. He said, **“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”**

First Corinthians #15 vv. 41 & 42 tell us (1 CORINTHIANS 15:41-42A), **“There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So is it with the resurrection of the dead.”** There will be variation in the rewards and recognition that we believers receive from the Lord. It seems from the analogy of these passages that these rewards will have something to do with our capacity to glorify God. Some of us will be like bright stars. Others of us will be like the moon. All of us will glorify God to the extent of our capacity, but that capacity may vary according to our spiritual growth and faithfulness in the midst of tribulation during our earthly lives. (PROJECTOR OFF)

That recognition process may have similarities to high school graduation. Remember graduation? The entire atmosphere was positive, usually. It was a time of rejoicing. For some it was a time of special recognition. For others it was a time of lesser recognition. But even for the individual who graduated academically last in his class, it was still usually a time of positive recognition of achievement.

In the time of tribulation we can take comfort from the fact that God will recognize ultimately our faithfulness in walking with Him. Notice that I said faithfulness, not success. Success is something for which the world around us clamors. Thus we see the glorification of sports and entertainment celebrities. We see glorification of people like the Kardashians, who seem to be famous for simply being famous. Faithfulness is that for which God is looking. As believers faced with trials, we have the promise of God’s recognition for our faithfulness. In addition to that we have the promise of God’s future. Then we have the promise of God’s care.

Joseph Scriven (PROJECTOR ON--- JOSEPH SCRIVEN) was a man who knew what it was like to experience tribulation. Born in 1819 he grew up in Ireland. He graduated from the University of Dublin in 1842 at age 23. As a young man he fell in love, but the night before his wedding, his bride to be was tragically drowned. Dealing with such great pain, he decided to leave the country and go to Canada. There he became a private tutor to a wealthy family.

Joseph Scriven was a Christian guy who did preaching on the side. He acquired a reputation in his small town in Ontario for helping the less fortunate. He also had talent as a poet. When news came from across the Atlantic that his mom was seriously ill, he wrote a poem for her. He entitled it “Pray without Ceasing.”

Joseph Scriven again fell in love. His fiancée then contracted tuberculosis. She got worse and came down with pneumonia. She, too, died before they could be married. Joseph rededicated himself to serving others. In the midst of his pain he found that God was worthy of his trust.

Later in life Joseph’s health deteriorated, and he was taken back into the home of the family for which he had done private tutoring. The father of the family discovered the poem that Joseph had written years earlier for his mother. He sent it off to a religious journal, which published it shortly before Joseph Scriven died.

Joseph's contributions to his Canadian town were so significant that a monument was erected in his memory. (JOSEPH SCRIVEN MONUMENT) A lawyer by the name of Charles Converse discovered that one poem that was published and determined to set it to music. Charles Converse had studied music in Germany and had written symphonies and oratorios. He also like to write simple melodies for gospel songs.

(PROJECTOR OFF) We are going to conclude by singing the product of the collaboration between Joseph Scriven and Charles Converse, a poem originally written for the purpose of encouraging his mother. Let's make the words our declaration of trust also. ("What a Friend We Have in Jesus")