

ANTICIPATING THE SECOND COMING
DANIEL 12:4-13

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

The Pew Research Center, based in Washington, DC, has developed a good reputation for asking detailed questions about what people believe about religious topics. Last year their survey found that 39% of American adults say that they believe “we are living in the end times.” Forty-seven per cent of those who identify as Christians say that we are living in the end times.

The survey also asked Americans if Jesus “will return to Earth someday.” A little over half said yes, including three-quarters of those who identified themselves as Christians. Of the evangelical Christians who believe that Jesus will return to earth, over 71% said either that they were not sure that Jesus will return during their lifetime or that He will probably will not return during their lifetime. That sounds like a reasonable answer, because we don’t know.

One interesting side note to this study is that ten years ago Pew surveyed the beliefs of people in other countries about the return of Christ and found that more than half of Muslims in Iraq, Lebanon, and Tunisia--- and just under 50% in Morocco and the Palestinian territories--- believe in the “imminent return” of Jesus.

In recent weeks we have considered what the Book of Daniel has to say about the end times. We have looked at the world around us and seen that the stage could well be set for these end time events and Christ’s return to earth.

Daniel seems to speak of a revived Roman Empire. In our generation we have seen the establishment of the European Union and a desire among some of those countries for even greater unity. In recent years Russia has reasserted itself and has made efforts to have greater involvement in the Middle East, having established military bases in Syria. Iraq is being rebuilt. Iran is threatening the existence of Israel.

Perhaps most importantly for Biblical prophecy, Israel is back in its homeland, and for the first time in almost two thousand years it exists as a nation. Since 1967 it has been in possession of the old city of Jerusalem. Some orthodox Jews are prepared to rebuild the temple. One of my brothers three weeks ago had a tour of the Temple Institute in Jerusalem and saw some of the holy objects, including a giant menorah, which are ready to be placed in a rebuilt temple. Israel is faced with a fair set of enemies and is ripe for someone who could guarantee its security.

This being said, we need to cautiously remember that Christians since the time of the New Testament have expected Christ’s return in their lifetimes. (PROJECTOR ON---

MARTIN LUTHER) Martin Luther wrote in the 1500s, **“The last day is at hand. My calendar has run out, I know nothing more in my Scriptures.”**

William Miller (WILLIAM MILLER), who was instrumental to the beginning of the Seventh Day Adventists, convinced tens of thousands of Americans that Christ was coming back in 1843. Charles Russell (CHARLES RUSSELL), the forerunner of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, was certain that 1914 was the year. Hal Lindsay (LATE GREAT PLANET EARTH), whose book *The Late Great Planet Earth* sold more copies in the US in the 1970s than any book except the Bible, predicted that it would happen by 1988. Edgar Wisenart (88 REASONS WHY) sent out over four million copies of this little book giving 88 reasons why 1988 was indeed the specific year of Christ’s return. Harold Camping (HAROLD CAMPING), the head of Family Radio, predicted September 6, 1994 was the date of the return of Christ. Then he changed it to 2011. He and his adherents hired some trucks with signs which drove up and down the strip proclaiming that the big event was about to happen. But guess what. They have all been wrong. (PROJECTOR OFF)

We have learned that there are actually two parts to Christ’s return. First, in my interpretation of the Biblical data, there will be the rapture of the church when all true believers in Christ will be caught up to meet Christ in the air and will go with Him to heaven. At that point we will receive resurrection bodies. Then, second, there will be the actual physical return to earth of Christ at the end of the seven year tribulation.

The Bible doesn’t tell us exactly when the rapture will happen. But the passage before us today gives detailed information about the timing of Christ’s return to earth once the events associated with the rapture occur. So we are going to look at that information and see what application it has to us.

With this message we have reached the end of the Book of Daniel. However, I am going to have one more message in which we give consideration to the overall life and impact of Daniel. *[[[[Next time I would like to give you an opportunity to share what things have impressed you about Daniel’s character and what made Daniel successful in God’s eyes. It would be good if some of you who have been around for most of this study would come prepared to share with the rest of us along these lines: What impresses you most about the man Daniel? What made Daniel a success in God’s eyes? We will provide an opportunity for you to share some of your thoughts about that.]]]]*

Daniel #12 vv. 4-13 are part of a vision which began in #10 that the godly statesman Daniel received at the end of his life. In this vision an angel from God tells Daniel about significant events that will happen in Israel’s future. In the immediately preceding verses he has just been describing the terrible seven year period of the tribulation. Now he describes events leading up to the return of Christ.

I.

First, in v. 4 the angel describes THE MYSTERY OF THE TRIBULATION.

(PROJECTOR ON--- I. THE MYSTERY OF THE TRIBULATION) He says, **“But you,**

Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” At first the statement about concealing the words and sealing up the book may sound as if the angel is saying that Daniel should keep these revelations secret. He should not let anybody know about them.

That is not what the angel really means. In the Ancient Near East important documents were “concealed” in some kind of safe, secure place so that no one could tamper with them. If someone wanted to make copies of those documents, or if the terms of the documents were ever questioned, those originals could be taken out of the safe place for inspection.

Then also in that day important documents like contracts and treaties were sealed. A scribe could write down the document as it was dictated to him and then place his seal on it to indicate that what was contained therein was what he was told to write. Other witnesses would add their seals to it also, thus making that document the official text. So what the angel is saying, in effect, is that Daniel is responsible to see that these revelations are accurately written down and preserved so that they are available to be read even to the end times.

The second part of this verse can also be misleading. Many have taken it to mean that a sign that the end times are near will be the great increase in the world in the mobility of people and in the accumulation of knowledge. Isaac Newton read these verses in the 1600s and predicted that the time would eventually come when scientific knowledge would increase such that people would be able to travel at a speed of 50 miles per hour. The French skeptic Voltaire read about that prediction and laughed at it. He was sure that such a thing would never happen.

Knowledge and mobility have obviously increased greatly since then. But the Hebrew words and the context suggest a different meaning. The Hebrew word for “go back and forth” when it appears in this verb form everywhere else in the Old Testament means “to move one’s body in search of something, especially of information.”

Then also in Daniel 12 v. 4 the word “knowledge” has the definite article in Hebrew connected with it. What then is “the” knowledge that will increase? What will people be searching for? The context would suggest, it seems to me, that the meaning of the times and the knowledge of the revelations about the end times are involved. The angel, in effect, is saying, “Daniel, people, especially your people the Jews, will wonder what many of the things that happen to them mean. It will be a mystery to them. What are we to make of the holocaust? But as world events unfold, the meaning of the revelations that I have given to you will become more clear.”

That has indeed proven to be true. When Daniel heard the first part of this revelation, I am sure that it made little sense to him. But by the time of Christ all 135 predictions in the first part of Chapter 11 had been fulfilled. In the first century AD when the Apostle John received the Revelation of Jesus Christ, those mysterious revelations that Daniel

received concerning the end times were reinforced and became a bit more clear, though much remained hard to understand.

In our day, having access to the entire Bible and being able to observe world events around us, our knowledge and understanding about predicted end time events is increased even more. The description of the Tribulation and the return of the Messiah is less mysterious. We can imagine in a clearer way than Daniel or the Apostle John could ever imagine how these events might truly come to pass. Requiring a number on the hand or the forehead to buy or sell would have seemed strange to them. Perhaps they would have thought of some kind of branding mark. With the advent of microchips and a digital economy, it is much more understandable as to how such a requirement could be established.

II.

In vv. 5-7 then we are given a description about THE DURATION OF THE TRIBULATION. (II. THE DURATION OF THE TRIBULATION) In vv. 5 & 6 Daniel sees two heavenly creatures. One of them, probably Gabriel, whom we saw identified in Chapters 8 & 9, asks a question of the other being dressed in linen. In an earlier study we saw that this second individual could well be an appearance of the preincarnate Christ. The question asked of Him in v. 6 is: **“How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?”**

This person raises both hands, utters a sacred oath and gives a twofold answer. He first gives an answer in terms of chronology and second gives an answer in terms of purpose. He says first that this time of wonders will be for a time, times, and half a time. This is the same expression that appeared in #7 v. 25. It refers to the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation. The same expression later appears in Revelation #12 v. 14. In #11, #12 and #13 in that book the time, times, and half a time is equated with a 3 ½ year period.

This being describes the 3 ½ year period also in terms of purpose. It will be for **“the shattering of the power of the holy people [the Jews].”** As we have already seen, in the middle of this tribulation period the Antichrist will break the covenant that he made with Israel guaranteeing its security and will begin to actively persecute the Jews. He will succeed in killing many of them. The Jews would all be destroyed if it was not for the intervention of the archangel Michael, who will provide divine protection for them, as we learned last time.

Is it that God wants the Jews to be destroyed, or that he takes pleasure in seeing them suffer? No! They are still His chosen people. They are a holy people, a people set apart. But they are also a proud people. They are a people who have often throughout history refused to submit themselves to the true God. They are a people about whom Stephen said in the (ACTS 7:51-52A) Book of Acts, **“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?”**

It is only when the power and self-sufficiency of the Jewish people is shattered, when Israel experiences a **“time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation** (v. 1), that there will be a national turning to the true God and a recognition that Jesus is the Messiah. When that happens, the Tribulation will come to its completion. (PROJECTOR OFF)

It is also often only when we as individuals are brought low that we come to recognize that we are inadequate in ourselves. We need to establish a relationship with God, or we need help with a problem, or we are inadequate to deal with an addiction. During the years of my ministry I have seen it happen a number of times where an individual who has an alcohol problem refuses to admit it until either he loses his job or his mate leaves him or her. Only when there is a time of distress such as never occurred in their lives until then are they willing to admit that there is a problem and seek divine help. Tribulation, in those situations, can serve a useful purpose.

III.

In vv. 8-13 of our passage we come to a description of THE OUTCOME OF THE TRIBULATION. (PROJECTOR ON--- III. THE OUTCOME OF THE TRIBULATION) After witnessing the revelation Daniel naturally had questions. In v. 8 he says, **“O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?”** In response Daniel is told at least five things. In v. 9 the man dressed in linen says: I’m not going to tell you what all these things mean. **“...the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.”** (A. THE MEANING WILL REMAIN OBSCURE) The first thing that this celestial being says is that THE MEANING WILL REMAIN OBSCURE until the end time. Daniel at that time was not going to be given any more information. Today, living later in history and having more of the Scriptures available to us than Daniel did, we do understand more of the significance of these things. But still there is considerable uncertainty about how these things will unfold.

(I. A. B. THERE WILL BE A PURIFYING AND HARDENING.) Secondly, in v. 10 this being, perhaps the preincarnate Christ, says that especially in regard to the end times THERE WILL BE A PURIFYING and refining of the good and a HARDENING of the wicked. In Revelation #7 the Apostle John learns about saints during the tribulation who become committed to the point of martyrdom. (REVELATION 7:14) He hears the Lord say, **“These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”**

At the same time many unbelievers become more hardened. In Revelation #9 (REVELATION 9:20) we read, **“The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, (REVELATION 9:21) nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”** Trials and sufferings, especially like those of the tribulation, produce just such opposite effects.

Many Jews responded to the Holocaust of World War II by becoming hardened. “How could a loving God who has chosen us put us through such horrible suffering. (PROJECTOR OFF) There must not be any such God. If there is a God, I don’t want anything to do with Him. He has abandoned us. We must trust in our own strength. We must also be on guard against trusting other people.”

On the other hand the Holocaust and subsequent founding of the nation of Israel helped prompt a few Jews to come to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Other religious Jews have at least recognized the providential hand of God in establishing the modern nation of Israel as a positive outcome of their terrible experience of World War II.

(I. A. B. C. THERE WILL BE A SPECIFIC END TO THE TRIBULATION.) The third thing that this being tells Daniel in vv. 11 & 12 is that THERE WILL BE A SPECIFIC END TO THE TRIBULATION. Verse 11 says, “**And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days.**” From Revelation #13 and other passages we know that the abomination of desolation is the stopping of sacrifice and worship in the temple in Jerusalem and the requiring of worship of an image of the Antichrist. That happens in the middle of the Tribulation. From that point to the return of Christ to earth is a time period of 3 ½ years, or 42 months, according to the Book of Revelation. (REVELATION 13:5) Revelation #13 v. 5 tells us: “**And the beast [i.e. the Antichrist] was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.**”

A Hebrew month is 30 days in length. So 42 months works out to 1260 days. Yet v. 11 in our passage in Daniel speaks about a period of 1290 days. Why are there 30 extra days? Some have suggested that 30 days are needed after the return of Christ for the judgment of the nations and the regathering and judgment of Israel. Perhaps. We don’t now for sure. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Then v. 12 back in our text adds an additional 45 days: “**Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days.**” What is often suggested is that additional time is required to set up the governmental machinery to begin the millennial kingdom. So at the end of this time period the formal inauguration of the thousand year reign of Christ will take place. That seems to make sense, but again, it is not certain.

There are two more responses in v. 13 to Daniel’s question about the meaning, or outcome of these events. Number four on our list is FOCUS ON YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES. (III. A. B. C. D. FOCUS ON YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES.) The being says, “**But go your way till the end.**” “Daniel, go about your business and fulfill your responsibilities for the remaining time that you have in life. Focus on your responsibilities.”

Then he adds the last bit of information (III. A. B. C. D. E. YOU WILL RISE AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOUR REWARD.), which is #5 on the list: “**And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.**” In other words, YOU WILL RISE

AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOUR REWARD. Resurrection and reward are coming. Here again, as in v. 2, we have a reference to the physical resurrection of believers from the dead.

Tying this in with v. 2 it would seem that this resurrection from the dead will occur after the Tribulation and before the Millennium, the thousand year reign of Jesus on earth. Daniel is an Old Testament saint. The logical inference is that all true believers who died before the coming of Christ will rise from the dead at the same time as the tribulation saints of v. 2. That would happen immediately after the tribulation. The allotted portion at the end of the age, according to Revelation #20 v. 4, would involve ruling and reigning with Jesus in the Millennium.

IV. A.

(IV. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TRIBULATION AND CHRIST'S RETURN) Let's consider then THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TRIBULATION AND CHRIST'S RETURN. One of the two questions that the Book of Daniel answers is this: IS GOD WORTHY OF OUR TRUST? (IV. A. IS GOD WORTHY OF OUR TRUST?) The passage before us shows what happens when God's chosen people refuse to trust God. Historically we can see that God has allowed the Jews to experience many difficult things. Yet the nation as a whole has refused to turn to God and acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah.

Verse 7 tells us that God is going to put Israel through such a terrible time of distress that their own power is shattered, and they have no hope left except for trust in Jesus. Yet v. 10 also declares, **"Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand..."**

Suffering and trials that come along in life produce one of these two effects in our individual lives, as well as in the life of a nation. They serve to either soften us and draw us closer to God, or they harden us and drive us further away from God.

When we were living in Massachusetts, the pastor of our church one day was called by a local hospital and asked to visit a 19-year-old young lady who was from out of town. She was dying of cancer. Our pastor shared with her how she could have eternal life by trusting Jesus Christ as her personal Savior. She responded and prayed a prayer with him, inviting Jesus into her life. During the next week or two before she died, the hospital staff saw an amazing change in this girl's attitude, as she began to face death with confidence.

This difficult situation produced an opposite effect on her parents. It seemed to harden them. They became resistant to the gospel and bitter toward God. This was their only child. "How could a loving God take away our daughter? We don't want anything to do with this kind of God."

God has used trials in many of our lives to show us the need that we have for a Savior. Perhaps you have never trusted in Jesus, and God has allowed you to experience trials

so that you will recognize the need that you have to become a genuine Christian. The simple gospel is this: We are all sinners. God sent His Son to become a human being. Jesus was both God and man. He lived a sinless life. He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. He rose again from the dead. Our one responsibility to benefit from His sacrifice for us is to invite Jesus to be our Savior. We are forgiven and receive a ticket to heaven when we truly put our trust in Jesus. (EPHESIANS 2:8-9) The Apostle Paul wrote, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”** Eternal salvation is a gift that we receive by trusting in Jesus.

Our Heavenly Father also brings trials into the lives of us believers. A major reason for that is to refine and purify us. It isn't always fun, but James (JAMES 1:2-3) tells us, **“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (JAMES 2:4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”**

God has not made us robots. Sometimes we don't respond so well. We can become hardened in our spiritual lives. But the best life and the safest life is always a life lived in dependence upon Him. (PROJECTOR OFF)

On December 7, 1941, a young radar specialist was sitting in front of his radar screen on top of a mountain on the west side of the island of Oahu in Hawaii. He and his partner were testing the new equipment that they had recently received. He suddenly saw his screen become filled with scores of blips. At first he thought that the stupid thing was broken. There was no way that there could actually be so many planes in the area. But he called in a report to the information center. The young lieutenant who answered the call told him not to worry, that it had to be a flight of B17 bombers that was due in. So the private and his partner went off to breakfast. The failure of all of them to heed the warning signs contributed to the deaths of hundreds of Americans as the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

When the tribulation finally comes, people will have available to them in the Bible a detailed description of what will transpire. Yet thousands and millions of people will fail to heed the signs. They will be hardened, and they will be blinded. The approach of these end time events ought not to catch us who know Christ unaware. Rather it should find us prepared, growing in trust in the One who told us about them thousands of years ago.

B.

The second question that the Book of Daniel answers is: HOW SHOULD WE LIVE IN AN OFTEN GODLESS SOCIETY? (IV. A. B. HOW SHOULD WE LIVE IN AN OFTEN GODLESS SOCIETY?) The lesson from this passage is that we should live in expectation that Christ might return at any moment to raise us up and meet Him in the air. The Lord would not tell Daniel exactly when he was coming back. When the disciples asked Christ about the timing of His return in Acts #1 (PROJECTOR ON---

ACTS 1:7), He said, **“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority...”** In the epistles we sense that many of the writers lived in expectation that Christ could return at any moment.

In the Middle Ages an estimated 50 million people were killed because of their faith in Christ. (PROJECTOR OFF) The watchword of many of them was “maranatha,” which meant “The Lord is coming.” Today I know of no Biblical reason why the Lord Jesus could not return at any time for the rapture.

The Lord wants us to live in the expectation that Christ could return at any moment. He has done this so that we will be motivated to faithfulness, so that we will be motivated to service, so that we will be motivated to purity.

On this Memorial Day Sunday we are reminded of the commitment to these ideals displayed by so many of our service men and women who paid the ultimate price in service to their country. Roger Brady is a retired United States Air Force four star general and a committed Christian. He wrote an article saying this about the meaning of Memorial Day: **“Most Americans will never serve in the military... And even among those of us who do, very, very few of us are asked to give that last full measure of devotion. So what is the question for us on this day as we remember those Americans who died on our behalf? I believe that question is--- for what shall we live?**

“Whether or not we wear the uniform of our country, we all have a service to offer, a service to those ideals that reflect God’s universal truths and that our American ancestors captured in the formation of this country. When Jesus left this earth to take his place at the right hand of the Father, he left us, his bride, the church, to carry on his work. So when evil strikes in the form of a school shooting or when nature unleashes its fury and devastates property and lives, when children suffer, when people are hungry or homeless and ask ‘Where is God?!’ We must be there and have them see him in us.

“So on Memorial Day, and every day, we need to ask ourselves, for what shall we live? How are we doing at fulfilling not just the ideals of our American forefathers but those universal values set in place by the one who made us in his image, who sent his only begotten son to secure our salvation, the one who ‘created us in him to do good works?’”

The Lord is pleased when we live in eager expectation of Christ’s return. It could happen at any time. In the meantime we should be following the admonition of this Christian general. Maranatha! The Lord is coming.