

Evergreen Presbyterian Church

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Sermon Title: God's Answer

Sermon Text: Daniel 12:1-13

Dan. 12:1 ¶ “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.

Dan. 12:2 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.

Dan. 12:3 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.

Dan. 12:4 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.”

Dan. 12:5 ¶ Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream.

Dan. 12:6 And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, “How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?”

Dan. 12:7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.

Dan. 12:8 I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?”

Dan. 12:9 He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.

Dan. 12:10 Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.

Dan. 12:11 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.

Dan. 12:12 Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days.

Dan. 12:13 But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.”

Main Point: The people of God have comprehensive reasons for hope since their Lord is the sovereignty and patient Lord of Life.

Outline:

1. A God of Life
2. A God of Patience

Introduction

Daniel is the sort of book that has made people very anxious over the years. It's the sort of book that in the hands of one kind of person can become a sort of mad-dash to comprehend and understand all of history and everything that's coming.

On some level it does almost seem to invite the conspiratorial type person who wants to see all the connections of history visualized and simplified. But at some point trying to make these things all understandable and comprehensible can cause a real headache for us. I do think the overwhelming nature of this book is *part* of the point; it is a feature of the book. Because it makes us see our limits. At which point, what do you do, then?

Well I'll get to this, but what we're meant to do is rest in the one who doesn't have limits and doesn't have a problem with understanding exactly what this book is about. Especially when there is so much about it that does go over our heads. But one type of person does approach this book sort of hoping that they'll get everything they want out of it, and every answer to every question out of it.

In the hands of another type of person, the book of Daniel is meant to become this incredible source of assurance, because yes, it's pretty overwhelming. And you'd feel really overwhelmed if we'd decided to do a truly deep dive on each part of the prophecies we've read so far. And that's a temptation. But I think the eyes of faith see a book like Daniel and appreciate the sort of God who is being set before us.

That's actually the sort of note that Daniel ends on, and it's the sort of response that I believe this book is intended to produce. We're not meant to become more anxious or fearful or wild-eyed by this book. We're supposed to be even more eager to let ourselves rest in the powerful, wise, and patient hands of our God.

So as we wrap up this series and conclude on this final chapter, I want us to remember the God this book reveals to us. First, a God of life. Then Second, Daniel reveals to us a God of patience.

1. A God of Life (Judgment and Resurrection)

First, the book of Daniel has revealed to us a God of life.

What happens in this chapter is in many ways the capstone of the faith of God's saints, because this is probably the clearest place in the entire old testament where we see the promise of a future resurrection for both believers and unbelievers alike.

Now, let me be clear: the Old Testament does speak of resurrection in more places than just this. For example, Isaiah 26:19:

“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.”

This teaching is there already in the Old Testament, but Daniel 12 is the place where we find out most clearly that unbelievers also are raised up. But even this teaching is there implicitly already in Scripture. Isaiah 66:24 is a particularly gruesome verse, but it does imply, I would argue, a future resurrection of even God's enemies:

“And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”

Obviously this is a passage expressing a severe statement of justice against God's enemies. But this passage isn't describing a sort of non-existence after death. In particular, I remember the atheist Ricky Gervais saying that he wasn't worried about being dead because he wouldn't be around to be worried about it. He was convinced that when we die, there's just nothing.

But God doesn't talk that way here. He doesn't say, “they shall go away,” or “they shall cease to exist.” Instead he says, “their worm shall not die.” The idea is that there is some kind of ongoing physical existence to God's enemies.

My point is that these things are there already in the Old Testament. The belief that both the living and the dead will be raised up at the final resurrection doesn't all hang just on this passage that we're looking at here.

And Daniel 12:2 does something similar to Isaiah, but brings these things together in a way that is even clearer than Isaiah was. In particular, the man in linen says here that “those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”

So they will all awake, but there is something different awaiting each when they rise from the grave. It's like two kinds of resurrection: one to life, and one to death.

We may not often think of the unsaved as also experiencing a resurrection, but Daniel is telling us here that there will be a resurrection. For those whose name is written in the book, they'll be raised to everlasting life. For those whose name is not written in the book, they'll be raised up to experience everlasting and immortal judgment and suffering that does not end. Such as is fitting for someone

who was an enemy of the immortal and eternal, holy and righteous God, and who refused to bow the knee to him.

He's teaching not just resurrection, but judgment. In verse 1 it tells us that following the time of distress and tribulation for the church that something will happen. He refers to a future in which all those who are God's people will have their name written in what he calls "the book." The idea here is that God knows who his people are.

The very people who have suffered so much, who have seen such horrible things, may have been tempted to believe that they'd been cast off, forgotten, or ignored by God. But he actually is giving a gracious and kind assurance here: "I haven't forgotten you. Your name is written. You are mine."

Can you imagine what this must have felt like to Daniel – to be so far from Israel – so far from the temple and the holy things. And yet to know that he remains unforgotten and precious to his God, much beloved, with his name written down?

I know that many of you have endured many difficulties even just in this past year – some of you extremely recently. I believe that all of us need this assurance. We're not forgotten. We're precious to our God. Our names are written down. He's set his love upon you. You're precious to him. In Christ, *your* name is written down.

The book of revelation pictures this judgment for us as well, and John tells us that at the judgment "the books were opened." For believers, our name is written down. For unbelievers, their deeds are written down. Their sin by which they are judged is written down. It is a fearsome thing to face the judgment of God with all of your sin and deeds to your name.

I would suggest that the judgment is being alluded to here by the man in linen. The very one, I have already said, that is speaking is the same one who will bring that judgment. Jesus says in John 5:22, "For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son."

What does this mean? It tells us that in a sense Daniel is laying before us a choose your own adventure ending. God lays a clear path before us. We can be his enemies, in which case we will be held to answer for every sin we have ever

committed. Or, we can have our name written in the book. What must we do to have our name written in the book?

Well once again in John 5, Jesus tells us. What does he say?

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24).

I think some people are surprised by this, because Jesus makes it seem so easy. We sort of have this expectation that if we get something, then we have to give something. Things have to even out somehow. We have to owe someone. Or we just think, “Surely it has to be harder than this. This is too good to actually be true.”

We don’t instinctively feel like it’s right to get something for nothing. But Jesus says, “You can never pay me enough. You must hear my words and believe him who sent me. Trust in me, and I’ll give you life eternal, and you will never come into judgment.”

Not coincidentally, we will begin our new series on the book of Romans next week, and so if you have more questions on this topic (of “how can I be saved?”) I am hopeful that Paul’s letter to the Romans will contain many of those answers.

But I want you to see that Daniel ends this book on a note of incredible hope and vindication.

At the end of the day, Daniel has been telling us the story of two humanities: there are the just, and the unjust – the saved and the lost. It is not about what we do, and whether we deserve it. It’s about who we trust, and whether such a one can save. Will we trust ourselves? Or will we trust the Savior God has sent?

The abundant answer of Jesus is, “In the midst of suffering, you can trust me. In the midst of international and political tumult, you can trust me. In the midst of life’s sorrows and heartbreaks, you can trust me. And when you do, you will receive such a hope that no one can ever take it from you.”

2. A God of Patience (Wisdom and Eternity)

Second, the book of Daniel has revealed to us a God of patience.

Even though this book ends on a note of hope, it's hope with an asterisk. It's not an asterisk because God gives with the one hand and takes with the other. It's an asterisk, because it's a hope that is only seen through endurance. It's a hope that is anchored in God, who is eternal and wise and far more patient than we are.

You and I are just naturally impatient. I'll speak for myself anyway. I'm naturally impatient. I'm the sort of person in traffic who, if the person in front of me sits at a green light for more than 3 seconds I start to reach for the horn. So trust me, my picture is next to the word impatient in the dictionary.

God, on the other hand, is incredibly patient and is absolutely glad and willing to let interminable waits take place.

In verse 4, Daniel has received the real substance of the promise. He's heard that there's a resurrection to come. He knows that not only will he and God's people be raised up to life, but that God's enemies will also be judged.

The man in linen tells Daniel, "Shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end" (v. 4). If I were Daniel, by my very nature, I'd protest: "I don't want to wait until then to understand this. I want answers now. I'm in my 80s, man!"

The man in linen doesn't mean that *nobody* should read these words. What he means is that what happens here will not be completed for a long time. "Many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase." So there will be a time when these things happen. But a lot of things will happen between now and then.

It has to be hard to receive a vision like this, and know that the hope that you're waiting on is still future. It's still out there. It hasn't happened yet.

Note Daniel's impatience in response: "I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, 'O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?'" (v. 8). Here is the part where I do just want to temper what I was just saying.

Yes, it's hard to hope in something we don't have yet. But what does Daniel do? How does he cope? He turns to Christ – he turns to the man in linen – and he takes his confusion and misunderstanding to the Lord himself and says, "What shall be the outcome of these things?"

So Daniel doesn't fully grasp the meaning of this revelation. He's seen a lot here. He's heard the man in linen say a lot of things, and he doesn't understand. But even in this, he goes to the Lord with it.

You see, yes there is a wait ahead – even for us still. But it's not like he's just trusting that the universe just works this way or something like that. Instead the idea is that he is entrusting this to a *person*. He is trusting God with this. He can't handle it himself. He can barely *understand*. But he knows who does grasp and understand and comprehend, and hold these things.

By the way, this is a good attitude to have if you've felt baffled by this book, or confused by it. Or at least by the weakness of the preacher. Let the things you don't understand rest with the Lord. Commit them to him in prayer.

Look at this: when Daniel asks this question (“what shall be the outcome of these things?”), the man in linen doesn't clear things up. You know? Instead the response he gets is, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end” (v. 9). “You're confused, Daniel? Trust me with this.”

And then you have verse 12, which says, “How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!” By the way, there are as many interpretations of what those days are as there are people on planet earth, so that's another matter that I think we have to trust to the Lord.

But do you see this? Whatever the 1,335 days are, God is telling us to keep waiting. Keep waiting. Wait upon the Lord. Rest in the Lord. Trust him. He is patient, he is good, he is wise. He is at work.

Let's pray.