

The sermon

Intro

We've come to the end of Daniel. If we remember anything from Daniel here's three thoughts. First, in spite of appearances, God is in control. Second, God acts for his people. Third, God's final victory is a done deal.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

First, I'll explain 12:1-13. Then we'll have three points of application.

Interpretation

12:1-4

"At that time" = a distressing time for God's people that ends when the Antichrist is killed by Jesus (11:45; 2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:20). When the Antichrist is ended, the saints are delivered by being raised to everlasting life (12:2). The unbelieving are raised at the same time for judgment.

"shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end" (12:4). Meaning keep it safe, protect it, secure it *"until the time of the end."* So that those living in future times like us would be encouraged by this vision.

12:5-13

The vision in complete. There's three angels (12:5) and one asks a 1st question: *"How long shall it be till the end of these wonders"* (12:6)?

Answer: *"a time, times, and half a time"* (12:7a) = the time period lasting from Daniel's day to the resurrection of the believing and unbelieving dead.

Additional info: shattering of the Jews = sign end is here (12:7b).

Daniel is confused (12:8). He can't understand visions given to him yet he could interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream which he didn't have access to = understanding comes from God. Do you want to understand God's word? Ask him with an open, submissive mind.

2nd Question: *"what shall be the outcome of these things"* (12:8)?

Answer 1: No answer (12:9).

Answer 2: There's two ways to live.

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. – 12:10

Many will understand the truth and follow it. These people will find themselves being refined. When the tribulation heats up, the dross will be removed from their lives. They will find themselves better off spiritually because of tribulation.

Others will fail to respond to God's word and remain dead in their sins.

Answer 3: *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.* – 12:11

I take this to refer to Antiochus IV Epiphanes' reign (175-164 BC). There could be a double fulfillment. Antiochus and the final Antichrist.

Answer 4: ***Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days.*** – 12:12

Blessing is conferred on those who wait. What's meant by 1,335 days? I don't know how all the numbers fit together. But waiting means enduring the distress of this age by waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises. The idea is blessing (deliverance, everlasting life) comes to those who expectantly endure tribulation and experience refinement and helps others understand God's promises (11:33-35). He who waits = the true believer.

Answer 5: ***But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.***" – 12:13

Daniel, be faithful in the days you have left. Rest means he'll die. Shall stand means he'll be raised to everlasting life.

The gist is distress will continue for God's people till the very end. Distress will cause the righteous to stand firm, mature, and tell others about their God. Distress is temporary. Distress gives way to everlasting life for believers.

Point 1: Divine sovereignty doesn't relieve you of human responsibility

Divine sovereignty

By divine sovereignty I mean God's meticulous rule over the affairs of men.

He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; – 2:21

God alters the various eras and epochs in human history.

God removes world rulers and installs new rulers in their place. God is behind the scenes directing world history!

this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, ²⁵ that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. ²⁶ And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. – 4:24-26

Nebuchadnezzar needed to learn that God was the ultimate authority and that Nebuchadnezzar was not. Earthly kingdoms belong to God, not men. God gives those kingdoms to whomever he desires. Then God demonstrates his sovereignty by giving Nebuchadnezzar the mind of a beast. Why? So he'd understand that God rules over the affairs of men.

In chapter seven, the times and the law are given into the little horn's hand "*for a time, times, and half a time*" (7:25). God will give the Antichrist authority for a predetermined period of time.

In chapter nine, "*Seventy weeks are decreed about your people*" (9:24) and "*Desolations are decreed*" (9:26). **Decreed** meaning decided and determined by God and unable to be altered.

In the vision of chapters 11-12 we find language like "*but only for a time*" (11:24), "*at the time appointed*" (11:27), "*for it still awaits the appointed time*" (11:35), "*for what is decreed shall be done*" (11:36). That's God determining beforehand what will be, when it will be, and for how long it will be.

In case you're hearing me wrong, the point of these truths isn't so that you'll conclude my actions are meaningless.

In Scripture, God's sovereignty is a comfort. God is working behind the scenes and directing your life (Rom 8:28) and the affairs of nations. God isn't locked in a closet with his hands tied. God doesn't get overpowered by Satan.

It's because of God's sovereignty that we can have confidence he'll provide material provisions (Matt 6:25-34). It's because God is sovereign we can have confidence when we pray that our circumstances can change (Matt 6:9-13; 7:7-11). A big God gives us confidence in prayer!

Human responsibility

By human responsibility I mean that God's sovereignty doesn't destroy our moral responsibility. On the day of Daniel 12:2 everyone ever born will answer to God for their deeds.

Our choices have real consequences. We're told to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12-13) meaning effort is required for spiritual progress. We can't blame God for our lack of spiritual progress.

The Proverbs are full of human responsibility. Our actions can produce self-inflicted consequences. Our actions can produce self-inflicted blessing.

Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty. – Proverbs 28:19

If I want to have a soul that can survive hardship, I need spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible reading, Bible meditation, and self-examination.

If I want a healthy body, I need sleep, rest, exercise, and a healthy diet.

If I want healthy finances, I need to work, give, plan, save, and exercise restraint.

If I want my children to follow Jesus, I need to model godliness, develop relationship with them, discipline them, teach them God's word in the home, help them to see their own hearts, help them connect God's word to daily life.

If I want to have relationships with my grandchildren 30 years from now, I need to work on my relationship with my kids today.

Embrace divine sovereignty. Embrace human responsibility.

Point 2: Avoid hell at all costs

The judgment of the wicked is described as resurrection *"to shame and everlasting contempt."* Shame meaning disgrace, dishonor. Contempt meaning despised because of repulsive appearance.

The picture is those in hell will experience disgrace and be held in contempt by onlookers. Their marred appearance will give onlookers the creeps. Forever.

What do I mean by hell?

The unbelieving will be raised to be sentenced to a location where they will experience *"weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." – Matthew 25:46

Eternal punishment is going to a place.

These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. – Jude 12-13

False teachers are a subset of those who will experience hell. God, in the past, reserved a place (the gloom of utter darkness) for a group of people (the ungodly) for a future duration of time (forever).

Eternal punishment is living forever in a place characterized by *“weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

How should we feel about hell?

John Piper says, “I must *feel* the truth of hell—that it exists and is terrible and horrible beyond imaginings forever and ever. “These will go away into eternal punishment” (Matt. 25:46). Even if I try to make the “lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15) or “the fiery furnace” (Matt. 13:42) a symbol, I am confronted with the terrifying thought that symbols are not overstatements but understatement of reality. Jesus did not choose these pictures to tell us that hell is easier than burning (John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry*, 114).”

Hell should disturb us. Hell should grieve us. Hell should move us to weep for unbelievers and pray for their salvation and pray for opportunities for gospel conversations and open our mouths about the gospel with them. Hell should move us to befriend non-Christians and spend time with them. Hell should move us to live out a transformed life that commends the gospel.

Have you ever wept over an unbelieving child or friend or grandparent?

How can I gather with my family or go to work without exploding with gospel warnings? Well, being crazy emotional and hysterical won't do the gospel any favors. Paul commends occasion fitting speech (Eph 4:29) and gracious speech that answers each person's own unique questions (Col 4:5-6). Jesus says there's a time to withhold the truth from hard hearts (Matt 7:6). We need wisdom in sharing these difficult truths.

The message is hell is awful. Avoid it all costs! Choose everlasting life.

Point 3: Endure tribulation by waiting for eternal life

If hell is weeping and gnashing of teeth, eternal life is the end of every form of human suffering.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” – Revelation 21:4

What does hell mean for the believer? Relief.

This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering- ⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. – 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Who's this addressed to? The church of the Thessalonians.

How does relief come to the church? Jesus inflicts eternal destruction on the unbelieving. Hell is a judgment for the church!

When does relief come to the church? When Jesus appears visibly (revealed) to sentence the unbelieving to hell.

Daniel 12:2 is the day of deliverance, the day of relief.

Eternal life involves a new, glorified body fit for the kingdom of God.

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,* ⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.* ⁵³ *For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.* ⁵⁴ *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."* – **1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

Eternal life is already not yet. We possess eternal life. We've passed from death to life. But we haven't received immortal bodies yet.

Eternal life also means reunion with deceased believers.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ *For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.* ¹⁵ *For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* ¹⁶ *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* ¹⁷ *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.* ¹⁸ *Therefore encourage one another with these words.* – **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

Gospel

The good news is the fall will be undone. Everything sad will come untrue. No more being mocked or hated or excluded because you obeyed God. No more battle with the world, the flesh (your own sinful heart), and the devil. No more struggle with a body that's breaking down. No more separation from deceased, believing loved ones.

How can you possess eternal life today? By turning to Jesus in faith and repentance. That's turning from sin to trust in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Jesus died on the cross as a substitute, standing in the place of sinners. Sinners like you. Sinners like me. So that whoever believes would have eternal life. Jesus offers you eternal life today. Turn from your sins by trusting Jesus. God is merciful to receive you today.

We've learned some about hell. A place to be avoided at all costs. God hates sin. Hell is the proof. Hell is unending. Hell is irreversible. You've been warned.

There's two ways to live. God is king or I'm king. There's two outcomes. Hell or eternal life. Choose wisely.