

Reformation Fellowship Notes • July 19, 2020

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Handout #14

Daniel 12

I. Listener Questions:

- A. I wonder if verse 33 anticipates the Apostles of Jesus and verse 34 anticipates the Pharisees?
1. I am taking these two sections to be generic—a transitional section between the section before and the section after. I will take this opportunity to clarify what I was saying last week.
 - a) Verses 34-35 and 36-39 are both transitional.
 - (1) 34-35 deals with the experience of believers in times of persecution.
 - (2) 36-39 deals with persecuting, God-hating rulers.
 2. Why do I call it “transitional?”
 - a) It has relevance to both.
 - b) They are applicable to the persecution under Antiochus and also the persecution under the ruler to come.
 - c) But they are truths applicable anytime there is persecution of God’s people.
 3. Those who are wise are those who embrace truth (the Gospel).
 - a) The wise will be a source of wisdom for many in times of persecution.
 - b) But they will also be targeted with the persecution.
 - (1) When they are targeted, others will rally around them and provide a little help.
 - (2) But some who are not sincere will join them.
 - (a) There will be traitors in their midst.
 4. If I am correct, this does anticipate the apostles.
 - a) Not so much the Pharisees
 - (1) A better example would be Judas.

B. How can you say that the United States is not in prophecy?

 1. I don’t know enough to say conclusively that the United States is not in prophecy
 - a) But to the extent that I understand prophecy, the US is not there.
 2. Some have argued that the US is an heir of the Roman Empire and is in prophecy in that way.
 - a) Possible, but I am dubious.
 3. It is possible that Europe and maybe even the US could become Muslim and make their way into prophecy that way.
 - a) I think this could happen in Europe.
 - b) I think this is less likely in the US.

4. I think it most likely that the US will degenerate into a civil war and chaos with the nation under the control of regional war lords.
 - a) This is just a guess.
 - b) Based on what I see happening today.

II. Introduction

- A. This is the third chapter presenting Daniel's third vision.
 1. Chapter 10 sets the scene.
 - a) After three weeks of fasting for the people of Israel, Daniel receives a vision.
 - b) The Messiah in priest clothes appears to Daniel.
 - c) Then Gabriel strengthens Daniel and describes the ongoing conflict in the heavens.
 2. Chapter 11 describes the coming events with respect to an ongoing conflict between two Hellenistic kingdoms (Seleucids and Ptolemies).
 - a) Judea gets caught in between these two powers.
 - b) The account culminates with Antiochus IV.
 - (1) After his hopes of gaining Egypt were dashed by Rome, Antiochus IV takes it out on Judea.
 - (a) Severe persecution for a period of time
 - c) Then it talks about another Antiochus-like ruler who will attack Israel and Egypt and become very wealthy.
 - (1) But at the height of success will hear rumors from the east and north that worry him.
 - (a) He will persecute God's people horribly.
 - d) He will come to his end, with no one to help him.
 3. Chapter 12 concludes this vision and the book.

III. Daniel 12:1

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.

- A. *At that time*
 1. At the time of the great distress
 - a) When the people of God are at the height of persecution
 2. Michael will arise
 - a) Archangel assigned to protect the people of Israel
 - b) He will act at this time.
- B. Horrendous persecution
 1. Unmatched since the beginning of nations
 - a) Starting point suggests the connection to Empire

- C. Your people will be delivered.
 - 1. Not Israel as an ethnic group
 - a) Believers
 - 2. Those whose names are written in the book
 - a) The book of those who will get eternal life

IV. Daniel 12:2-4

²*Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.* ³*Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.* ⁴*But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”*

- A. Many will awaken from the grave.
 - 1. Apparently, a resurrection
 - 2. Some will rise to eternal life.
 - a) These are the wise.
 - (1) Those who embrace the truth
 - (2) And those who lead many to righteousness
 - b) These will rise to great glory.
 - 3. Others will rise to eternal damnation.
- B. Daniel is told to seal up the words of the scroll.
 - 1. The scroll of Daniel?
 - a) Some think it is just this vision.
 - b) But it could be the whole book.
 - 2. Preserve it for the end (rather than hide it).
 - a) It will serve an important service.
 - (1) Especially at the end
 - 3. People will look everywhere for knowledge.
 - a) People looking for clarity and understanding in confusing times
 - b) This book will be important for those who really want understanding.

V. Daniel 12:5-6

⁵*Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank.* ⁶*One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?”*

- A. Difficult choreography
 - 1. I am sure the choreography is significant, but I don't understand it.
 - a) I have trouble envisioning what is described.
 - 2. In chapter 10, we were introduced to a man in linen.
 - a) This was a God-like figure in priestly clothing.
 - (1) Presumably the Messiah

3. Then another figure (presumably Gabriel) raises Daniel up and gives him the vision of the kings of the north and south.
4. In this section, he sees “two others.”
 - a) One on each side of the river
 - (1) One is dressed in linen.
 - (a) This is probably the same figure Daniel saw in chapter 10.
 - (i) Messiah
 - b) I don’t know what it means when it says, “who was above the waters of the river.”
 - (1) The word for river is the word used as the name of the Nile.
 - (a) This could be alluding to the Exodus.
5. The other one asks the Messiah, “how long until these things are fulfilled?”
 - a) How long until all of this has come to pass? How long will it be until the end?
 - b) How long will the horrible persecution last?
 - (1) This appears to be the right understanding.
 - (a) This is the question that is of interest in the narrative.

VI. Daniel 12:7

The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, 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.”

- A. The God-like, priest-like figure takes an oath to certify his answer.
 1. Swears by the eternal God
 2. “for a time, times, and half a time”
- B. This is the fourth time we have heard a figure given describing how long.
 1. Vision of the four beasts (chapter 7)
 - a) No one asked how long.
 - b) Daniel 7:25 with respect to the Antichrist:

He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.

 - (1) The answer tells us how long the saints will be persecuted in the final persecution.
 - (2) An enigmatic answer
 - (a) Time, times, and half a time
 - (i) Presumably 3 ½ somethings (years?)

2. Vision of the ram and the goat (chapter 8)
 - a) Daniel 8:13:

“How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled—the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?”

 - (1) With respect to the small horn of the goat
 - (a) I interpreted this to be about Antiochus IV.
 - (2) The question was, “How long will the temple be defiled?”
 - (3) The answer was 2,300 evening mornings.
 - (a) Apparently 1,150 days (3.2 years)

3. Answer to Daniel’s prayer (chapter 9)

- a) Daniel 9:27:

He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.’”

- (1) No one asked how long.
- (2) Multiple time periods are indicated.
 - (a) The last time period is the time from the end of the sacrifice until the end.
 - (b) This is half a seven—apparently 3 ½ years.

4. This passage

- a) They all tell us how long the persecution lasts.
 - (1) 8:13 tells us how long the persecution of Antiochus IV lasts.
 - (2) The other three are all telling us how long the final persecution lasts.
- b) All of the answers appear to be about 3 ½.

- C. “When the power of the holy people has been finally broken

- a) Rebellious power
 - (1) When the people of Israel submit en masse to God.

VII. Daniel 12:8-12

⁸ *I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, “My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?”*
⁹ *He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. ¹¹ “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. ¹² Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.*

- A. The answer was too enigmatic for Daniel to understand.

1. So he asks a different, but related, question.

- a) Not about timing
 - b) About purpose
2. What will be the result?
- a) Why do this?
- B. The Messiah responds to Daniel.
- 1. Essentially a dismissal
 - a) "Go your way."
 - b) The message is sealed (protected) until the end.
 - 2. But then a brief answer to both.
 - a) Why?
 - (1) Because it will purify many.
 - (a) All those who embrace truth will understand what is happening and why it is happening and be purified by it.
 - (2) It will not benefit the wicked.
 - (a) They will just keep being wicked.
 - b) When?
 - (1) From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up
 - (a) This suggests that the third temple will be built.
 - (i) Sacrifices will be offered.
 - (b) The king of the North will stop the sacrifices and set up the abomination of desolation.
 - (i) This is a reiteration of what Antiochus IV did.
 - (2) Till the end
 - (a) A mathematical puzzle
 - (b) It will be 1290 days.
 - (i) Just over 3 ½ years.
 - (ii) 360-day year: 3.58
 - (iii) 365-day year: 3.53
 - (3) There will be an additional 45 days.
 - (a) One and a half months
 - (i) I have no idea what this is.

VIII. Daniel 12:13

"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. "

- A. Go your way.
 - 1. Don't worry about it.
 - 2. Continue as you were until you die.
- B. At the end of days
 - 1. When the 1,335 days is over (?)

2. You will rise (resurrection).
3. You will get your inheritance.

IX. Concluding Comments

A. What is Empire?

1. The natural contrivance of sinful man to cope with our fears for our safety and comfort.
 - a) The unification of resources to solve our problems
 - (1) This part is not inherently wrong.
2. There is the temptation to see the community as the source of our security *instead* of God.
 - a) Empire is sinful man's alternative to God (idolatry).
 - b) This temptation for every individual can increase—
 - (1) Over time
 - (2) As the community provides more of our needs
 - (3) As society becomes more artificial
 - (a) The more artificial society is, the harder it is for people to see their dependence on God.
 - c) The temptation of people who are attracted to power grows as the resources of society increase.
 - (1) Ruthless people seek to find ways to appropriate that power and benefit themselves and their families and friends.
 - (2) The more wealth and control members of society hand over to the community, the greater the community resources.
 - (3) Ruthless people coax the members of the community into granting the community more control with goodies (handouts).
 - (a) Bread and circuses
 - (4) The more the control, the more subservient the population.
 - (a) The end is enslavement to the thing that was supposed to make us safe and secure.
3. Empire is essentially and necessarily hostile to God.
 - a) In order to be as powerful as possible, Empire needs the absolute commitment of everyone.
 - (1) God is a rival commitment.
 - b) God is committed to the destruction of Empire.
 - (1) Empire senses this and hates it.
 - c) From time to time, Empire manifests its hostility to God with persecution of God's people.
4. God will completely destroy Empire.
 - a) God will allow it to reach its *telos*.
 - (1) Human sinfulness written in huge letters for all to see
 - (2) It will be clear to all what man is capable of.

- b) Once it has reached its *telos*, God will completely destroy it.
 - (1) Never to be resurrected
 - c) God's people (the wise) will be freed from death and Empire forever.
 - (1) We will be saved!
5. God will replace Empire with the Kingdom of God.
- a) Eternal
 - b) Absolute safety and security
 - c) Freedom from sin and death

Accordingly the revelation has this as its object, to show how the heathen world-kings shall not attain to an enduring stability, and by their persecution of the people of God shall only accomplish their purification, and bring on the end, in which, through their destruction, the people of God shall be delivered from all oppression and be transfigured. (Keil)

6. This is the truth.

B. Why do we need to know?

1. To protect us against the seduction of culture
 - a) Those who firmly believe this narrative are invulnerable to Empire.
 - (1) Empire has no leverage on such people.
 - (2) People who believe the Gospel undermine Empire.
 - b) Empire is constantly trying to get us to fall for alternate narratives.
 - (1) Culture bombards us with messages designed to dissuade us of the Gospel and to encourage us to believe a different narrative.
 - c) This pressure is very hard to resist.
2. To protect us in times of persecution
 - a) This is the greater concern in the book of Daniel.
 - b) Preparing people for the end
 - (1) When the risks are the greatest
 - (2) Many believers will lose their lives.
 - (3) And it will look like God's side is losing.
 - (4) Believers' faith will be tested to the utmost.
 - (a) Will you witness to the truth of the Gospel even if it costs you your life?
 - (i) Every witness to the truth of the Gospel is another nail in the coffin of Empire.

C. How do we then live?

1. In most times and places, we are called to live as a part of the society in which we find ourselves
 - a) The peace it provides is a gift from God.
 - (1) Daniel was a high-ranking official in Babylon.
 - b) But don't sacrifice your principles.
 - (1) Daniel and his friends were examples of this integrity.
2. But we are warned to get out of Babylon.

- a) Why?
 - (1) Avoid its judgment
 - (2) Avoid the cultural influence
- b) How?
 - (1) Many ways
 - (a) Socially
 - (b) Technologically
 - (c) Physically
 - (2) Most importantly: spiritual separation
 - (a) Hold firmly to the true narrative.
 - (b) Avoid being seduced.

D. Importance of reading the prophets

1. I have been looking at the prophets for several years now.
 - a) I have been a little surprised by what I have found.
 - (1) They are very difficult to understand.
 - (a) I have benefitted greatly from some commentaries that provide some helpful background and observations.
 - (2) But they are full of helpful and very understandable truths.
 - (a) Warnings against evil
 - (b) Descriptions of righteousness
 - (c) Descriptions of the future that awaits the righteous
2. It is chiropractic for the soul.

X. Another Listener Question

“The answer may be necessarily speculative, but why do you suppose YHWH sends prophecy in so many different forms? Some is very specific (e.g., Isaiah mentions Cyrus by name; 70 years of Babylonian captivity), some reference a type (e.g., Elijah returning; Emmanuel), some are highly symbolic (e.g. beasts with horns; statue with gold head and clay feet; "Mene mene ..." word play in weird language), some possibly compress long time periods together, some have angels helping with interpretation.”

- A. I don't know.
 1. Specific is important.
 - a) We can be confident that it was fulfilled.
 2. Short term is important.
 - a) We can be confident in the long term.
 3. They constitute a huge puzzle
 - a) They are primarily about the end.
 - b) The end brings a lot of themes together.
 - (1) You need to know the Bible as a whole.
 - (2) The story that God is telling.
 4. The Bible yields up its treasures to those who most want to know.
 - a) One quick read won't do it.