

Daniel 12: Living Wisely in Light of the End

Daniel 12 closes the book with a look beyond earthly empires to the final future: a time of intense trouble, God's deliverance, the resurrection, and a call to live wisely. It reminds us that history is moving toward a real conclusion, and that God has already written the last chapter.

1. A Time of Unparalleled Trouble and Certain Deliverance

Daniel 12:1 (NKJV)

"At that time Michael shall stand up,
The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people;
And there shall be a time of trouble,
Such as never was since there was a nation,
Even to that time.
And at that time your people shall be delivered,
Every one who is found written in the book."

The angel tells Daniel that there is coming "a time of trouble" unlike anything before. Jesus echoes this when He speaks of "great tribulation" in Matthew 24:21. However we understand the precise timing and sequence of events, the main point is clear:

- There will be a final, intense season of distress for the people of God.
- God has not forgotten His people; He sends Michael, His angelic champion, to stand guard.
- Deliverance is promised for those "found written in the book."

This "book" reflects what Scripture elsewhere calls the **Book of Life** (see Exodus 32:32–33; Revelation 20:12, Revelation 20:15; Philippians 4:3). Those who belong to God by genuine faith are not forgotten, even in the darkest hour.

Application for believers:

God does not promise that His people will never face trouble, but He does promise that trouble does not have the final word. Your name in His book is more secure than any earthly safety. When life feels chaotic, you can rest in the God who keeps close track of those who belong to Him.

2. Resurrection and Two Destinies

Daniel 12:2–3 (NKJV)

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life,
Some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever."

Here we have one of the clearest Old Testament statements of the resurrection:

- Death is not the end; those who “sleep in the dust” will **awake**.
- There are two eternal destinies:
 - Everlasting life
 - Shame and everlasting contempt

Later, the New Testament expands this truth. Jesus said:

“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” (John 5:28–29, NKJV)

Revelation speaks of a “first resurrection” and of the judgment of the wicked before the great white throne (Revelation 20:4–6, Revelation 20:11–15). However we understand the exact stages, Daniel sees the core reality: there is a real, bodily future, and it is eternal.

Those who are wise—who fear the Lord, trust Him, and live accordingly—are promised that they will “shine like the brightness of the firmament.” And those who turn many to righteousness—who help others come to know God and walk in His ways—will shine “like the stars forever and ever.”

Human applause is brief. Some people’s influence is like a firework in the sky: bright and loud for a moment, then gone. God is inviting us into something far better—long obedience, quiet faithfulness, and the eternal brightness of a life spent leading others toward Him.

Application for believers:

Ask yourself, “Am I living for flash or for faithfulness? For applause that fades or for a glory that lasts?” A wise life is not measured merely by how much we do, but by how deeply we walk with God and how many we help toward righteousness.

3. Sealed Words and Increasing Understanding

Daniel 12:4 (NKJV)

“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.”

Daniel is told to “seal the book” until “the time of the end.” That does not mean the book is hidden forever, but that its full meaning will become clearer as God’s plan moves forward and later generations look back at fulfilled history.

“Knowledge shall increase” at the very least means that understanding of these prophecies will grow as history unfolds. As believers today, we can see many of Daniel’s predictions already fulfilled, which gives us confidence that God will also keep the parts that are still future.

Application for believers:

Prophecy is not given to satisfy curiosity, but to strengthen faith and inspire obedience. As God opens His Word to you, let growing understanding lead to deeper trust and a holier life, not endless speculation.

4. A Limited Time of Suffering

Daniel 12:5–7 (NKJV)

“Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, ‘How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?’

Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.”

One angel asks the question we all ask: “How long?” The answer is symbolic and precise at the same time: “a time, times, and half a time”—commonly understood as three and one-half units (often taken as years). However one calculates it, the main point is:

- The period of intense suffering is real, but it is limited.
- It will not go on indefinitely.
- God Himself has set a boundary: “all these things shall be finished.”

The suffering of God’s people may reach a point where their strength seems “completely shattered,” yet even then God has not lost control. He allows times of pressure, but not without purpose and never without an end.

Application for believers:

You may not be facing the final crisis Daniel sees, but you might feel like your strength is shattered. God’s answer is the same: your trial has limits. It is held in His hand. He sees, He knows, and He has already written “finished” over suffering and evil—even if you cannot yet see how.

5. The Wise Will Understand, the Wicked Will Not

Daniel 12:8–10 (NKJV)

“Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, ‘My lord, what shall be the end of these things?’ And he said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.’”

Daniel is honest: he hears, but he does not fully understand. He wants to know more, but the messenger tells him to “go your way.” In other words:

- Some things will remain partially mysterious until God’s appointed time.
- Daniel’s responsibility is to be faithful, not to have every detail figured out.

In that process:

- Many will be purified, made white, and refined. Trials will sift and refine true believers.
- The wicked will continue to act wickedly and will not understand, not because the truth is impossible to grasp, but because their hearts are resistant.
- “The wise shall understand”—those who humble themselves before God and seek Him will gain the insight they need.

Application for believers:

You do not need to understand every detail of prophecy to walk faithfully with God. What you do need is a heart that is willing to be refined and a mind that is open to His Word. Pray to be among those “wise” ones who understand enough to trust and obey.

6. The Measured Days and the Call to Perseverance

Daniel 12:11–12 (NKJV)

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.”

These numbers remind us that God has fixed times and seasons, even when we cannot perfectly map every detail. From a decisive act of desecration (“the abomination of desolation”), there is a measured period until the end. Then there is a further period linked to a special blessing for those who endure.

Rather than turning this into a speculative chart, notice the heart of the promise:

- God knows exactly how long the darkest days will last.
- Those who wait, endure, and cling to Him are called “blessed.”

Application for believers:

God’s call is not to decode every time calculation, but to endure. Hold on to Him when it is costly. Continue to trust and obey when the world pulls the other way. Blessing is promised for those who persevere.

7. A Personal Word to Daniel—and to Us

Daniel 12:13 (NKJV)

“But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.”

God does not just speak about empires and timelines—He speaks to His servant personally:

- “Go your way till the end” – live out your calling in your own generation.
- “You shall rest” – your earthly life will end in God’s peace.
- “You will arise” – there will be a resurrection.
- “To your inheritance” – you have a secure and personal portion in God’s eternal kingdom.

That same pattern applies to every child of God in Christ:

1. Walk faithfully now.
2. Rest in God’s care when your earthly journey ends.
3. Rise again in the resurrection.
4. Receive the inheritance He has prepared for you.

A Challenge for Believers

In light of Daniel 12, believers should ask, “If this world is passing away and eternal realities are ahead, how should I live?”

Here are some concrete challenges:

1. Live for what lasts.

Set your heart on things above, not on temporary achievements or possessions. The trials and successes of this world are short; the resurrection and the kingdom of God are eternal.

2. **Pursue holiness and refinement.**

Let God use difficulties to purify you rather than embitter you. When your faith is tested, respond with repentance, dependence, and obedience, not with resentment.

3. **Commit to turning others to righteousness.**

Daniel 12:3 says that those who turn many to righteousness will shine like stars forever. Ask the Lord to use you to point others to Christ—through your words, your example, your prayers, and your love.

4. **Stay watchful and ready.**

You may not know all the details of the end times, but you do know this: Jesus is coming again, and history is headed toward His judgment and His kingdom. Live as someone who believes that.

An Invitation to Those Who Are Not Yet in Christ

Daniel 12 is not just a timeline; it is a warning and an invitation.

There is coming:

- A time of trouble such as the world has never known.
- A resurrection to everlasting life or to everlasting absolute separation from God in hell and the lake of fire.
- A final separation between those written in God's book and those who are not.

God's desire is not that you perish, but that you turn to Him and live (see Ezekiel 33:11; 1 Timothy 2:3–4). That is why He sent His Son.

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God:

- Took on flesh and entered our broken world.
- Lived a sinless life.
- Shed His blood on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins.
- Bore the judgment we deserve so that we could be forgiven.
- On the third day rose from the dead, and His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.
- Calls all people everywhere to repent and believe the good news.

The difference between “everlasting life” and “everlasting shame and contempt” is not how impressive your life has been, but whether you have turned to Jesus in repentance and faith.

The Scripture says:

“For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13, NKJV)

If you sense in your heart that God is drawing you, you can respond to Him now. There is no magic formula, but you might pray something like this:

*“Lord God,
I confess that I am a sinner and that I have gone my own way.
I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins
and that He rose again from the dead.
I turn from my sin and place my trust in Jesus as my Savior and Lord.
Please forgive me, cleanse me, and write my name in Your book of life.
Take my life and make me Yours.
In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

If that expresses the desire of your heart and you genuinely turn to Him, He will not turn you away (John 6:37). He is the One who saves us by His shed blood, and His empty tomb proves that He has authority to forgive and to give eternal life.