

Questions

- *The first angel is senior in knowledge and authority*

- *God often keeps timing secret*

- *'It will be for a time, times and half a time*

- *The final rebellion against God and his church will be short and sharp*

- *Just at the point when it seems God's people will be destroyed, rescue will come*

- *Those whose name is found written in the book will be delivered*

- *Questions remain – a striking testimony to the inspiration of Scripture*

- *The angel discourages too much curiosity about future matters*

- *The days of persecution will have a purifying effect on the church*

The angelic revelation of Daniel 11:2–12:4 has now finished, but Daniel is left in wondering admiration. He now sees two more angels. ⁵*Then I, Daniel, was still watching, and there before me stood two others. One was standing on my side of the river and one on the opposite side. We recall that the angel had appeared to him by the River Tigris*¹. One angel is talking to the first angel who had given the revelation. The first angel seems to be senior in knowledge and authority. He is visible in a standing position above the River Tigris. This is probably a way of expressing authority. The Tigris was a water-supply for the Persian empire. God's angels have control of the circumstances of the nations.

One of the angels asks a question. ⁶*One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was standing above the waters of the river, 'How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?' God often keeps timing secret. Even the angels did not all know the timing of these predicted events. ⁷The 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 take an oath by him who lives for ever. This is an extraordinarily emphatic declaration. Normally one raises only one hand in taking an oath. The angel (who has a man-like form) raises both hands, in taking an oath. He swears by God. It will be the living God, in his great power, who brings these predictions to pass. The question centres on the revelation in Daniel 12:1 – the 'time of distress such as has never happened since nations first came into existence'. The answer comes back: 'It will be for a time, times and half a time.' We have had this phrase in Daniel 7:25. I suggested that it may have derived from the period of persecution in the days of Elijah, which lasted for about three-and-a-half years. The period from the height of Antiochus's persecution to his death also seems to have been about the same length. Certainly three-and-a-half years, or 'a time, times and half a time', was used as a traditional expression for a short but severe persecution. Here the point is that the final rebellion against God and his church will be short and sharp. Just at the point when it seems God's people will be destroyed, rescue will come. ⁷*When the breaking of the power of the holy people has come to an end, all these things will be brought to completion.*' When the final enemy of God and his people seems to be at the point of total conquest of God's people, then at that point he himself will be destroyed. Daniel 12:1 will be fulfilled. Those whose name is found written in the book will be delivered.*

Daniel still has questions. *I heard the answer, but I did not understand. So I asked, 'My lord, what will be the outcome of these things?'* It is a striking testimony to the inspiration of Scripture. God gave Daniel a word but even Daniel did not fully understand it! No prophecy of Scripture ever came from what that person wanted to say¹.

Daniel is not given an answer. The angel discourages too much curiosity about future matters. ⁹*He replied, 'Go on your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.'* The revelation is not for Daniel's time as much as it is for the days of the distant future. The angel does however give a general description of what is ahead for Daniel. 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.'* The days of persecution will have a purifying effect on the church. The wicked will never be entirely abolished in this world. God's people will be given spiritual understanding but the rest of the world will continue in spiritual blindness.

¹ 10:4

¹ see 2 Peter 1:21

Persecution

• *Persecution will come to the point where it can hardly be borne and one expects the end to come – but then it goes on somewhat longer in its intensity and severity*

• *Then suddenly, unexpectedly, in the middle of the month, the end comes!*

• *Daniel himself must 'endure to the end' of the period in which he lives and the same is true for us*

• *But we are laying up treasure in heaven. We too will rest from the troubles of this world*

• *We shall pass into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ*

Next the angel has a word about the sharpness and severity of the days of Antiochus. 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.' We have had reference to a 'time, times and half a time'¹². And we have had reference to 2,300 mornings and evenings³. Now we have reference to 1,290 days, which is the same 3 ½ x 12 x 30 (3 ½ years if the year is counted as having 360 days) plus an extra month of 30 days! I suggest it means 'the traditional short and sharp period of persecution (1,260 days) plus one month more!' In other words it stresses that the time of persecution will come to the point where it can hardly be borne and one expects the end to come – but then it goes on somewhat longer in its intensity and severity.

Then the figure is lengthened by 45 days more! ¹²'Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.' It is as if 1,260 days is hardly bearable. A month more (1,290 days) is even more terrible. But then there is another month (1,320). Then we are halfway through another month (1,335). Will this go on for ever? Then suddenly, unexpectedly, in the middle of the month, the end comes! 'Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.'

Daniel himself must 'endure to the end' of the period in which he lives. The angel says, 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.' Daniel will not be alive when Antiochus comes. But he must endure much suffering in his own day in order to be faithful to God in the midst of a pagan empire. But then he will rest from the troubles of this world. The final end of the story for Daniel will be when he shares in the resurrection to life he has already had revealed to him. On such an occasion he will receive a heavenly reward: his 'allotted inheritance' which will compensate for every suffering he has endured. He will enjoy it for ever, with the Lord. The same is true for us. No country in the modern world is without elements of paganism. We too may well have to endure sufferings small and maybe sufferings large for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we are laying up treasure in heaven. We too will rest from the troubles of this world. We know something Daniel did not know. We shall pass into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. But there will be a day of great publicity when all is revealed and reviewed. Our heavenly reward will be visible to everyone. We shall shine like the stars in heaven. God will compensate for every suffering endured for his sake. We too will enjoy an 'allotted inheritance' for ever, with the Lord Jesus Christ.

7:25
12:7
8:14



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