GO YOUR WAY TILL THE END

Daniel 12:1-13

Key Verse: 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.”

In chapter 11, the angel unfolded the Book of the Truth regarding the sufferings of the Jews through the reign of Persia, of Greece and of the willful king, the Antichrist in the final form of the Roman era. The final Antichrist literally rules the world until the time of wrath is completed, while God’s people are refined and purified and made spotless fit to the coming kingdom of Christ. We are to know that God never gives up on his people until finally they are purified and purged. At last, the Antichrist is destroyed by the splendour of the coming of Christ. In today’s passage, the last chapter of the book of Daniel, the angel gives him the message of hope, true and everlasting hope, for God’s people after a long painful message of their tremendous suffering. And to Daniel is given a very personal message to go his way till the end to rise and receive his allotted inheritance. What an ending! Let’s take a look.

The angel says in verse 1, “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.” During the three and half years of the time of unequalled tribulation and distress, God protects his people through the great prince Michael. Michael, perhaps the most powerful of all the angels, has been given throughout all of Israel’s history the responsibility of defending the people of God. God has assigned Michael the special task of caring for Israel. Michael was mentioned in 10:13, to help his fellow angel in coming to Daniel when the angel was resisted by the prince of the Persian kingdom, in 10:30, “…No one supports me against them except Michael, you prince” and here in 12:1. The great prince, the prince of Israel, will be there in such a time of distress as a protector for them whereas the Antichrist appears as a protector for them during the first half of the tribulation time and then annihilates them breaking the covenant between them. It is well depicted in Revelation 12:6, “The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days” and in verse 14, “The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach.” And 12:17 says, “Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make a war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” It is sure that when we live by faith in obedience to his word, God absolutely protects his people. Jesus said in Luke 12:6-7, “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” And we are to know that amid God’s protection his people can be martyred courageously for God gives them such a courage to stand against the evil power to the end. God protects his people in either way.

The angel says continually in verse 1, “But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.” In Exodus, when the Israelites committed a terrible sin of making gods in the shape of a golden calf, Moses pleaded with the LORD out of a broken heart for his people, “Please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written” (Ex 32:32). It is the book of remembrance in Malachi 3:16, “…A scroll/book of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.” In Luke’s gospel, when seventy-two returned with joy from their trip to preach the gospel, saying, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name,” Jesus replied, “…do not rejoice that the spirits submit , but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (10:20). There is such a book in heaven. This is the book of life and it is mentioned 6 times in Revelation (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27). People want their names to be written in books, on buildings and statues and benches, or on the park and streets in this world of the earth. But what truly matters is if one’s name is written in the book of life in heaven. So here in Daniel 12:1, this deliverance is related to eternal life.

The angel continues in verse 2, “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” What a declaration! The life in this world is not everything. It is not the end. There will be the everlasting life and the everlasting contempt. The resurrection of the dead is clearly mentioned not only in the New Testament, but also in the Old Testament. Isaiah 26:19 says, “But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.” Jesus himself said in John 5:28, 29, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” According to Jesus, there will be two kinds of resurrection, the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment/condemnation. After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus said to his disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mk 16:15-16). What divides people eternally is whether one believes the good news of the gospel, Christ’s death for our sins and his resurrection or one does not. This results in eternal salvation or in eternal damnation. The everlasting life through the resurrection is the hope of Israel and the true hope of all mankind. When Paul met and talked with his own people the leaders of Jews about the reason he came to Rome as a criminal, he said, “It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.” (Ac 28:20). And Peter said first of all to the early suffering Christians, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pe 1:3).

Here what does the angel say continually? In verse 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.” Here, those who are wise are those who know their God and firmly resist the evil power of Satan and who are refined, purified and made spotless through all the persecutions and even through their stumbling. They are those who understood God’s way of working and remain in the faith. Jesus said, “he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Mt. 24:13; Mk 13:13) and “by standing firm you will gain life” (Lk 21:19).

What happens to the wise? The angel said, “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens.” Wow! Truly it is shining in eternity. Brightness is contrasted with darkness. Brightness refers to life, joy, peace, endless happiness, all the beautiful things in fellowship with God, while darkness refers to death, sorrow, pain, endless suffering and all other elements of deadness. Those who are wise will have the capacity to eternally radiate the glory of God. The angel said further, “and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.” How precious and great it is to lead even one to righteousness. According to Jesus, if one sinner repents, there is rejoicing in heaven (Lk 15:7). We believe that the most precious thing we can do in this world is to lead one soul after another to righteousness, to Christ Jesus. For this we can invest our time and money and energy and all we have. In the course of doing this invaluable work, we can have a sense of loss. We can be misunderstood, criticized, slandered and persecuted, and discouraged and disheartened. But Jesus said, “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.” (Matthew 5:11-12). The faithfulness of our own witness will determine our eternal capacity to manifest the glory of God. The Lord wants us to be faithful to preach the Word and give out the gospel. Those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars of the sky for ever and ever. People want to be stars in this world, shining momentarily. But God wants us to be stars in heaven, shining eternally. What a wonderful life it will be! May we have this aim. “Shining like the stars for ever and ever” can be the conclusion of the angel’s words to Daniel.

One further remark of the angel is in verse 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.” The words of the scroll are to be preserved and kept, not to be altered and distorted to the time of the end. Many will go here and there seeking for true knowledge, the knowledge of salvation, while trying to increase knowledge. The LORD said in Amos 8:12, 13, “Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD….In that day the lovely young women and strong young men will faint because of thirst.” Paul clearly said in 2 Timothy 3:15, 16, that the Scriptures are able to make people wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, for all Scripture is God-breathed.” May God rise up Bible teachers who can reveal the truth of God’s words as they are including the words written in the book of Daniel.

Verse 5 says, “Then, I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. 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?” Why two other angels, not one? Probably they were standing there as two witnesses. As we thought of in chapter 10, the man clothed in linen is most likely the preincarnate Christ dressed in linen with a belt of the finest gold around his waist, his body being like chrysolite, his face like lighting, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze and his voice like the sound of a multitude (10:5-6). He was standing above the waters of the Tigris River. In Psalm 29:10, “The LORD sits enthroned over the flood.” The angel’s question to the man clothed in the linen, “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?” shows the angel was weary of the suffering of God’s people and the fight with demons, wishing such a time to be over soon. For even angels long to look into the redemption of the people of God through Christ (1 Pe 1:12).

Then Daniel says in verse 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 to 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.’” Whenever a Jew wanted to make an oath, he raised his right hand. And we also do so in the court to promise to tell the truth. That’s a sign of swearing. Raising both hands is a sign of absolute binding affirmation. It confirms the solemnity of the swearing.

In fact, it had been revealed in 7:25 that “the saints will be handed over to him/the Antichrist for a time, times and half a time.” Yet the angel who asked the question could not get the meaning of this or he forgot it. The expression, “a time, times and half a time” is written thrice in the Bible, once more in Revelation 12:14, “she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time” as we studied above. It shows sureness of the duration of the great tribulation until the power of the holy people has been finally broken. They will be so broken and crushed that they will look to their Messiah with no place to go, with no self-dependence, no human dependence at all whatsoever. According to Zechariah 12:10, finally “they will look on the one they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child”, which means they would repent and accept Jesus as the Messiah whom God sent for their salvation. It is further written in Zechariah 13:8-9, “‘In the whole land,’ declares the LORD, ‘two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is our God.’”

In verse 8, Daniel says, “I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, ‘My Lord, what will the outcome/end of all this be?’” At this the man clothed in linen spoke to Daniel personally, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.” These are words of rebuke in a way, but also words of comfort. God wants him to be content with what God has revealed. As for us we should stay away from meaningless speculation, not trying to have every single prophetic detail catalogued and every event fully explained. The man continued, “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.” This is a beautiful talk between Daniel and the man clothed in linen.

In chapter 10, at the glorious appearing of the man clothed in linen, so majestic and glorious, Daniel was helpless and his face turned deathly pale with no strength left. When Daniel heard him speaking, he fell into a deep sleep, his face to the ground, meaning he fainted, utterly losing his consciousness. But now here what a gentle and gracious talk is going on between the two! Truly it is the grace of the preincarnate Christ with his glory hidden. The man clothed in linen did not give a new message but repeated the same message, mentioning the time of the end and the refinement and purification of his people again. It is good to remember that the description “the time of the end” is written fivefold (8:17; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9). “The time of the end” is a reference to the great Tribulation, a time, times and half a time.

10:35 says, “Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end.” Here, “many” refers to one third of the Jews as written in Zechariah 13:8. The one third is the many of all to Paul, who said in Romans 11:26, “And so all Israel will be saved.” The remnant of believing Jews become the “all” of Israel that is saved. The sad thing is that the wicked will continue to be wicked with no understanding. It is as Jesus said to John in Revelation 22:10, 11, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.” The colours of people become clearer as the time comes to an end.

The man clothed in linen says to Daniel continually, “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of 1,335 days.” We are familiar with 1,260 days, that is 42 month and 3 and ½ years, not 1,290 days. The great tribulation is the second half of the seven years – a time, times and half a time. Then thirty days may be for the remaining purpose: for Christ the King to judge all nations written Matthew 25, separating the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats to determine who has the right to enter the to enter into the millennial Kingdom. The extra 45 days can be for the full establishment of the kingdom of blessing. It seems that God is very specific as well as general for us to know the reality of the blessed and glorious kingdom of Christ. Although we cannot be completely sure of all these, God has all these numbers in his mind and will bring them to completion.

Now the final words given to Daniel is, “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.” This is a blessed benediction, a sworn promise to Daniel. He had been given thorough revelations of the history of the times of the Gentiles. He had been given insight into all of the destiny of Israel. He had seen the time of the end. He had seen the Antichrist, the great tribulation and the Kingdom of blessedness. And he knew that in the meantime, Israel, his beloved people, would suffer horribly. So God gives him a glimpse of the preincarnate Christ, which is a great comfort to Daniel.

His personal message to Daniel is, “As for you, go your way.” People usually say, “I go my way. No one can bother me.” It is true that each one goes his or her way anyway. But what matters is that my way is on the right track. As for Daniel, his life was wonderful in God’s sight, not compromising with the power of the kingdoms of the world by living a life of faith in deep fellowship with the LORD, leading many to righteousness, being so faithful since he came to Babylon as a young captive until he became nearly 90 years old with the victory of faith over any power of the world. It is surely Christ’s great encouragement to hear, “You, Daniel, go your way till the end.”

And “You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.” This is the promise of resurrection and eternal reward. We are reminded of Colossians 1:12, “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.”

It is thrilling that at the end, Christ the Lord came to Daniel talked to Daniel with these words of blessedness. He is our Saviour and Christ the Lord. He is looking at us, having each of his people in his heart. May we treasure our relationship with him, growing in fellowship with him and all the more living a life of faith in the way of Christ with the hope of resurrection and eternal inheritance.