

EASTER ATTRUENORTH

April 8-15, 2023

MAIN POINT

Though God's people will face suffering, God is always in control and the hope of resurrection remains.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever experienced great suffering in your life?
Or have you walked with a friend who experienced great suffering?
Share some about that experience.

What hope do Christians have in the midst of trying circumstances?

On this side of heaven, there is no avoiding pain and suffering. It isn't matter of if, but when. God's people have been no strangers to suffering throughout history. Yet, they have never been consumed by it. No matter how bad things became for the Israelites, and for followers of Jesus in the early church, deliverance has always come. Be it deliverance from slavery, oppressive rulers, famine, or the ultimate deliverance from sin and death through Christ himself, God has always been faithful to deliver His people. This deliverance has always been out of God's covenant faithfulness, not the strength or merit of His people.

We are reminded throughout the book of Daniel—including the final chapter—that Yahweh, the God of Israel, has ultimate control and charge over all things. History is held in His hands, despite the actions of sinful people. Yet, this does not mean that God's people have been or will be free from suffering. Though trial and tribulation will last for a time, God's plan and His people will ultimately endure.

UNDERSTANDING

READ [DANIEL 12:1-4](#).

How would faithful believers demonstrate wisdom, according to these verses?

Why would Gabriel instruct Daniel to “shut up these words and seal the book”?

At the time of great conflict described in [Daniel 11:45](#), Israel's angelic protector, Michael, will not leave God's people unguarded. This is understood to be a time of great trial in the future, at the culmination of all things. This period of tribulation will mean suffering unlike ever before for the people of God, but they will not suffer as those without hope. Gabriel reminded Daniel that God will leverage the power of heaven, led by Michael, to deliver the people from their trouble. Not even death will have the final word for God's people. For those who have died—whose names are written in the book—will be raised again to life. We are reminded in these culminating verses of the hope we have in Christ for resurrection power. Death will not be the demise of Christians, who will be raised again, nor will it be an escape for the wicked.

Certainly, only God knows the appointed time that the prophecy is to be revealed ([Daniel 8:26](#); [12:9](#)). Though we do not know all the specifics, we know that God saw fit to trust Daniel

with this vision, but for it to be revealed beyond Him was not appropriate. What we do know, is that in due time, the fullness of God will be revealed to us. The words of His prophecies and the fullness of truth will be sealed no longer ([Revelation 22:10](#)). Though, it is always our human desire to know what is coming, our hope is grounded in faith. That faith is not blind, but rooted in the knowledge that God holds the entirety of His creation in His hands and He will make all things new.

READ [DANIEL 12:5-13](#).

What two questions are raised in these verses?

What hope do these closing verses bring to God's people?

What seems to be the purpose of God's people enduring suffering?

In the final epilogue, we are reminded again of the setting of the vision—Daniel standing on the banks of the Tigris River ([Daniel 10:4](#)), where he was joined by two additional angelic beings. One of the angelic messengers asks, “How long?” How long will it be until all of these things prophesied about actually come to pass? How long will believers have to endure? In a triple-confirmation of his oath, the messenger responds by raising not one hand, but two, and swearing by He who lives forever ([Deuteronomy 32:40](#))—Yahweh, the God of Israel. Without a doubt, Daniel knew what was coming next was true. Accordingly, it would be “time, two times, and a half a time” ([Daniel 7:25](#)) and when the power of God's people has been shattered. This means that more suffering for God's people would be in store. They would struggle to be purified of their wickedness.

Admittedly, Daniel did not understand the messenger's answer. So he asked, “What will the outcome be?” But Daniel would not receive more answers or a detailed account. The faithful will be purified through enduring suffering and fleeing wickedness. In doing so, God's people will be sanctified with deeper, more firmly rooted trust in Him and His plan. And in purification—just as in the refining of a precious metal—the wicked will be separated out from the faithful. Returning to the first question of “how long?” the messenger gave specific amounts of days for the prophecy to come to pass. Though we can only speculate about literal application of the numbers, we know that an additional amount of time is given for God's people to endure. Blessed are those who will hold on a while longer in the midst of trial and tribulation ([Mark 13:13](#)).

Daniel was an old man at this point, having spent most of life in a foreign land, under foreign rule, serving unholy leaders. Even with this vision, he probably knew his own days would cease before it would all come to pass. Yet, he endured with the hope of life to come. What an unwavering hope we have as God's people to know that not even death is out of God's purview or power. Our hope in a future and final resurrection from our earthly graves surmounts any threat or suffering on this side of heaven.

APPLICATION

Studying the end of the book of Daniel, how has your view of God shifted?

What aspects of His character have been emphasized?

What aspects of His character have become more real to you?

How does this final chapter inform your view of suffering?

What does it mean to endure with hope?

How does the hope of resurrection inform how we live in the present?
How does it inform how we engage with a lost and broken world?

PRAYER

If you are in a season of suffering in your own life, pray earnestly that the Lord would meet you in the midst of your pain. Ask Him to strengthen you, that you might be found faithful to the end. If you are not currently suffering, intercede for someone you know who is experiencing trial and hardship. Finally, praise God for the hope that comes with resurrection. Praise Him for the fact that suffering, sin, and even death will not have the final say—but only Him, the One who is making all things new.

COMMENTARY

DANIEL 12:1-13

12:1 At that time refers to the events predicted in the previous paragraph ([11:36-45](#)), which details the antichrist's furious attempt to destroy and annihilate the Jewish people ([11:44](#)). Then the archangel Michael... who stands watch over the Jewish people will rise to their defense to preserve them (cp. [Revelation 12:7](#)). This will be necessary because the great tribulation (the second half of Daniel's seventieth week; [Daniel 9:27](#)) will be a time of unprecedented distress. Despite the horrific nature of the persecution of Israel, the result will be that the surviving remnant of the Jewish nation will turn in faith to their Messiah Jesus ([Zechariah 12:10](#); [Romans 11:25-27](#)) and He will deliver them. The book refers to the heavenly Book of Life in which the names of the elect are listed ([Psalm 69:28](#); [Phillippians 4:3](#); [Revelation 13:8](#); [17:8](#); [20:15](#)).

12:2 Following the deliverance of Israel, there will be a resurrection of those who sleep in the dust. This verse does not imply any kind of soul sleep before the resurrection since the faithful go to be with God instantly upon dying ([2 Corinthians 5:8](#); [Phillippians 1:21-23](#)) and the faithless go to a place of suffering also immediately upon dying ([Luke 16:22-23](#)). The word "sleep" is used as a metaphor to emphasize the temporary state of bodily death before being physically raised at the resurrection (cp. [John 11:11-15](#)). Although telescoped together here (as is common in prophecy), the resurrection of the faithful and the unfaithful are two distinct events separated by the one-thousand-year messianic kingdom ([Revelation 20:4-6](#)). Daniel 12:2 contains the clearest statement of resurrection in the OT, but by no means is it the only one (cp. [Job 19:25-27](#); [Isaiah 26:19](#)).

12:3 The phrase those who are wise refers to those with the wisdom to turn in faith to the Messiah Jesus. As a result, they will lead many others to faith and righteousness.

12:4 Although it is possible that Daniel was told to keep these words of the vision secret, an alternative rendering of the Hebrew is to "close up the words" and seal the book, a reference to preservation of the text of Daniel until the time of the end. Preserving Daniel's prophecy was necessary because in the end of days, many will roam about seeking answers that will be found in the book of Daniel. Moreover, in that day, knowledge will increase, possibly referring to the understanding of Daniel's prophecies as informed observers recognize the fulfillment of his predictions.

12:5-7 Daniel saw two others, meaning angels, who served as witnesses for the oath of the linen-dressed angel ([10:5](#)). Two was the minimum number of witnesses necessary for an oath ([Deuteronomy 19:15](#)). One of the witnessing angels asked how long until the end of the predicted time of distress. The angel dressed in linen answered that the time of the great tribulation (the second half of Daniel's seventieth week) would be for a time, times, and half

a time, or three and one-half years ([7:25](#); [Revelation 12:7](#)). By the end of the great tribulation, the power of the holy people Israel will be shattered, causing them to turn in faith to their long-rejected Messiah Jesus ([Zechariah 12:10](#)). At that time, He will return and deliver them ([Zechariah 14:1-21](#)) and all these things will be completed.

12:8-10 Daniel's statement that he heard but did not understand does not mean that he did not comprehend that his prophecy was about the end of days but rather that he did not understand precisely how these events would happen. Daniel was told to go on his way, because the words are secret (or "closed") and sealed until the time of the end, meaning they would not be fully recognized until their fulfillment at the end of days. At that time, the wicked will fail to comprehend their situation but the wise will understand the fulfillment of Daniel's words and turn in faith to the God of Israel and His Messiah Jesus.

12:11-12 Two periods of time were revealed to Daniel. First, from the middle of the tribulation when the antichrist stops daily sacrifice and commits the abomination of desolation until the end, there will be 1,290 days. The great tribulation is said to be three and one-half years (v. [7](#)) or 1,260 days ([Revelation 12:6](#); [13:5](#)). Here it is 30 days longer, probably to include time for the judgment of the nations ([Matthew 25:31-46](#)). Second, a blessing awaits the one who... reaches 1,335 days, a period that includes not only the 30 days for judging the nations but an additional 45 days, perhaps to establish the government of the messianic kingdom. Those who enter that kingdom are said to be blessed because they will be part of the most glorious world, governed by its greatest King, the Lord Jesus Himself.

12:13 The angel told Daniel that he was to continue to the end of his life, at which point he would rest, a euphemism for death. Yet he was given the promise that he too would rise from the dead at the end of the days (v. [2](#)).