

This is our last message in our series on the life of Daniel. We have learned a lot about this man. Daniel has been an inspiration to us on how to live well while in exile in a foreign and unholy land. We have seen his spiritual life up close and personal. And have learned from Daniel's example how we can live faithfully while in exile. What I mean by that is we see in Daniel a man who followed God and was formed by the values of God. We don't see a man here who followed the world and was formed by the world.

Daniel lived his entire adult life in exile in Babylon, and Daniel trusted God. And living in that place of trust, Daniel saw the power of God protect him in the midst of persecution. He saw God save him from being eaten by hungry lions. He saw God save his friends from burning to death in a furnace, and he saw God turn and rescue his nation and return his people to the land God had given them.

We will continue to see in this message that God gave Daniel visions, extraordinary visions. In those visions, God revealed who he is and his plan for world history. The world is a madhouse right now, but Daniel must have thought that the world was a madhouse too as he was taken from his home and shipped to Babylon. But these amazing visions show that the world is not as much a madhouse as it is an arena, a battlefield where war is constantly raging between the forces of God and the forces who oppose God.

In these visions, Daniel saw God triumph over terrifying beasts that represented the powerful kings and nations of the world. He saw angels doing the work of God on behalf of the people of God. And Daniel got a glimpse of the future. He saw the pre-incarnate Jesus, the Son of Man, descending from the clouds to defeat Satan and his kingdoms of this world.

After all of these spectacular visions, we read that Daniel was left exhausted and weak. He didn't fully understand what he saw, but what he did see is that the God he worshiped is holy and sovereign over all that he was seeing. So what does Daniel do? He just humbles himself before God and prays. He prays a beautiful prayer of confession for his own sins and the sins of Israel. He confessed their sins, their wickedness, their disobedience, their treachery against God, their shame, and their refusal to obey.

“Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled;

we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants, the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.” Daniel 9:4-6

And then, at the end of Daniel's prayer of confession, starting in verse 15, Daniel pleads for God's mercy to be shown to God's people.

In chapters 10-11, we read about Daniel's last and longest vision. Let me just say that it pulls back the curtain on the great war between the forces of heaven and the forces of the earthly empires. Those earthly empires that wreaked havoc in Daniel's day, wreaked havoc in our day and will continue to wreak havoc until the last day. Do you know what all of these visions have in common? God wins. In this sense, they are very much like the spectacular visions John received in the book of Revelation—God wins.

The truth that God wins should make our day today. And I think one of the highlights for me in this series is to see that through all of Daniel's hardships while in exile for his entire adult life, he maintained an amazing relationship with God. Remember, day after day, year after year, he prayed three times a day. Whether he was in a lion's den or having to tell a king some bad news, he kept it up. A powerful lesson from Daniel is that throughout his entire life, Daniel remained attentive to God. He remained attentive to what really mattered. Putting ourselves in a place where we can be attentive to God is a powerful lesson here.

Daniel is attentive to God

Dallas Willard said, “The first act of love is the gift of attentiveness.” This is a beautiful picture of love. Daniel gives God his attention because Daniel loves God. And God gives Daniel attention because he loves Daniel. How are we doing in this area? How is our attentiveness to God? When Kevin raised this question back in the fall, it resonated with us. How are we doing at giving God our attention on a daily or weekly basis? How do we seek God?

Someone shared with me Psalm 105:4 this week. *“Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.”* This is Daniel right here, and for us to persevere when things are tough, this needs to be us too.

After a particularly terrifying scene in one of these visions about beasts, war, and something called the abomination that causes desolation, Daniel mourned and couldn't eat for three weeks.

Daniel says in 10:8, *“So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless.”* Then it says Daniel heard from God, and he listened until he fell asleep, with his face to the ground.

Then a hand touched him. An actual angelic messenger visited Daniel, woke him up, and said to him, *“Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them”* (Daniel 10:12).

God praised Daniel because he set his mind to be attentive to him. Daniel wanted to know God and understand his ways. All kinds of good things, things that God praises, flow from attentiveness. Humility and obedience are wonderful things that flow out as we seek a posture of attentiveness.

It kinda summarizes how we are to live as exiles. We follow Daniel's example and walk through our days, remaining attentive, humble, and obedient. And that's how we encourage each other as we do life together as fellow exiles. And we can do this because God is all-powerful. God alone is all-powerful. So our attentiveness to our all-powerful God, our humility before an all-powerful God, and our obedience to an all-powerful God will help us to persevere in exile.

In Chapter 12, the final words of this book, God brings out one more posture to help us persevere in exile. It's the posture of dependency. We are dependent people. As Daniel was, we also are dependent on God for wisdom, for his revealed truth. We are dependent on his power, his mercy, and his goodness to his people. By definition, a dependent person doesn't know everything. A dependent person has limitations. As it was with Daniel, it is with us. There are just some things that we aren't supposed to know, and we are helpless to do anything about it. From this posture of dependency, we learn to trust God.

I hope you will be encouraged today with the reminder from our text that God knows each of us intimately, he knows you, he knows me, and he knows those who are his children around the world today who are suffering. God knows His people.

God knows His people

“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.” Daniel 12:1

This is a continuation of the vision in chapter 11. So absorb this verse. If you rewind and playback all the horrible events that you have read about in history, all the evil people who brought genocide, wars, famine, who enslaved their fellow man and brought darkness and despair, verse one is saying that all of that evil won't compare to the distress that will happen in the last days.

We read about an angel named Michael, who is a special angel referred to as the archangel or commander of angels in Jude 9. The Bible records him saying only four words. He says, *“The Lord rebuke you”* to Satan. Michael is a warrior, not a talker. The Bible refers to him as a protector who stands guard over God's people. Revelation 12 describes the apocalypse when Michael and his army of angels defeat the giant dragon who was Satan and hurled him and his demons to earth. God knows his people and knows that his people need encouragement in our season of exile. Think about this: We can literally count on spiritual help from angels while we live in exile.

Look at the last part of verse 1. Everyone whose name is written in the book will be delivered. This is actually the first mention of eternal life in the Old Testament. And we know from the New Testament that those whose names are written in the book will be saved. Jesus tells us in Luke 10:20 to *“...rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”* What is more important than anything, and what should make you happy, secure, and grateful is to know that your name is written in the book of life. In Revelation 21, God speaks of that Holy City, the new Jerusalem that God will establish where nothing impure will ever enter it. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life shall enter the New Jerusalem.

God knows his people. To have your name written in the book of life means you have repented from your sins and accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. To have your names written in the book, you must be born again, which means that through faith in Christ, we surrender to him, we die to self, and ask God's spirit to enter us to lead and guide us.

Daniel 12:2-3 is a picture of that last day of world history; we might also refer to it as the 2nd Coming of Christ, or The Day of the Lord.

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. vv. 2-3

God knows his people. I'm not sure that I can find any passage of Scripture sweeter for God's people to hear today than this. That person who led you to Christ will shine like stars forever. Resurrection! Our current physical life is not the end. Suffering and death do not have the final victory. Those who proceed us in death, those who follow us in death, we will see them again. God knows his people and calls them out of the grave by name.

Along with the good news, Daniel also gives us sobering news. The wicked who have aligned with the kingdoms of the world will experience resurrection too. Not a resurrection to everlasting life, but rather a resurrection to everlasting shame and contempt. The Bible describes this as resurrected to a place, a

place of separation from God, a place of judgment, of punishment, hell. It's a place that God's people are saved from because God loved the world so much that he sent his Son Jesus to die for our sins and take the penalty of our sins that we deserve upon himself on the cross.

So it's a fair question to ask this morning, what kingdom are you aligned with? The kingdom of God, or one of the kingdoms of the world? For God's people, life in exile can get dark, but God knows us, and one day he will welcome us into the fullness of the light of His kingdom.

"But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge" (v. 4). It's as if the writer is saying, Daniel, I know you well, and you now know enough. Not knowing more about this is better for you right now. I will close the scrolls until the end. Going forward, you need to depend on me.

And where do we hear about the scrolls again? It's in Revelation Chapter 5. And even though it wasn't for Daniel to know at that time, God made it known to us through Jesus so that we can know more about what will happen in those last days. There is only one who is worthy to open the scroll, and He will open the scroll at the time of the end (Revelation 5: 1-6a, 5:9-13). Daniel didn't see this glorious scene. John did, and we get to as well.

The vision here in chapter 12 is a continuation of Daniel's vision in chapters 10 and 11. Daniel received this vision while standing on the banks of the Tigris River. Going back to chapters 10 and 11, we see Daniel standing by the river, and he sees a dazzling figure of a "man clothed in linen" who predicts in great detail wars that will be fought between the kings of the north (Syria) and the kings of the south (Egypt). And God's people will be caught in the middle and suffer.

In Daniel 11:21, the writer calls the last king of the north a contemptible person because he will abolish the daily sacrifices, desecrate God's temple, and persecute God's people. History records that king as King Antiochus IV of Syria. We know him as Antiochus Epiphanes, who reigned from 175 BC until 164 BC. About 350 years after Daniel died. Now, this is important. Antiochus deceived his way in as a peacemaker but then abruptly turned on God's people in Israel. In Daniel 11:31, we read that this king, who most scholars believe was Antiochus, revealed his true self and desecrated the temple in Jerusalem.

Pigs were unclean according to Jewish Law. A Jewish person wouldn't have let a pig get within miles of the Temple. Historians have evidence that the historical Antiochus sacrificed pigs on the temple altar and smeared pig blood all throughout the temple. And then he put up a statue of his god Zeus and commanded that God's people worship it. In Daniel's vision, he is described as the abomination. Keep that in mind as we continue in verses 6-12.

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?" vv. 5-6

God knows us, and he knows the times in which we live. Daniel was probably speechless at what he saw and is helped out by another angel who asks, "How long?" How long before the end? How long before God's Kingdom will be fully realized? How long will the church have to persevere until the resurrection? *"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,"* (v. 7a).

Then the man clothed in linen raises both hands like he was taking an oath; typical Old Testament oaths were to raise one hand. So raising two hands made what he was about to say doubly sure. Remember, he isn't speaking for himself; he is speaking for God. And what was his answer?

"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" (v. 7b). Well, that clears everything up, doesn't it? Under oath, the angel says this. How long? Most scholars believe that when the end is about to arrive, it will happen fast. Scholars see that time, times, and half a time probably relate to weeks or months, not years or centuries.

Here is what we do know. The end will come at a time when the power of the Holy People of God has been broken down. When God is through refining his church, when everyone has an opportunity to repent, when God is done building attentiveness, humility, obedience, and dependence in his people; at that moment, God will say, this is the time.

The point is not that we know the times. The point is that God knows the times. We don't need to know the time because God knows the precise number of years. How would that help us? It might make us careless and put off repentance.

"I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end" (vv. 8-9). "Go your way, Daniel..." Don't try to pry into secrets that are beyond your understanding. I take it like this. The Lord has not told us all things, and we should be happy not to know those things. Remember what the disciples asked Jesus just before he ascended into heaven? They asked him when he was going to restore the kingdom of Israel. And Jesus said, *"It is not for you to know the times or the dates the Father has set by his own authority"* (Acts 1:7).

"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" (v. 10). The wise will understand

this. That God has not withheld anything from us that we need to know to persevere in exile. And many will understand and come to faith in the last days, But many will not understand and remain wicked.

"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 the 1,335 days" (vv. 11-12). So remember Antiochus Epiphanes? Remember, he was called an abomination because he abolished holy sacrifices and desecrated the temple. Some scholars would say that Antiochus was a type of antichrist that pointed to the future antichrist in the Book of Revelation.

Some scholars would say that God is revealing to Daniel that at the end of the world, another abomination called the Abomination of Desolation, will rise up and persecute God's holy people. And when it happens, it will happen fast. He will rise and fall in a matter of weeks and months. He will embody Satan and lead a final severe persecution of God's holy people. We get our first glimpse of this antichrist as a beast from Revelation 13, and Paul and John both refer to him in their letters to the church as a man of lawlessness and a deceiver.

The good news is that we serve a God who controls, knows, and is sovereign over all the times. Martin Luther helps us accept our lack of knowledge about the end of the days:

Daniel concludes the record of his terrifying visions and dreams on a note of joy, namely with the coming of Christ's eternal reign of glory. It is to this glorious final chapter of world history that all of Daniel's visions and dreams have pointed.... Whoever wants to study them profitably dare not focus attention on the details of the visions and dreams, but will find comfort in the Savior Jesus Christ whom they portray in the deliverance he brings from sin and its misery, (Martin Luther)

So God doesn't reveal how to interpret every detail to Daniel, but instead, in verse 13, God gives him the marching orders he needs to finish out his life in exile. God's last word 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" (v. 13).*

"Go your way till the end." God is saying, "Go with confidence. I care for you. I have an eternal plan for you. Stay attentive, practice humility, act in obedience, and depend on me." Scottish Theologian Sinclair Ferguson said, "The biblical response to the promises of God's coming kingdom is to always live for that

kingdom now, recognize his reign now, be obedient now, fulfill your present responsibilities now."

So as we depart Daniel and go our way, what do we do? We go back to work. We come home from work. We change diapers. We do our homework. And most importantly, come together as a church to worship together and receive the nourishment of God's word so that we might be strengthened to persevere.

So what happened to Daniel? The best we can tell is that he died in Babylon in his mid 80s and went to a place of rest in the grave, waiting for Jesus' second coming when he will rise from the grave and receive his allotted inheritance—eternal life in heaven.

There are a lot of things we don't know about at the end of the day. We may face trials as we persevere to the end, but Daniel has given us some tools to persevere. And we know that there is an inheritance that our Lord is happy to give us in heaven.

The New Testament has even more good news that Daniel didn't know about. Even though we don't know about dates and times, we do know that God has known us before the foundation of the world, that God has redeemed us, adopted us to be his own, and one day will bring us into everlasting glory.

The New Testament tells us that we don't have to wait until "the end of the days" to get a taste of everlasting life. When Jesus hung on the cross, one of the criminals crucified next to him said to him, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." Today He said! Not the end of the days. Today! Jesus is in heaven today, and when his followers die, he will welcome them to heaven today! So we don't need to fear death. We can persevere because when we die, we will immediately be with the Lord in heaven.

So no matter how fierce the persecution, we persevere because he knows us, he knows the times, and he is powerful, good, and in control of all of it. Remember this, one day as it will be for Daniel, it will be for us. We will stand before Jesus, and we can look forward to him saying, *"Well done good and faithful servant! Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:21).*

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

© 2022 Central Peninsula Church, Foster City, CA
Catalog No. 1465 10FC