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July 3rd: Daniel 12 & Acts 25:13-27

July 2, 2021



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Michael, the Prince of Israel, arises. Agrippa and Bernice visit Festus.

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Transcript

Daniel chapter 12. At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.

But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above.

And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. 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." Then I, Daniel looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream, and one on that bank of the stream.

And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, him. How long shall it be till the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream. He raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things would be finished.

I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, O my Lord, what shall be the outcome of these things? He said, Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.

And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. But go your way till the end, and you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.

Daniel chapter 12 is the conclusion of the fourth vision, received in the third year of Cyrus and the final chapter of the book. Daniel receives this final vision in response to his distress and lengthy mourning at that time, presumably provoked by discouraging news from the returned exiles in Jerusalem and the stalling of the rebuilding efforts. In the vision he sees Michael, the angelic guardian and glorious high priest of Israel, a figure who should be likely identified as the pre-incarnate Christ.

Daniel is given an outline of the history that will follow. In chapter 11 he was given a preview of the events from the middle of the sixth century through the rise of the empire of the Greeks, the six Syrian wars, the persecutions of Antiochus the fourth epiphanies, the Maccabean revolt in the Hasmonean dynasty and through to the rise of the Herodian dynasty. The concern that drives Daniel is not some general uncertainty or anxiety about what sort of things are going to happen in the future.

The vision is aimed at addressing something more specific. We arrive at the climax of all of this, in this chapter, the arrival of Michael, the angelic guardian, the glorious high priest and the messianic prince. The nations were ruled over by angels at this time.

Israel however was the Lord's special possession. Michael or the angel of the Lord or the angel of the covenant is the divine guardian of Israel. Daniel saw him back in chapter 10, falling down as dead as a result of the glory of the vision.

In the last days, the time when the whole order of the empires will come to its end, the time anticipated in Daniel chapter 2 with the stone crushing the statue or in chapter 7 with the granting of authority to the people of God, Michael himself will come on the

scene. The advent Michael however will be accompanied with unprecedented tribulation. Those whose names are found in the book will be delivered.

We should think here of the various references to names written in the Lamb's book of life in the book of Revelation, which is framed as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel. Verse 2 is one that many have seen as a rare Old Testament testimony to the resurrection. The resurrection here however seems to be more complicated.

First it is of many, not necessarily all. Second, if this is the final resurrection, it is happening far far too early. Third, it is a resurrection that includes many of the wicked, which makes it difficult to identify as a spiritual resurrection.

Elsewhere in scripture we see a number of different ways in which resurrection is referred to. For instance, there is a sort of resurrection in the advent of new spiritual life in a person or a nation. In Revelation chapter 20 verses 5 to 6 we read of the first resurrection.

In the first century following the resurrection of Jesus, all covenant saints who had rested in Sheol were raised up by Christ to sit with him in the glory of heaven. Whereas they had been formerly in the exile of the grave, now they enjoyed God's very presence and participation in the divine counsel itself. What death means for the people of God radically changed at that point.

This being raised up from the grave to God's presence is the first stage of the resurrection. The later, greater stage still awaited is the raising of our bodies and the fullness of the new heavens and the new earth. In Ezekiel chapter 37 and the vision of the valley of dry bones within it, we have not individual bodily resurrection, but the spiritual resurrection of Israel as a nation, its re-establishment as a people.

In John chapter 5 verses 25 to 29, Jesus talks both of a form of resurrection that is already occurring through his ministry and of a resurrection yet awaited. Jordan argues that the resurrection in view in verse 2 of Daniel chapter 12 is principally the raising of the nation through the ministry of Christ and his apostles. Some here respond and are raised up to new life and others, hearing and rejecting, are marked out for destruction.

Jesus is the one who brings about the fall and the rising again of many in Israel. This time of national resurrection to judgment and new life comes in the period from Christ's ministry to the end of the age in AD 70 with the removal of the old covenant order with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. It would be accompanied by extreme tribulation as Christ declares in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew chapter 24 verses 21 to 22.

For then there will be great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no

human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short.

It would be a time when the judgment of the entire old creation would occur. All of the blood from Abel to Zechariah would come upon that first century generation as Jesus said in Matthew chapter 23. The arising of Michael at that point in history was the advent of Jesus, his atoning work and his rising again in the resurrection.

He is exalted as the representative and great high priest of his people to the Father's right hand. He raises up the Old Testament saints with him from the grave and vindicates them against the unfaithful of their people in the events of AD 70 and the destruction of Jerusalem. Michael would wage successful war in heaven and the old covenant demonic authorities would be subdued as we see in Revelation chapter 12 verses 7 to 11.

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

He was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Coming through the tribulation of that time, the faithful martyrs would be raised up to God's presence, they would be vindicated and their enemies would be judged in the downfall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Those who are wise and righteous would shine like stars, reigning with Christ and sharing in his victory, testifying to him in the darkness of the world.

In Philippians chapter 2 verse 15, Paul describes Christians as shining as lights in the world. Daniel must seal the book until the time of the end. His prophecies concern a time long distant.

While the book of Revelation is constantly stressing that the fulfilment is near at hand and is about unsealing a sealed book, Daniel's prophecy awaits a far off future. In Revelation we see the fulfilment of the events foretold by the book of Daniel, the advent of Michael, the coming of the Son of Man and the saints into possession of the kingdom, the destruction of the beast, empires and victory over the angelic powers, the elevation of the saints, the great work of atonement and the consummation of the destiny of the people. Because the events foretold by the book of Revelation will occur within a matter of a few years after its writing, in Revelation chapter 22 verse 10, John is instructed not to seal the book because the time is near.

During the period of awaiting the fulfilment of the vision, there would be a great deal of drama, wars and rumours of wars. All of the events of chapter 12 for instance are important, yet they are just milestones on the road to the awaited future. The conflicts and persecutions foretold during that period are not the final end.

Nevertheless, as the time drew nearer, clarity of understanding the prophetic horizon of that future would greatly increase. The faithful people of God would meditate upon the meaning of the prophecies of Daniel over the centuries that followed, wondering what exactly their fulfilment would entail. The man clothed in linen, Michael, is asked by an angel about the time of the fulfilment of the vision and the end of the times foretold.

The answer is given that it will be for a time, times and half a time. This length of time has already been mentioned earlier in other connections in the book. It seems to be a symbolic means of referring to both longer and to shorter periods.

The time, times and half a time was mentioned in connection with the little horn in chapter 7 verse 25. In Revelation chapter 12 verses 6 and 14 and chapter 13 verse 5, it is related to the period of the woman's time in the wilderness in 1260 days and the period of the blasphemous authority of the sea beast as 42 months. We should also recall the half week in the final of the 70 weeks of years in Daniel chapter 9. The referent of the time, times and half a time is made a little clearer in verses 11 to 12 with the 1290 and 1335 days.

The first number, as Jordan points out, is 3 times 430. The significance of that number is seen in Exodus chapter 12 verses 40 to 41. The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years.

At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. The prophetic symbolism of that number is also seen in Ezekiel's prophetic sign act of Ezekiel chapter 4 verses 4 to 6. Of course, 390 days and 40 days added up make 430 days multiplied by 3 and we get 1290. Jordan suggests that the time, times and half a time refers to three periods of persecution following which there will be a period of great tribulation that will be cut short, the half a time.

In his reading, the 1290 days takes you up to the time of the great tribulation. Those who pass through those three Egypt-like times and pass through the tribulation as well reach the 1335 days, receiving their reward. These three periods begin with the cutting off of the regular burnt offering and the establishment of the abomination that makes desolate, all in the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus also speaks of an abomination of desolation corresponding to the time of the great tribulation prior to AD 70. The three periods correspond to the period of tearing in Egypt and are according to Jordan, the period of Antiochus Epiphanes, the period of the Hasmonean dynasty and the period of the Herods. The half a time is the great tribulation that precedes the final destruction of Jerusalem, which is the aftermath of the fulfilling of the 70 weeks prophecy in Daniel 9, verse 26.

Jordan suggests that the 45 years corresponds to the time following the departure from Egypt, the period of wandering in the wilderness and the conquest of the promised land.

Karen Newsome helpfully writes, The length of the delay would have the same numerical pattern as the original prediction, a time, two times and half a time. This pattern would also account for why the two parts of the final period are not presented as of equal duration.

The total number of days also lends itself to other symbolic numerical play, which whether intentional or not would lend authority to the calculation. The total of the two numbers is 2625. If one calculates by weeks rather than months, 7 years of 52 weeks of 7 days equals 2548 days.

Subtracting that from 2625 leaves 77 days, a number of symbolic significance. The prophecy all refers to events far off, but the distant hope would give the people of God the power to persevere in the interim. Those who are faithful to the vision would purify themselves and gain insight into the promised future as they meditated upon the vision.

However, wickedness would continue and grow in others. Daniel himself is addressed in the final words of the book. He must soon die, however at the conclusion of the period of time he will participate in the first resurrection.

He will be raised up to God's presence, to his allotted place of rule, inheriting the kingdom with Michael, the son of man of chapter 7 and the prince of the people of Israel. His kingdom, established in heaven at that time, would end the reign of the beasts and begin the reign of man. Like the stone of chapter 2 it would grow to fill the whole earth.

The great struggle for sovereignty in the kingdom, which is the subject of the whole book of Daniel, would finally be resolved as he would reign forever and ever, his kingdom having no end. A question to consider, if the fulfilment of this prophecy occurred in the first century AD, how might it relate to Christians in the 21st century? Acts chapter 25 verses 13 to 27 And when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews laid out their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face and had opportunity to make his defence concerning the charge laid against him.

So when they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought. When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed, rather they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them.

But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar. Then Agrippa said to Festus, I would like to hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, you will hear him.

So on the next day, Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. And Festus said, King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer.

But I found that he had done nothing deserving death, and as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him. But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write, for it seems to me unreasonable in sending a prisoner not to indicate the charges against him.

In the second half of Acts chapter 25, Agrippa and Bernice visit Festus, and Festus invites them to hear Paul's case, as he would appreciate their insight. Paul had appealed to Caesar, and so, if Festus is to send him to Rome, he wants to be able to give a clearer sense of the case. Help and counsel from two powerful people closer to Judaism would be very useful in this situation.

Herod Agrippa II was the only surviving son of Herod Agrippa I, who had died in Acts chapter 12. He ruled over north-eastern parts of Herod the Great's old kingdom. He was a faithful vassal, trusted by the Romans, and he was allowed to appoint the high priest by them.

He was pious, he was an expert in Jewish matters, and his sister Drusilla was the wife of the previous governor, Felix. He would later side with Rome in the war, and he was the last ruler of the house of Herod. By asking this favour of him, Festus would also be strengthening his relationship with another key ruler within the land.

Bernice is the sister of Agrippa, although it was rumoured that she was also in an incestuous relationship with him. Later she would be the mistress of both Vespasian and Titus, and is mentioned by several ancient historians for this reason, Diocassius, Suetonius, Josephus, and a number of others. As Festus suspects that the case is really about matters of Judaism, these are good people to consult.

Paul here is protected by pagan procedure, and by Festus' unwillingness to hand him over. Nevertheless, we should not take all of Festus' statements at face value. Festus, as commentators like Ben Witherington and Robert Tannehill observe, is really serving his own interests here and putting a positive spin upon all his dealings with Paul.

In the Book of Acts, neither Roman or Jewish justice are portrayed in flattering ways. Nevertheless, Roman justice is generally the more desirable of the two for Paul and the early Christians. The Jewish authorities don't even plan to administer justice.

Their intention is to have Paul ambushed and killed on the way to Jerusalem. Felix

delayed for over two years, while Festus seems to be more eager to deliver justice more speedily. However, he doesn't seem to be able to bring himself to free Paul, even though, by his own admission, there don't seem to be any charges that a Roman governor could reasonably deal with.

Relating the case made by the Jerusalem authorities, Festus makes clear that the substance of their case concerned religious questions, which he was not competent to judge, nor were they within his jurisdiction. Paul had seemingly done nothing contrary to Roman law. The situation is complicated by the fact that Paul has appealed to Caesar.

Paul understandably won't go to Jerusalem to be tried before his own people, as there is no justice for him to be expected there. The Roman governor has a difficult relationship with the Jewish authorities and can't easily free him, but doesn't feel able to condemn him either. Now Paul has appealed to Caesar, but it isn't clear that he has done anything that should be tried within a Roman court.

Festus has got to get a better sense of this complicated case if he is going to inform Caesar. The following day, they all gather together with great pomp. This is quite the hearing.

There are military tribunes, prominent men of the city, Agrippa and Bernice, and Festus, the Roman governor. This is, among other things, a fulfilment of the prophecy of Christ in Luke 21, verses 12-13. But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake.

This will be your opportunity to bear witness. And then also in the calling of Paul, in Acts 9-15-16, the Lord had said to Ananias, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel, for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. Verse 22 raises the possibility that Agrippa had already heard about Paul and was eager to hear him for himself.

He was curious about what this man had to say. Given the opportunity to hear him by Festus, he readily jumped at it. Festus presents Paul to the gathered authorities and dignitaries.

He describes the hostility that the Jewish people had against this man, and the way that their authorities had sought a death sentence from him. Yet he had not found anything in Paul worthy of death. As Daryl Bach notes, this is a second of three declarations of Paul's innocence within these chapters of the Book of Acts.

The first is from Claudius Lysias in chapter 23 verse 29. I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. A similar statement is made at the end of this scene in chapter 26 verse

31.

Festus presents the situation as if he knew that he was not qualified to judge the case, it belonged to the area of Jewish law, and so as an act of reasonableness he was going to send him to Jerusalem to be tried there. However, in the earlier account we see that he was going to grant him to the Jewish authorities, a far less favourable presentation. He knew that he was sending Paul to his death, that Paul would not get justice, but doing such a favour for the Jewish authorities would be to his advantage.

Paul's appeal to Caesar was in part to avoid this situation, in hope that he might find more justice in another court. The Caesar to whom he appealed here was Nero. It would be absurd for him to be presented before him without some sort of charge, and so at this point Festus is largely fishing for a charge.

Even though he's found nothing wrong in Paul, he can't set him free without causing friction with the Jews, and so he's going to send him to the Emperor, but he needs some sort of charge to send him with. What follows is less a matter of Paul answering specific charges that have been levelled against him, and more a matter of a hearing to ascertain whether there are any charges that he could reasonably be sent with. A question to consider.

Reading the narrator's description of Festus and his actions, and Festus' own descriptions of his actions, where might we see disparities and tensions? How do you think Luke wants us to regard Festus as a character?