WHAT DOES OUR FUTURE HOLD?

1. There will be trouble
2. There will be triumph

What does your future hold? The future is a book that remains closed to us. Yet what secrets are contained in its pages? Wouldn’t it be nice to take just one peek inside? But, would you really want to know? Who would not want to know whom they will marry? Who would not want to know how many children they will have? Wouldn’t you like to know where you will work, where you will travel, whom you will meet? Wouldn’t you like to know what stocks to purchase or when to retire?

The future holds such grand potential, but it also contains some scary possibilities. Do you really want to know about the diseases that would hit friends and family? Do you want to know what terrible disasters and wars will come? And then there is death itself. Do you really want to know what your future holds?

In a way, that is exactly what our lesson from Daniel is about. As we consider these verses, we ask ourselves as God’s people, his saints, WHAT DOES OUR FUTURE HOLD? The answer that we find here tells us that there will be trouble, but there will also be triumph.

There will be trouble, and Daniel knew this very well. God had given Daniel the opportunity to peek at what would happen in the next several pages of the future. Daniel had seen a number of visions that showed him how history would unfold. He had seen the rise and fall of several nations. He had even seen visions of how God would fulfill his promise to send the Messiah.

Right before our verses in chapter 12, Daniel records a very detailed prophecy. It shows in detail what was about to happen in the region where God’s people lived. It revealed how the Greeks and the Persians would clash as they vied for control of the Mediterranean world. This sets the stage for what we see in chapter 12.

What did the future hold for God’s people? We hear: There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. They were about to suffer great trouble and hardship. Their nation would be overrun by foreign soldiers. They would have to live under the rule of these other nations. They would be mistreated and abused. They would even witness sacrifices to pagan gods in the Temple. All of these things would happen. This future was sure and certain. It could not be avoided. It could only be endured.

Yet, God’s people would not be abandoned in these times. There will be help for them. We are told: At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. God promises help from Michael. But who is he? In Bible, he is called the great prince who protects your people. Certainly, he is a powerful ally. He is an archangel, a leader among these powerful servants of God. According to what we hear in the Bible, it seems that Michael’s job is to work against God’s enemies and protect God’s people from them.

God would not forget his people. We are told: But at that time your people - everyone whose name is found written in the book - will be delivered. The time of trouble will not last forever. God promises an escape, even if it is not always clear how. It will be so for all whose names are found written in the book. Those in the book are those who have been adopted into God’s family through faith in his Savior. Their God would not abandon them, and they will be delivered.

Jesus also warns us that there will be trouble. Listen to what he says about what it will be like in the last days. He says: In the world, many will come in my name, claiming, I am he, and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be
alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

He says to God's people: You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.

He says how terrible it will be: How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that this will not take place in winter, because those will be days of distress unequaled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now - and never to be equaled again. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? He continues: If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. This is what the future will hold.

Why is that the case? It really goes back to sin. The world is filled with it. All people are afflicted with it. We see it even in ourselves. It will get worse as the world continues. We also have powerful enemies. As the end grows near, Satan will fight all the harder, as Revelation 12 says: He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short. He will use all his power and unleash all his forces. He will do all he can to wrench us away from our Lord.

Hearing about this future can tempt us to despair. How can we endure such a future? Why does it pay to continue this fight? What hope do we have since it seems that all will be lost? Yes, there will be trouble in these last days. We can be sure of that, but that is not all that the future holds for God's people. There will also be triumph.

What had God promised to Daniel? He said: Your people will be delivered. The day of the Messiah’s coming was drawing nearer and nearer. He would offer once and for all the sacrifice for sin when he sacrificed himself on the cross. His blood would atone for sin of all people. As he rose from the dead, he proved that the door of heaven now stands open for all who believe in his payment for them.

Certainly that is the hope we share. We do not have to wait for these things to be fulfilled. They have already taken place. We can now look forward to the deliverance that will rescue us from this veil of tears forever. Daniel and God's people in the Old Testament knew the day of resurrection was coming sometime in the distant future. For us, it could come at any moment. We look forward to the day when, as reading says, multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake. That day could be tomorrow!

With these words, God is promising that our future will be one of triumph. His Messiah, our Savior, Jesus Christ, has defeated every enemy through his perfect life, death and rising to life. On Judgment Day, sin is forever removed. The devil is forever caged in hell. Even death loses its power to claim those who have died in faith in Christ. Jesus will raise the bodies of his people. He will reunite them with their souls, and, as Scripture says: he will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Listen to the description of that glorious and triumphant event in text: 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. This wisdom, this righteousness, was given to us when the Holy Spirit brought us to faith. It is knowing that Jesus has forgiven my sins so that I will live with him in heaven. That will be our future. We will shine in glorified bodies, brighter than the sun and moon and stars. We will live in heaven with Jesus, whose glory fills it so that it needs no light nor lamp nor sun.

There we will never face trouble again. All of the things that bring trouble in this life or cause hardship and tears will be gone forever. No more extra pounds, gray hairs, glasses, or crutches. No more hurt feelings, awkward moments, or disappointments. Sin and its effects
are no more. Then we will also join all believers of all time. We will see family and friends who have died in the Lord. We will join them at Jesus’ table, and we will join him in his triumphant celebration of victory for all eternity.

What does your future hold? That question might cause us to quake with fear when we hear there will be trouble. We must also know that there will also be triumph and that we will live forever as Saints Triumphant. That is what our future holds. That is why Paul can say in Roman 8: I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. May we confidently await that triumphant day. Amen.

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