

**November 15, 2015 – Daniel 12:1-3 (Epistle: Hebrews 10:11-25 Gospel: Mark 13:1-13)**

*Fear Not! Because of Jesus Christ, Everything Will Be OK!*

When we face a difficult time, we often want someone to tell us that everything will be all right – that everything will be OK. Hearing this can give us hope and encourage us to endure what we are facing. While someone can reassure us with these words, only God really knows how things will turn out. When God tells us everything will be OK, we can believe it!

In both our Gospel and Old Testament readings today God reassures us that despite all the turmoil that we will experience in the world, especially as Christ's return approaches, everything will be OK in the end because of the salvation we have through Jesus Christ.

Jesus warned His disciples that the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed. This happened some 40 years after Jesus' crucifixion. The Jews revolted against Rome in 66 AD. Tiberius Julius Alexander besieged and conquered Jerusalem in 70 AD, destroying the Jewish temple in which Jesus had walked. It was a time of great tribulation for the Jews.

But, as we know, that was not the end. Jesus warned them, and warns us, that we would "*hear of wars and rumors of wars*" but Jesus tells us not to be troubled; "*for such things must happen, but the end is not yet*" (Mark 13:7). "*For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows*" (Mark 13:8). He warns that we will be hated by all for His name's sake, but tells us: "*he who endures to the end shall be saved*" (Mark 13:13). We see this salvation in Daniel 12:1-3.

Daniel was one of the Israelites taken captive to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. While he was taken to the king's palace to serve before the king (Daniel 1:5-6), Daniel's life in Babylon was anything but easy. His friends were thrown into a furnace to be burned to death, but God protected them from the fire (Daniel 3:19-26). The other leaders conspired against Daniel and had him thrown into a pit of lions, but God sent a messenger to shut the lions' mouths so he was not harmed either (Daniel 6:1-21).

In addition to these troubles, Daniel was concerned for his people, the people of Israel. They were living in exile. He prayed to the Lord and God gave him visions and sent a messenger to show him not only what would happen to Israel, but what would happen even on the last day.

Chapter 11 ends with a description of the antichrist waging war, going out "*with great fury to destroy and annihilate many*" (Daniel 11:44). We read in chapter 12 that "*At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people*" (v. 1).

This is Michael the archangel (Jude 1:9). He is "*one of the chief princes*" (Daniel 10:13). He is "*the great prince who stands watch over the sons of*" Daniel's people (v. 1); He stands watch over us as the people of God, the spiritual Israel. He fights for us against the evil spiritual forces of this dark age (see Ephesians 6:12, Revelation 12:7). Michael will stand fighting for us at the end when "*there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time*" (v. 1).

The time of great tribulation described here in Daniel and by Jesus in the Gospels is not something we look forward to, but Jesus tells us not to worry. At that time "*every one who is found written in the book*" shall be delivered (v. 1). God, Himself, tells us that everything will be OK.

This book refers to "the Book of Life" (see Philippians 4:3, Isaiah 4:3). All those whose names are written in God's Book of Life will be saved (see also Revelation 20:12). Those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will enter the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:27). But

anyone who is not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

This may lead us to wonder how we get our name in the Lamb's Book of Life. That is something we cannot do. We cannot and do not earn our salvation. It is a gift from God. In fact, Revelation describes the names in the Lamb's book as having been written there "*from the foundation of the world*" (Revelation 17:8, see also 13:8). Your name is in there by God's grace and choice.

This is not something that we can really understand. We have to take God word for it. Jesus told His disciples: "*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit*" (John 15:16). In Ephesians we are told that God chose us in Jesus Christ "*before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.*" Your name is in the Book of Life because God wrote it there from the foundation of the world.

But that does not mean everyone will be saved. We see this clearly here in Daniel: some will awake "*to everlasting life*" but others "*to shame and everlasting contempt.*" We cannot infer from this, however, that God chose some to be saved and not others; we cannot conclude that God predestined some to be damned. God never says that. On the contrary, God tells us that He wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). The idea that if God chose some, He must not have chosen the rest is a conclusion that is only based on our limited, faulty human reason, which cannot penetrate the mysteries of God by itself.

When Moses lead the people out of Egypt, they made and worshiped a golden calf while he was up on Mount Sinai, meeting with God for forty days. After calling the people to repentance, he asked God to forgive their sin and said, "*but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written*" (Exodus 32:32). God replied "*Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book*" (Exodus 32:33).

By all rights, we deserve to be blotted out from God's book, for we have all sinned against God. We have not loved Him above all things. Instead we have put ourselves and our desires ahead of what God wants, and we have often served ourselves rather than God or our neighbor. But as our epistle reading describes, Jesus came to offer "*one sacrifice for sins forever*" and "*sat down at the right hand of God*" (Hebrews 10:17). By offering Himself on the cross, Jesus has taken away your sin, so that you are not blotted out of His Book of Life. Of you, God says: "*Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more*" (Hebrews 10:17). This is important as we look at the final judgment God describes here to Daniel.

Verse 2 tells us, "*And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake...*" This can be misunderstood in English to mean: "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth (but not all) shall awake on this day." That is not what this verse is saying. A clearer translation would be: "*And the great number of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake...*" The Hebrew focuses on *how many* there will be who will awake, and does not imply that only some will rise. Jesus said, "*the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation*" (John 5:28-29). That is the same thing that we read here. "*Some [shall awake] to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt*" (v. 2).

Jesus' words may trouble us. As we look at what we have done in our lives, we see that we have done evil in God's sight. We have not always done good, as God requires. But remember that because of Jesus' sacrifice, God will remember your sins and lawless deeds no more! When the books are opened and we are judged according to our works (Revelation 20:12), God will find all

your sins blotted out and expunged from your record because of Jesus' sacrifice. His perfect life will be written there instead. We can "*draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water*" (Hebrews 10:22). Instead of shame and everlasting contempt you have everlasting life because of Jesus' death and resurrection.

God tells Daniel here that "*Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament*" (v. 3). It is God's word that makes one wise – only the Holy Scriptures are "*able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 3:15). True wisdom only comes from God. He gives it through His word. The wise here are those who have faith in the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus – a faith that comes by hearing the good news that God sent His Son to take away the sins of the world.

God also says here, "*And those who turn many to righteousness [will shine] Like the stars forever and ever*" (v. 3). This refers to our witness to Christ. We tell others the good news that God remembers their sins no more because Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice on the cross. We point them to the righteousness of Jesus that is credited to us by faith. We turn them to His righteousness.

This also refers to what our Epistle encourages to do. We are to "*consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*" (Hebrews 10:24-25). God knows that we cannot "go it alone." He calls us to gather together and to encourage one another with His word, and to remind one another that we live through Christ's righteousness. We are to do this especially as we "*see the Day approaching*" – as we see and hear of all the wars and tribulation that Jesus said would precede His return.

But fear not! Because of Jesus Christ, everything will be OK! He has offered Himself as a sacrifice for your sins so that your name is written in His Book of Life and you will be saved. To Him be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

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