

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

PART TWELVE – DANIEL’S FINAL GLIMPSE OF THE END OF TIME

After providing King Darius with a sweeping vision of the next 5 centuries until the coming of Christ, in the first part of which he and his descendants would play a key part, Daniel is given a final message for himself and his fellow believers.

We have already been introduced to Michael in chapter 10:13 as a leading angel who supported the Son of God in the behind-the-scenes spiritual battle between heaven and hell. Now we meet him again as the guardian angel of the Jewish people. He will protect them in a time of terrible suffering from which those written in the book, presumably the book of life will be rescued.(Ps.69:28; Phil.4:3; Rev.3:5; 13:8; 17:8)

At the end of history those in this book will be resurrected to life, to be eternally the light of the world by which others have found their way to God.(Matt.5:16; John 5:35; 9:5) Those not in the book of life face judgement and hell.(Rev.20:15)

Daniel is told several times to seal up the book until the end of time. If he did as he was told, how could it be that we can read these words? Does ‘the end of time’ refer to the completion of the prophecy of the 4 empires rather than the very end of history? Peter described the ‘last days’ as beginning at Pentecost.(Acts 2:17) Jesus talked of the ‘time is fulfilled’ when his ministry began.(Mk.1:15) Paul described the birth of Jesus as ‘when the fullness of time came.’(Gal.4:4) Daniel’s words did not truly make sense until Jesus arrived.(Col.1:26)

Daniel had been talking with the ‘man dressed in linen’(12:6,7) who had previously been described(10:5) in a way which was similar to John’s vision of Christ in Rev.1:12-16. Now two other heavenly figures appeared one on each side of a river, presumably the same river, the Tigris, identified in 10:4 across which the Persians would have come to defeat Babylon. But again it reminds us of the river flowing out of the heavenly city, in Rev.22, and the river which flowed out of the Garden of Eden. Life flows out of God.

As always our big question is ‘when?’. The answer this time teases us, ‘time, times and half a time.’ presumably means 3 ½ periods, but are they years and when do they start? The same answer was given in 7:25 referring to Roman times. The siege of Jerusalem which lasted for 3 ½ year from Feb.67 to August 70 AD ended with the destruction of the city and the temple, and the death of over 600,000 Jews and Christians. The same period is mentioned in Rev.11:2 and may refer to this event. Jesus said of His return that not even He knew when it would be.(Matt.24:36) The Lord wants us to have a sense of expectation of His return while we get on with the job He gave us to do. We do not need a date in our diaries.

Daniel asks, ‘how will it all work out?’(12:8) but the answer he is given is still only in terms of the ‘end of time’ and the way such events will separate the believer from the unbeliever.

The key signal for the Jews will be a blasphemous sacrifice as happened repeatedly under Antiochus Epiphanes, 163 BC, Pompey, 63 BC, and again Titus, 70 AD. This time Daniel is given a firm length of time, 1290 days which is 3 ½ years, and for the faithful an extra 45 days, but once again we are given no starting point. The one clear promise is of resurrection life and his instruction to wait and trust. The clear purpose of God in allowing persecution is that His people will be ‘purged, purified and refined.’. If we trust Him we will be quietly transformed into His image.(Rom.12:1,2; II Cor. 3:18)

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY ON DANIEL, CHAPTER TWELVE

1. What key information is Daniel given about ‘the end of time’? What was to be his response? What effect had persecution had on his life? What effect does it have on ours?
2. How does this final chapter draw together the stories of chapters 1-6 and the prophecies of 7-11? What inspires you most about the book of Daniel? How may it affect your future?
3. What similarities can you see between the books of Daniel and Revelation? How does each present Jesus? How can they help to explain each other?