

Daniel 11:41–12:13 — The King of the North to His End

The Campaign Through Israel and Egypt; Tidings out of the East; The Prince of Princes; Tophet; Michael and the Time of Trouble; Daniel 12:2 as Figurative Restoration; and Daniel's Rest

Scripture Reading: Daniel 11:41–12:13; 8:23–25; Isaiah 8:8; Matthew 24; Ezekiel 20; 37; Zechariah 12; Revelation 11; 19–20

“He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.” (Daniel 11:41)

“He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.” (Daniel 8:25)

The Campaign: Through Israel, Down to Egypt

The king of the north sweeps through the glorious land with the force of an overflow, taking Egypt and extending his reach to the Libyans and Ethiopians. His is not a surgical strike but a massive inundation — the same language of overflow that Isaiah used of the Assyrian passing through Judah to the neck (Isaiah 8:8) and that Daniel 9:26 used of the coming flood of desolation. He has accumulated Egypt's treasures of gold and silver, together with whatever aid-driven resources had gathered there. For a moment, his campaign looks unstoppable.

Edom, Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon escape his hand. This is not a detail to pass over. Isaiah 11 shows that a regathered Ephraim will be used

instrumentally against these peoples. The king of the north, for all his fury, is not the answer for Israel's ancient adversaries; those are reserved for a different and more particular dealing. A powerful man who imagines he can solve every problem will find that certain moral and spiritual issues are not his to settle. God has reserved some matters for himself and for the agency he specifically appoints.

Tidings out of the East and North: The Prince of Princes

At the height of the campaign, tidings come from the northeast — back in the direction of the land he has just swept through. He turns with great fury to destroy and to exterminate. Daniel 8:23–25 illuminates what those tidings are: the king of fierce countenance, backed by a power not his own — likely Russian support, given that Gog descends from the far north in the final conflict and shares this personage's policy — stands up against the Prince of princes, and shall be broken without hand.

The Prince of princes is the Lord Jesus, and the capital P in J.N. Darby's translation leaves no room for confusion. He is not the coming prince of Daniel 9 (the first beast, the Roman prince), nor any Assyrian general. He is the Lord himself. The appearing of Christ in glory — described in Revelation 19 — is what the king of the north has heard tidings of, and it is against that appearing that he charges with great fury. He is broken without hand: no human agency, no instrument of Israel, no army of men. The Lord himself deals with him, just as he deals summarily with the beast and the false prophet, casting them into the lake of fire.

He comes to his end, and none shall help him. The confederacy assembled through the patronage of this great political manipulator dissolves at the moment he most needs it. His tabernacles of his palace are planted between the Mediterranean Sea and the mountain of holy beauty — between the great sea and

Jerusalem — and that is where his career ends. In Isaiah he is cast into Tophet, which was the valley outside Jerusalem where refuse was perpetually burned and which became in Hebrew the equivalent of Gehenna, the figure for hell. Like the beast and the false prophet, he is dealt with summarily and without the intermediate stage of the great white throne. Annihilationism cannot survive such passages: the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire at the beginning of the millennium, and a thousand years later the unrighteous dead are raised and cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are — present tense, still there. Scripture cannot be broken.

Michael Stands Up: The Time of Trouble Such as Never Was

Daniel 12:1 introduces Michael, the great prince who stands for the children of Daniel's people. He is an angel with a particular identification with Israel, a spiritual force for good toward them. His standing up is connected with the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation. This is one of six passages in Scripture that use the distinctive designation — such as never was — and there can only be one such maximum. It was not the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. It was not the Holocaust under Hitler, awful as both those things were. This is still future: the great tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble, three and a half years long and extending slightly beyond the 1260th day into the period of the seven bowls of wrath.

At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. The many of Daniel 9:27 who entered into the covenant of protection with the beast — the apostates of Israel — are not written in the book. Only those who endured are. The Lord's words in Matthew 24, he that endureth to the end shall be saved, are one of the most misapplied texts in Scripture when used as a general threat about perseverance in Christianity; their proper reference is to this Jewish remnant preserved through the great tribulation to enter the millennial blessing. Blessed is he that cometh to the 1335 days.

Daniel 12:2 — Figurative Resurrection, Not Literal

Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. This verse is pressed by post-tribulationists as a literal resurrection occurring at the close of the tribulation. But three main passages in the Old Testament use resurrection figuratively for the restoration of Israel. The great proof that figurative usage is in play here is the Lord's own statement about two resurrections: the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of judgment. These are mutually exclusive: those raised at the resurrection of the just are raised to life, and those raised at the resurrection of judgment are raised to condemnation. Daniel 12:2 contains both blessings and condemnation in the same event, which would make it a resurrection of confusion — which is impossible if it is literal.

The figure of resurrection for national restoration appears most plainly in Ezekiel 37, the valley of the dry bones. The bones lie in the dust; they are called to life; they become a great army. This is not the resurrection of dead individuals but the restoration of the nation of Israel from its scattered condition. Daniel 12:2 is the same figure: many who sleep in the dust of the earth — scattered among the Gentiles, as if buried — awake to the blessedness of the millennial kingdom, while others (the rebels purged out in Ezekiel 20, brought into the wilderness and judged before they enter the land) are put to shame and everlasting contempt. The word sleep itself in verse 2 is significant: it is not used of literal death elsewhere in the same way, and those who note it are right to see in it a signal that the passage is not about physical burial.

The objection that figurative use of resurrection implies a literal understanding of resurrection is well taken and important. It does not undermine the figurative interpretation; rather, it confirms that Old Testament saints did have some knowledge of literal resurrection, even if it was not as fully revealed as in the New Testament. Abraham believed in the God of resurrection (Hebrews 11:19).

Job said, in my flesh shall I see God (Job 19:26). The figurative use is built upon the literal reality. As for the Sadducees who denied the resurrection, the Lord's refutation of them at the burning bush is the simplest and most irrefutable: God said to Moses, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — present tense, not I was, though all three had long been dead. That one argument should have been enough. The problem with those who cannot see it is less that they cannot than that they will not.

Go Thy Way, Daniel: Rest and the Lot at the End of Days

Twice Daniel is told to go his way; the words are closed and sealed until the time of the end. Then the final word: thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days. Daniel had served under the greatest rulers the ancient world produced and had seen, up close, how clueless, idolatrous, and fundamentally ungodly those men were who tried to rule the earth. Of all the saints who will reign with Christ in the millennium, few will know the contrast as keenly as Daniel. He was there. He saw Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, and Cyrus try to run things. And he will see what it looks like when the Prince of princes reigns in righteousness. The rest that awaits him is well earned, and his lot in those days will be entered into with a unique and particular joy.

He shall stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.