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Truths for Bitter Providences, Part 24

There are many passages in Scripture which warn of the danger of prosperity. For example:

Matthew 19:23, "And Jesus said to His disciples, 'Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.'"

This is NOT because God doesn't care for wealthy people. RATHER, it is because wealthy people typically don't see the need for God! In fact, just a couple of verses prior to this one, we read of the rich man whose idol was his wealth and so was challenged by Christ to give it up in order to follow God.

Matthew 19:21-22, "Jesus said to him, 'If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' [Christ doesn't present his here as the standard for every man's conversion. Money was this particular man's idol and so God called him to give it up] But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property."-

No doubt this is why Agur wrote these words:

Proverbs 30:7-9, "Two things I asked of Thee, do not refuse me before I die: keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, lest I be full and deny *Thee* and say, 'Who is the Lord?' ..."

We need to hear this for indeed of all peoples, places, and nations, we continue to live in a bubble of ease and prosperity which will wage war with our souls! It is doing it now whether you realize it or not!

The book of Daniel clearly was not written in a bubble of ease. It was written in exile, by an exile, for a people in exile. The entire book contains a series of sweet and sober truths for those living in bitter providences. We are now at the final truth, a sober one indeed, that life is a veil of tears which God's people will overcome in Christ! This has spanned the final three chapters of Daniel.

This final truth describes the Last Days, our days, portraying them as anything but peaceful and easy. It is expected that the era would be fraught with difficulties. And that is exactly what we read in the New Testament with these words of Christ:

John 16:33b, "...In the world you have tribulation [not a promise, but a statement of fact], but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Luke, speaking of Paul and Barnabas toward the end of their first missionary journey wrote:

Acts 14:21-22, "And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, **strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith** [How?] and *saying*, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.'"

1 Timothy 6:12a, "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called..."

Now I know many a Christian in the United States doesn't want to hear this message. Their bubble is comfortable and so they don't want to hear that life is hard. They'd rather I preach a message of "peace and safety!" Yet that is NOT the message of Daniel, NOR the message of the final section which we've been examining. This final message could be

summarized by Peter's words in 1 Peter 4.

1 Peter 4:12-13, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you [observe what ought to be our focus]; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation."

This is Daniel 12 in a nutshell! Yes, the last era is going to be hard! But rather than gloom and sorrow, the Christian suffering in Christ can and should be characterized by joy and anticipation! Toward that end, Daniel here gave us six glorious truths to encourage us in difficult situations! So far we have seen four:

1. The Promised Protection of the Lord
2. The Glorious Deliverance Affected by Christ's Return
3. The Hope of the Resurrection
4. The Vindication of the Last Judgment.

The fifth reason for hope is God's promised glorification.

Promised Glorification

Daniel 12:3, "And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

In the context as well as the natural progression of this prophecy, we understand that Daniel here is discussing what will occur following the Last Judgment. This means this could only refer to the Christian's glorification! After the Final Judgment, after the condemnation of the Devil, his angels, and the wicked of this earth, after the destruction of this world and its renewal, God is going to transform our bodies such that they will reflect the glorious radiance of celestial bodies, like the sun!

This no doubt raises a host of questions which Daniel here does NOT answer, BUT which other passages do. Paul wrote:

Philippians 3:20-21, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

From this text we are told that following the Last Judgment, when we are glorified, our

appearance is going to resemble that of Christ! Now you think of His incarnation and you think, “So we’ll look much the same as we do today!” But that is NOT how Christ looks today!

Daniel 10:4-5, “And on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris [recall, 60 miles east of Babylon; it is way out there], I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold [“behold” is a Hebraism for “*you are never going to believe this*”], there was a certain Man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with *a belt of pure gold of Uphaz.*”

The description is vivid; what Daniel saw knocked his socks off! This was a preincarnate manifestation of none other than Christ Himself! It is as Christ was, before He “humbled Himself” and “took the form of a bondservant” (Philippians 2:7). Yet we must understand that when Christ ascended to glory, He resumed the form of His former splendor such that when John saw Him in Revelation, he was left in awe.

Revelation 1:12-15, 17a, “And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet *were* like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters... And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man...”

That’s the description of Christ after His ascension; Daniel here described Him before His incarnation! Not surprisingly, they are the same! Recall what Daniel saw:

Daniel 12:5a, “I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen...”

The first thing that struck Daniel was the “linen” clothing Christ wore. Frequently in the Old Testament (cf. Ezekiel 9, 10) heavenly visitors appear in fine white linen. For example, in Mark 16 the angels that appear at the tomb of Christ are clothed in fine white linen. Again and again you see this associated with heaven and those who represent God. In fact, priests wore “white linen”¹ (Leviticus 16:4). What is the significance of this “white linen”? It is a symbol of God’s holiness! The Being before Daniel was holy!

Daniel 12:5b, “...[His] waist was girded with *a belt of pure gold of Uphaz*”

We have no idea what “Uphaz” is, so the focus here is on his “belt” that was overlaid with “gold.” In the Bible this is a picture of royalty and so sovereignty (think of the gifts given by the Magi, Matthew 2:11). The description continues:

Daniel 12:6a, “His body also was like beryl...”

What is this? Beryl is a transparent flashing jewel, no doubt here picturing divine glory! In other words the being standing before Daniel; His entire body, shown forth brilliantly like flashing beryl!



Daniel 12:6b, “His face had the appearance of lightening!”

Revelation says He has the face like the sun (Revelation 1:16). The brilliant light that is manifest in His face speaks of His omnipotence and so His glorious power.

Daniel 12:6c, “...his eyes were like flaming torches...”

In other words, they were like lamps of fire searching out, discovering reality. This is omniscience and so the penetrating knowledge of Deity!

Daniel 12:6d, “His arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze.”

In Scripture, “bronze” is the color that pictures judgment- think of the brazen altar where the animals were sacrificed on account of sin! In other words we are talking here about the wrath of God and so the judgment of God!

Daniel 12:6e, “...the sound of His words like the sound of a tumult.”

This could be in reference either to a large crowd or a mighty waterfall; *take the latter*. When this Being spoke it was like standing by a huge waterfall! You ever been by a large waterfall? At one and the same time the sound is both deafening as well as powerful. You know what I mean? The picture is of that of the unstoppable/unthwartable will of our Sovereign God. That is the Lord whom we have come to love and know! That is what Christ looks like today! And now get this: that is what someday we also shall be! Consider the following, glorious passages:

1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”

Truly when Christ returns we shall be conformed the image of His glory! Accordingly, Paul said that Christ will:

Philippians 3:21, “...transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”

To clarify this further, Paul gave this instruction:

1 Corinthians 15:35, 42-44a, "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?' [skip down to v. 42 where Paul is talking about the differing states which God has made things to be]... So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body* [a body unable to decay]; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory [referring to a body in conformity to Christ's glorious appearance and perfected for pleasing, praising, and enjoying God]; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power [a body able to do whatever it wants]; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body ["spiritual" doesn't mean 'without substance'/'immaterial'; rather it indicates that the body we have in glory will fit in and so correspond to the world in which it has been placed]."

Accordingly, when we read that "...those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven... like the stars forever and ever," we take this literally! Look at the sun, someday our bodies will shine with its brightness... and so fit the world which God will create upon the Second Coming of Christ!

Many today in the church wonder why God made them. What specifically are His plans for them? And where specifically are they headed? From this passage we conclude that we have been made so that we might co-reign with God in the glory of His greatness! And everything in this life has been ordained by God to prepare us for that existence! This means your temporal happiness, welfare, success, and more are NOT God's aim at this point and time. Everything in your life is headed toward the New Heavens and Earth and our mission and calling *there*! Accordingly, those who will shine as stars in glory are those who today give themselves to the Kingdom of God!

Oh Christian, in the words of Paul and Barnabas, "...[be] strengthened [and] encouraged... [for truly] through many tribulations we must enter [this glory]!" (Acts 14:21-22)

Divine Revelation

With that, notice the sixth word of hope that God gives to encourage us in difficult situations.

Daniel 12:4, "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."

This passage expresses two truths; I want to begin with the second one.

Daniel 12:4, "many will go back and forth [the image is that of a swimmer's arms or the oars on a boat; furthermore the Hebrew form intensifies the action picturing an "active/hasty search" (cf. Jeremiah 5:1; Zechariah 4:10)], and knowledge will increase."

Without further commentary from God here, this is not very clear. In what way will people go “back and forth”? And what is the “knowledge” that “will increase”? Thankfully the rest of Scripture provides us with the details. Paul describes the non-Christian in the last days as:

2 Timothy 3:7, “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

In other words, Paul prophesied here that the latter days would be a time when learning/knowledge/information is everywhere, but very few actually arrive at “the knowledge of the truth!” That’s the picture that comes into focus in Daniel 12. The end times will be characterized by people actively/hastily taking in knowledge.

Right now it is estimated that world knowledge doubles every twelve months. Yet with computer technology combined with artificial intelligence, it is estimated that in the future world knowledge could double every thirteen hours!² Think of the internet and how so many spend their time surfing the web by which they either watch or discover another point of trivia! Yet in spite of all this accumulated knowledge, so few actually arrive at a “knowledge of the truth.”

That is what is pictured here in Daniel! Truly, the last days will be an era of increased knowledge, facts and information will be easily attainable. But few, very few, will use these facts to come to an understanding of truth/reality (which we know is summed up in Christ)! Accordingly, the end times will NOT see a growing mass of conversions to Christ; BUT a growing mass of learning and the accumulation of inane/worthless information! *That’s the bad news! But now consider the good news.*

Daniel 12:4, “ut as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book.”

We’ve seen this language before in our study of Daniel. Speaking of the vision Daniel received of the four kingdoms, God told him this:

Daniel 8:26, “And the vision of the evenings and mornings which has been told is true; but keep the vision secret, for *it* pertains to many days *in* the future.”

In other words, seal up the prophecy for a latter generation. Culturally, let me explain this. Recall the time when Jeremiah was called by God to purchase his Uncle’s land which was inhabited by the Babylonians. He did so and was given the deed of purchase.

Jeremiah 32:14, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Take these deeds, this sealed deed of purchase, and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, that they may last a long time.’”

In the ancient world, when a purchase was made, the deed of sale was placed in a clay, cylinder and then sealed. On the outside of the clay cylinder, a summary of the deed would

be recorded. The purpose was for safe-keeping, but in some cases to prevent people from reading the document- as in Isaiah.

Isaiah 8:16, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples."

The particular message in view was confined to Isaiah's disciples; they would be allowed to read it and so understand it! Now that doesn't mean that Isaiah made a literal clay cylinder and placed his prophecy there. Rather, this is a Hebraism to indicate that the vision was not intended for a larger crowd, only his disciples.³ That is the idea in Daniel. Daniel was to seal up this last vision, not literally, but figuratively with the understanding that what God gave him was NOT for his generation, BUT a latter one.

See we have the notion that every prophet understood the message given to them by God. Yet that clearly was not the case. Many times they were just as clueless as you and I, and so themselves responded with diligent study and examination to understand what God had given them (no different from you and I today with God's word).

1 Peter 1:10-12a, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful search and inquiry [In other words, they didn't understand the revelation given to them], seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you..."

Do you understand what this means? Many Old Testament prophet received a revelation from God and then, much like us, went back and studied the prophecy with the hope of understanding it! We see it in Matthew when Christ spoke to His disciples.

Matthew 13:16-17, "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see *it* [In other words they could not understand what was given to them- though they tried and tried]; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*."

And so it was with Daniel! God gave him and his generation this glorious revelation. Yet as an act of mercy, so that they wouldn't frustrate themselves, God gave them this caveat: "*You are not going to understand this, because I have intended it for another time, place, and people!*"

Wouldn't it be great to be that "people"? To be the actual generation for whom God gave Daniel 10-12?! Well guess what? We are that generation!

=Daniel 12:4a: "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the

end of time..." - family of God, "the end time" is that era from Christ's ascension to His second coming! As such we conclude that we are the generation for whom Daniel 10-12 was written! God intended these encouraging words to be read and understood by you and me!

Do you therefore understand this Sixth and Final Word of Hope that God Intended for His People Living in Difficult Circumstances? It is the word of God! Again, God Personally intended this word for you and me! As the world frantically searches for knowledge, God has given us the full-deposit of His word and opens our eyes that we might understand it and apply it! It reminds me of the exhortation God gave Moses...

Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things [concerning the future] belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed [the word of God] belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

The final word of encouragement that God intends for His people facing the horrors of this life is His word! How is it therefore that we can have hope in the midst of sorrow? We need only feast upon this, God's word!

Jeremiah 15:16, "Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts."

Truly, if you find at times that you are weighed down by the things of this life, ask yourself a simple question: Am I appropriating the word of God? Am I daily supping upon it? Child of God, you want hope, courage, and a strong faith? Get into the word of God!

As I close, I want to bring this message home to where we live. Though we live at times in the midst of "horrible distress" (Daniel 12:1) on account of this state of sin and misery and/or our love for the Lord, nevertheless we can "take courage" (John 16:33) on account of:

- The Promised Protection of the Lord, Daniel 12:1a.
- The Glorious Deliverance Affected by Christ's Return, Daniel 12:1b.
- The Hope of the Resurrection, Daniel 12:1c.
- The Vindication of the Last Judgment, Daniel 12:2.
- The Glory that awaits us in Christ, Daniel 12:3.
- The All-Sufficient, All-Comforting Word of Hope given to us in Scripture, Daniel 12:4.

What impact ought these to have in our lives? Aside from giving us a disposition of hope and joy, Daniel described three activities to which God's people will give themselves in the last days.

First, they will have “insight” (Daniel 12:3a)- which means they not only will know the word of God, but they will live in light of it! That tells us that the remnant will indeed take advantage of God’s word!

Secondly, they will busy themselves with “leading many to righteousness” (Daniel 12:3c) which speaks of evangelism!

Thirdly, they will busy themselves with “giving understanding to the many” (Daniel 11:33) which speaks of discipleship!

Daniel 11:33, “And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder, for *many days.*”

Such is the disposition and passion of a people fixed on God’s word and ever mindful of the glories that await them in Christ!

End Notes

¹ Priestly linen was ordinarily bleached white and, though colored threads and bands were sometimes incorporated, we are justified in assuming that these linen garments were white. (cf. Joyce Baldwin, *Daniel*, TOTC, p. 200)

² Cf. <http://www.industrytap.com/knowledge-doubling-every-12-months-soon-to-be-every-12-hours/3950>.

³ J. G. Baldwin commented, “We are not intended to take this sealing of the book too literally. There is no indication that any part of the prophecy of Isaiah was kept secret in the sense that no-one was permitted to read it, nor that the last four chapters of Daniel were treated differently from the rest of the book.” (*Daniel*, TOTC, p. 228)