

TEXT – Daniel 12:1-3

Introduction: One of the cliché sayings that we seem to hear quite often these days is, “At the end of the day.” Another phrase along those same lines would be, “When all is said and done.” A player bemoaning the team’s rather poor performance says, “At the end of the day, when all is said and done the other team just beat us.” But even for the losing team at the end of the day they can look forward to correcting their mistakes and practicing hard as they prepare for the next game. We also know that at the end of the day whether it was a good day or a bad day, whether we are feeling satisfied or more frustrated, whether happy or sad we can lay our head down to sleep fairly confident that we will wake up to a new day, a somewhat fresh start. But what about the end when it really is the end? What about the end on the final day, the last day of this earth’s existence when everything is truly said and done? Some will be cast off into the horrifying fires of hell. Others will begin the most blessed days anyone could ever imagine in heaven itself. So what does God tell us about the end. The Lord through his prophet Daniel reminds us that IN THE END – 1) Michael will come, 2) all the dead will rise, and 3) the righteous will shine.

I. Michael will come

- The Lord speaking to Daniel describes Michael as “the great prince who protects your people.” Michael is the only angel we know of that is referred to as an archangel. Jude in his short epistle (verse 9) calls him the archangel.
- Just as the devil is the leader of the evil angels, so Michael seems to be the leader of the holy angels who praise God and serve us. Michael is the great prince or captain of the angels who constantly battles the devil and fights against his evil angels so that the Lord’s will is done. Right now there is a battle raging around us.
- This battle will continue until the end. But the Lord informs Daniel that there will be a time of great distress right before the end. In Revelation, John sees the ancient serpent the devil locked up through the preaching of the gospel but then set free for a short time right before the end.
- Jesus himself told his disciples, “For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”
- Jesus explains what he means as he goes on, “For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect if that were possible.” We may be living in that short time before the end as Christian churches are popping up everywhere and some are growing rapidly. But very few are concerned with teaching God’s Word in its truth and purity. They preach what works for membership.
- Satan is still deceiving the nations through false teaching. More than probably ever before Christian churches are defending homosexuality and abortion. More than ever Christians are stating that the Bible is full of errors and are denying the assurance of God’s complete forgiveness in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
- During this time of great distress right before the end Michael will arise to protect God’s people, to rally them around God’s word of truth that sends the devil reeling. Huddling around God’s Word is the only safeguard we have from abandoning our faith in Christ as we battle against Satan’s lies. Yet again, maybe more than ever before Christian families are not huddling around God’s Word, not having home devotions, and not praying together.
- But Michael fights for God’s people. He will bring about the final deliverance for those who remain faithful to Jesus their Savior. The end will come and everyone whose name is written in the Book of Life will be saved eternally. Is our name written in the Book of Life, the register for all those who will be in heaven? Only God knows. Our confidence that our name is there grows as we continue to grow in our faith, strengthening our faith in Christ by actively and regularly reading, studying, and sharing God’s Word with our families and others.
- Peter tells us in his first epistle chapter 5, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.”

Transition: At the end of the day, when all is said and done, in the end Michael will come to help God’s people and deliver them from this present evil age. In the end we also note that all the dead will rise.

II. All the dead will rise

- No one will miss out on the events of Judgment Day. Every single person who has died prior to Jesus’ return – the many, many, multitudes of dead will all be raised from their graves. Faithful believers like Abraham and David and the Apostle Paul as well as people like the Pharaoh Moses appeared before and Hitler and Saddam Hussein.
- All the dead will rise to hear their eternal sentence from the Lord Jesus. Some will awake from the slumber of death with their soul rejoining their body only to be condemned to where their soul was before – in hell.
- On the other hand, others will awake from the sleep of death in joy to be clothed with their heavenly dwelling, with perfect, glorified bodies. They will see with their own eyes the Savior from sin of whom they only knew by faith.

- Job proclaimed, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"
- For believers the resurrection is a source of great comfort especially for those who have lost a loved one in the Lord. We know we will see them again in heaven. That is because through faith in Jesus we know that our Savior has conquered death. By faith we know that even such a formidable enemy such as death that eventually claims each and every sinner is completely powerless to condemn those who trust in Christ.
- Jesus by his resurrection from the grave has guaranteed to all who trust in him that they too will rise in glory. Paul reminds us in the great resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him."
- Again Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15, "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."
- "For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Transition: At the end of the day, when all is said and done, in the end Michael will come to the aid of God's people. In the judgment all the dead, believer and unbeliever, will be raised from their graves and the righteous will shine.

III. The righteous will shine

- Believers in Christ have nothing to worry about in the final judgment. The Lord declares through his prophet Daniel that they are the wise ones and they will shine like the brightness of the heavens, like the expanse of the sky on a bright sunny day.
- They are wise for two reasons and it is by no means their own wisdom but wisdom that has been imparted to them by God. They are wise because they understand by the work of the Holy Spirit through God's law that they are sinners. They understand through the Spirit's "foreign" work that they are sinners who have failed to measure up to God's standards of holiness and perfection.
- Numerous passages condemn our sinfulness before God. James says, "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it." God's law clearly states, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We have failed miserably to measure up to God's standard of sinlessness.
- That makes us wise in one important aspect, but the other side of wisdom is more crucial. That wisdom is what God has done to make us righteous and holy in his sight by removing our sins through Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection and giving us our Savior's holiness that he earned by his perfect life.
- Paul says in 2 Corinthians, "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." Paul also states in 1 Corinthians, "It is because of him (God) that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."
- It is those who are wise in their sins and in their salvation through Jesus Christ that will shine like the heavens. But that wisdom is also a wisdom believers impart and teach to others – to their children, to the next generation, to neighbors, friends and co-workers. The Lord refers to these teachers of spiritual wisdom as those who lead many to righteousness. As believers in Jesus we are called to lead others to their only source of righteousness in Christ.
- Those that have this wisdom will shine like the stars. Sirius is the brightest star visible to the naked eye. It is estimated to be 25 times brighter than the sun. The most luminous star is believed to be Cygnus OB2-12. It is thought to be 6 million times brighter than the sun.
- What a glorious description this is for those who are wise through faith in Jesus. They will shine like the stars in dazzling splendor and glory for ever and ever.

Conclusion: At the end of the day, the final day, when all is said and done Jesus will return. Too often we lose sight of that final day and the importance of living each day in the light of that final day. Paul said it best, "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." We want to live each day as if it is our final day, as if tomorrow our life will end or Jesus will come again. We want to be prepared, making our faith in Jesus the top priority of each day. In the end now is the day of salvation. Amen.