

The Time *of the* End (*or the* End of Time)



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Daniel 11:40–12:13.*

Memory Text: “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever” (*Daniel 12:3*).

The final chapter of Daniel sketches the events of world history at the concluding portion of “the time of the end,” when “there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was” (*Dan. 12:1*). After receiving the last vision, Daniel still had questions, but God reserved a full understanding of the visions to the time of the end, when those who would study Daniel’s prophecies would understand their tremendous messages (*vs. 4*). We are, we believe, among those who have been called to understand.

In chapter 12 we stand at the edge of eternity. Behind us, the great events of salvation history have unfolded: the Flood, in which only eight people were saved; the Exodus from Egypt, which gave birth to the nation of Israel; and the Cross, which brought deliverance from sin to all humankind. The climax of salvation history, however, is still to come—the great exodus of the redeemed from this sin-filled planet.

The Week at a Glance: What is meant by the phrase “the time of the end”? Why do we believe that Michael is Jesus? Why was the book of Daniel sealed until “the time of the end”? What does Daniel teach about the resurrection of the dead?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 25.*

The Time of the End *(Dan. 11:40-45)*

The expression “time of the end” appears only in the book of Daniel (8:17; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9). The context in each case indicates that it refers to the final period in history prior to the Second Advent. Seventh-day Adventists have generally identified the year 1798, the end of the 1,260 years, as the beginning of the time of the end. Because the final verses of Daniel 11 seem to be unfulfilled prophecy, we need to be careful how we interpret them.

Which powers could be referred to by the terms “king of the north” and “king of the south” in the time of the end? *Dan. 11:40.*

The king of the north. At the time of the end for the kingdom of Judah, Babylon was the enemy from the North (*Jer. 1:14, 15*). In the book of Revelation, Babylon is the code name for spiritual Rome—the papacy. Thus, the king of the north in the time of the end is the papacy. This harmonizes with Daniel 11:36-39, where the king who exalts himself is also the papacy.

The king of the south. Some view the earlier use of the phrase “the king of the south” (*in Dan. 11:5*) as the Ptolemies, who ruled in Egypt after the demise of the Grecian Empire. Because this latter prophecy (*Dan. 11:40*) applies to the time of the end, the phrase “king of the south” can no longer refer to literal Egypt. Revelation 11:8 uses Egypt to signify that which is opposed to true religion. These two powers are engaged in some sort of warfare.

Who in the time of the end could be symbolized by the nations of Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites? *Dan. 11:41.*

These nations no longer exist, which indicates that this passage is not intended to be construed as literal. In ancient days these nations were the enemies of God’s people, but God in His grace has promised to save many who were once His enemies. The church will be used of Him to conquer spiritually “Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.” Many will come out of groups once opposed to the truth of God and join God’s people in the time of the end.

Though not easy to understand, these texts reveal that the world will be in chaos and turmoil right up through the “time of the end.” What this should help us understand is that strife and toil, far from proving there is no God, help affirm His existence, because He has warned us about these things in advance. How should this realization help strengthen us to face future struggles?

Michael the Prince (*Dan. 12:1*).

Read Daniel 12:1. It depicts two major events. What are they? From what we know as Adventists, describe what events it is talking about:

Who is Michael, this great Prince, who delivers God’s faithful people?

Adventists are about the only Christians who see “Michael” as Jesus. Consider the following evidence:

1. The Hebrew word *Michael* means “Who is like God?” The only One who is like God is Christ (*John 1:1*).

2. The “prince of the host” or “Prince of princes” (*Dan. 8:11, 25*) is also “Messiah the Prince” (*Dan. 9:25*). He is the same as “Michael your prince” (*Dan. 10:21*) or “Michael . . . the great prince” (*Dan. 12:1*).

3. The word *archangel* appears only twice in Scripture, once in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, where Christ comes with the voice of the archangel, and once in Jude 9, where Michael is called an archangel.

What is implied in the phrase “those found written in the book”? What book? (*See also Exod. 32:32; Dan. 7:10; Luke 10:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 22:19.*)

Even the most cursory survey of these texts implies judgment, even for those who serve the Lord. Those “found” written in the book of life are saved, those “found” not written in there are lost. If this isn’t some sort of final judgment, final reckoning, final separation between the righteous and unrighteous—what is?

“The Lord desires us to appreciate the great plan of redemption, to realize our high privilege as the children of God, and to walk before Him in obedience, with grateful thanksgiving. He desires us to serve Him in newness of life, with gladness every day. He longs to see gratitude welling up in our hearts because our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, because we may cast all our care upon Him who cares for us.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 299. Why do you believe that your name, right now, is written in the book of life? On what basis do you make this claim?

The Resurrection (*Dan. 12:2*).

One of the most powerful and dramatic texts in all inspiration is Daniel 12:2—the promise and warning of the resurrection from the dead. Here is a great truth that all the science, philosophy, and worldly wisdom could never unearth for us. We know it only because we have been told it, and we believe it because we have been told it by the Lord in His Word.

Read Daniel 12:2. What principle, what concept, do we see here in the text? See the following texts for some answers: Deut. 32:4; Eccles. 12:14; Acts 24:15; Rom. 2:5, 6.

Who hasn't at times been outraged at the lack of justice among us? All around, and every day, injustice taunts at us, mocks us, makes us angry and even doubtful. The devil, for sure, loves injustice. In so many ways, injustice and corruption seem to rule the day.

Yet, implied in this one simple text is the promise and the warning of God's final justice. The righteous will be rewarded, the unjust will be punished, and not by human beings' fickle, fleeting, and often perverted notions of justice and punishment but by a perfect, all-knowing, merciful, and just God who rewards and punishes. Hence, for those who will claim it by faith, the text offers us something that no human can: the promise of final, and perfect, justice—something not seen in this world.

What does this text tell us about death?

“The Christian will make no mistake about it: death is an enemy. But at the same time it is a defeated enemy. This means that we can fight it with confidence, knowing that its temporary victories will not prevail. We can be on the side of health, peace, and all else that promotes life without being discouraged and fearful that the enemy we fight will finally win.”—“Resurrection and Glorification,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 2000), p. 364.

Why is the promise of the resurrection of the dead so important to us, particularly as Seventh-day Adventists? How does our understanding of the state of the dead help us see even more clearly just how fundamental this teaching is? See also what Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 says about how crucial this doctrine is. Why do Paul's words make sense only if we understand that the dead now sleep?

The Sealed Book Is Opened (*Dan. 12:4, 9, 10*).

Read Daniel 12:4, 9, 10. Taken together, what are these texts saying about the book of Daniel?

For long centuries, many of the prophecies of Daniel were hidden in obscurity. This is not surprising, either, considering the contents of the book, particularly in regard to what it says about Rome, the one power that for centuries controlled access to the Bible.

However, since the time of the Protestant Reformation, and especially in the past few hundred years, more and more students have come to understand better the book of Daniel. The closed is now, more and more, opened. What makes it easier, too, is that living after many of these events unfolded, Bible students are able to look back over history and see just how these things happened, as predicted, an advantage that only those living at “the time of the end” could have.

“Since 1798 the book of Daniel has been unsealed, knowledge of the prophecies has increased, and many have proclaimed the solemn message of the judgment near.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 356. Of course, not everyone will understand. It’s sad that so much of the Protestant world applies key prophecies of Daniel to Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C., which is rather ridiculous, considering Daniel’s emphasis on “the time of the end.”

Read John 14:29. What did Jesus say that helps us understand why Daniel was told to shut up the book until the end?

In so many ways, the book of Daniel is a faith-affirming book. We, today, can look back and see how, just as predicted, nations came and went, one after another. The book appeals to our rational thought processes in ways that other books don’t. After all, the Lord, through the book of Daniel, has given us prophecies based on something as large and unchangeable as world history. We can be as sure of the prophecies as we can be of world history. In short, for those who will, by faith, let Daniel speak to them, the book will give them powerful assurances of God’s power and promises.

What’s your favorite prophecy in the book of Daniel? Which one does the most to help strengthen your faith? If you had the opportunity to give a non-Christian a Bible study from only one prophecy in the book, which one would you choose, and why?

Blessed Is He Who Waits (*Dan. 12:11-13*).

At the end of the book we find two time prophecies (the 1,290 and 1,335 days), which some Adventists set as literal days in the near future. What evidence in Scripture shows that these time prophecies are past?

First, we need to recognize that the angel's long discourse in Daniel 11 concludes in Daniel 12:4. Daniel 12:5-13 is an epilogue to the long vision in Daniel 11 and, in a sense, to the whole book, as well. It is not a new vision with a different topic but an explanation of certain elements in the visions contained in "the book," which is to be sealed. This is evident from the question in Daniel 12:6, " 'How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?' " (*NKJV*). The expression "these wonders" refers to the things Daniel saw in chapter 11, which itself is simply an elaboration of the issues in chapter 8.

Second, the phrase "time and times and half a time" (*NKJV*), in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, refers to one event, not two. In Daniel 7:25 the saints are given into the hand of the little-horn power " 'for a time, times and half a time,' " (*NIV*) and in 12:7 the holy people's power is shattered for " 'a time, times and half a time' " (*NIV*). These phrases refer to the same thing, the persecution of God's people during the 1,260 years.

Third, there's the taking away of the daily in Daniel 8:11, 11:31, and 12:11. Because in Daniel 8:11 and 11:31 the taking away of the daily refers to a past historical reality, the taking away of the daily in Daniel 12:11 is surely talking about the same thing.

For these reasons, and others, such as Ellen White's statement that after 1844, "there can be no definite tracing of prophetic time" (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 59*, 1900), we reject attempts to give these time prophecies a future fulfillment. They belong to the past.

One interpretation common among Seventh-day Adventists is this: A.D. 508 was the year in which Clovis, king of the Franks, stepped into the strategic position of the first civil power to join up with the rising Church of Rome. This laid the foundation for that centuries-long union of church and state, the abomination of desolation in Daniel 12:11. This was also the time in which many doctrines and practices that obscured Christ's high-priestly ministry became established in the church. Adding 1,290 years to 508 leads to 1798. Meanwhile, the 1,335 years starts from the same point (508), which then leads to 1843, "a significant date in the relationship to the great advent awakening."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 881; see also Friday's section.

Read Daniel 12:13. Look at the assurance Daniel was given about his eternal destiny. What Bible texts give you just as much assurance as Daniel was given here?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 112–119.

“I saw that God was in the proclamation of the time in 1843. It was His design to arouse the people and bring them to a testing point, where they should decide for or against the truth. Ministers were convinced of the correctness of the positions taken on the prophetic periods, and some renounced their pride, and left their salaries and their churches to go forth from place to place to give the message.”—Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 232.

“Again they were led to their Bibles to search the prophetic periods. The hand of the Lord was removed from the figures, and the mistake was explained. They saw that the prophetic periods reached to 1844, and that the same evidence which they had presented to show that the prophetic periods closed in 1843, proved that they would terminate in 1844. Light from the Word of God shone upon their position, and they discovered a tarrying time—‘Though it [the vision] tarry, wait for it.’ In their love for Christ’s immediate coming, they had overlooked the tarrying of the vision, which was calculated to manifest the true waiting ones. Again they had a point of time. Yet I saw that many of them could not rise above their severe disappointment to possess that degree of zeal and energy which had marked their faith in 1843.”—Page 236.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 **What dangers do we face by setting dates for future end-time events? What happens to the faith of many when these predicted events fail to come to pass?**
- 2 **Daniel ends with the promise of victory for God’s people. How, by dwelling on these prophecies, can your faith and hope be strengthened?**

Summary: Though some parts of the book of Daniel remain a mystery, we have been given enough to trust in God who, through Jesus Christ, has assured us that, along with Daniel, we, too, will stand in our “lot at the end of the days.”

Called to Fail?

N'drin Charles

I joined the Adventist Church while studying at a university in Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa. Soon after my baptism I began having Sabbath problems, and I could not complete one of my classes; I would have to take the class again the next year.

My parents were upset that I had let my faith get in the way of my studies, and they refused to pay my school fees after that. But I was determined to return to school and show my parents that my faith had not made me fail. The Lord blessed me, and I remained in school even without my parents' support.

As final exams approached, I prayed that God would help me do well and bring glory to His name. But just before exams the faculty went on strike and school closed. Some weeks later we were called back to take our exams.

The exam schedule indicated that my exams began on Tuesday, so I spent Monday reviewing. But Monday evening a friend came and asked why I had not attended two of my exams that day. To my dismay, I learned that the exam schedule had been revised after I had checked it. Missing the exams meant I had failed my courses.

"I have failed again!" I told God. "How can this bring honor to Your name?"

Later my pastor visited me and asked whether I would consider studying for the ministry. Other church members had asked me the same question, and I began to understand that perhaps God was opening another door for me.

I prayed to know God's will, and some weeks later, to my surprise, the church agreed to sponsor me to study at the Adventist seminary.

Before leaving to study, I asked God for two things: to continue providing throughout my studies, and to sustain me morally and physically to God's glory. God answered both of these prayers, and I graduated cum laude in three years instead of the usual four.

God fulfilled His promise that says, "If you put your trust in Me and walk before me, you will not be the last, but the first. You will not be the tail but the head." My parents, who once refused to pay my school fees, witnessed my graduation and gave honor to God for what He was doing in my life.

I urge believers to look to God when facing problems in their lives. Trust Him; He will never fail.

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The main focus of this Bible Study Guide, *His Wondrous Cross: The Story of Our Redemption*, by Brian D. Jones, will be on the final week of Christ's life, which culminated in His death and resurrection. Next, we focus on the meaning of the Cross, on what happened there, and what it offers us, who claim it as the foundation of our salvation.

Lesson 1—The Provocation and Provision

The Week at a Glance

Sunday: To Love God (*Matt. 22:37*).

Monday: Satan's Defection (*John 8:44*).

Tuesday: Satan's Earthly Exile (*Rev. 12:4-9*).

Wednesday: "Ayechah"? (*Gen. 3:6-23*).

Thursday: God's Intervention and Gospel Foreshadowed (*Gen. 3:15*).

Memory Text—*Genesis 3:9*

Sabbath Gem "Why, in order to love God, must we be free? Why must freedom entail the possibility to do wrong? How did God respond to the fall of Adam and Eve?"

Lesson 2—His Glorious Purpose Foreshadowed in Types

The Week at a Glance

Sunday: The Sin Crisis

Monday: The Sin Crisis, Continued (*1 John 5:19*).

Tuesday: Cain and Abel (*Gen. 4:1-8*).

Wednesday: Abraham and Calvary (*Gen. 22:1-19, Gal. 3:8*).

Thursday: The Serpent in the Wilderness (*Num. 21:4-9*).

Memory Text—*Genesis 22:8*

Sabbath Gem This week we look at those who were living in the shadows that were created only because the light was there to begin with. Before Calvary, the Lord was teaching His people truths about what God would do to save the world from sin.

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