

Rise Up and Shine

Daniel 12

Do you know that light is the most important external factor affecting sleep? While most people intuitively know that it's easier to fall asleep when it's dark, the connection between light and sleep is actually biological.

Light plays a key role in regulating circadian rhythm, which is the body's internal clock that signals when to be alert and when to rest. Light also affects the production of melatonin, which is an essential sleep-promoting hormone.

God designed our human biology to correspond to the daily patterns of sunlight and darkness. But although our biology hasn't changed, the world has. The invention of electricity makes 24/7 illumination possible. This 24/7 illumination is why New York City came to be known as the city that never sleeps.

Artificial lighting, like street lights, computers and cell phones can prevent us from getting a good night's sleep. But light, as God designed it, can also wake us up from a deep sleep so that we can get to work.

Now God not only designed light to wake us up physically, He designed the light of His glory to wake us up from spiritual death so that we can know His transforming goodness and shine His light in a perverse world.

Main idea: Christ's glory calls us to rise and shine so that others can be brought out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

This morning we are going to see how the glory of Christ awakens us to rise up from spiritual sleep to shine for Christ and bring others out of darkness and into His transforming light.

1. Wise up unto salvation through the sanctifying word of God.

First of all, the glory of God calls us to wise up unto salvation through the sanctifying word of God. As we unfold this chapter, keep in mind that it's a continuation of the prophesy revealed to Daniel in chapter ten in answer to his prayer. At the end of chapter 11, the angel, probably Gabriel, speaks of the demise of the coming anti-Christ, who will persecute the people of God and in particular believing Israel.

Now in that context, the Angel continues in Daniel 12:1: *“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time”* (Daniel 12:1a).

Like we saw also in chapter ten, Gabriel again reveals to Daniel that the angel Michael will arise to give divine assistance to the people of God during a period of great tribulation. As in Daniel's day, Israel's divine protector and prince (Daniel 10:20), will again engage in battle with the forces of darkness.

Verse one also describes this period of time as *a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation*. In Matthew 24:21 Jesus also spoke of this time: *“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.”*

Remember that the final antichrist, who is referenced at the end of Daniel chapter 11 and in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10, is behind the persecution of believing Israel and all who put their faith in Christ during this final tribulation period.

This is not to say the people of God will only experience persecution and tribulation during the great tribulation period. The time of the final Antichrist will bring tribulation and persecution like this world has never known. But this final antichrist is the last in a series of “antichrists” as described by the Apostle John (1 John 2:18; 4:3),

As Ryan Boys noted: “So we deal with the spirit of antichrist in little antichrists. An antichrist is simply someone who rejects the deity of Jesus Christ and refuses to put their faith in him. Antichrist attitudes

are marked by blasphemy, self-worship, power-worship, money-worship. These attitudes already have a central place in our culture. There's probably an antichrist in your extended family. There's probably several at your workplace. There are many in the world's governments. We face the spirit of the antichrist every day. Most importantly, the Antichrist loses. What seems like the overwhelming majority will ultimately be defeated by Jesus Christ."

Are you standing firm against the antichrist spirit of this age? As we will see more in a moment, it's the knowledge of Christ's glorious triumph, and not the absence of trouble, that enables the saints in all ages to persevere in faith to the end.

Now in light of the coming great trouble, the angel Gabriel continues at the end of verse 1: "*But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book*" (Daniel 12:1b).

It's important to note here that Gabriel doesn't say that God's people will be exempt from the coming great tribulation. Rather all who are written in the book will be rescued from it.

How will they ultimately be delivered? He continues in verse 2: "*And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt*" (Daniel 12:2). As believers, whose names are in the book of life, we can trust that our sovereign God is able to deliver us from tribulation or through tribulation. That is to say, that through divine assistance we can escape trouble or endure hardship for the cause of Christ.

Like the three Hebrew youth in Daniel 3, who would not compromise their devotion to God, we can trust God's ability to deliver us from the fiery furnace and we can also trust Him to purify and perfect us through fiery trials. But greater still, all who sleep in Jesus or die in Christ shall awake, as Gabriel revealed, to everlasting life.

Now it appears from verse two that Gabriel is pointing to two future resurrections; one to everlasting life and one to everlasting shame and

contempt. In passages like John 5:29 and Acts 24:15 the New Testament affirms that there will be two future resurrections; one for the saved and one for the unsaved.

Now although bible scholars agree on the coming resurrections of the just and unjust, there is disagreement on the timing of these end time events. The position that we hold at MBC is the premillennial and imminent return of Christ. Among other things, this means that the resurrection of the just and the unjust are separated by the literal thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth as recorded in Revelation 20:5-6.

This millennial reign of Christ begins when He returns with His saints at the end of the tribulation period (2 Thessalonians 4). Before the millennium the bodies of all whose names are written in the book of life will be raised unto everlasting life, and after the millennium the bodies of all whose names are not written in the book of life will also be raised to be judged and thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev 20:11-15).

Now after giving Daniel greater insight into the hope of the resurrection to come for his people and all whose names are written in the book, Gabriel explains: *“And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever”* (Daniel 12:3).

Who are the wise that shall shine like the brightness of the sky and like the stars forever? The wise are not only those who are made righteous through the saving and sanctifying word of God, but also those who turn others to righteousness through the good news of Jesus Christ. They will shine like the brightness of the sky above because they will share in the glories of Christ for all eternity.

But it's important to note that, although these faithful saints will share in the glories of Christ, there is a degree to which they already share in His glory today, which is why they are able to turn many to righteousness.

The wise are not simply those who hear or even understand the word of God, but who obey and apply the word of God to their daily lives. Obedience to the word of God is what sets believers apart from the world.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus prayed, *“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth”* (John 17:16-17). The word of God sets us apart enabling us to shine for Christ in the midst of the darkness.

How many of you know: The word of God will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from the word of God.

In regards to the word of God, Gabriel continues in verse 4: *“But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”* When the angel tells Daniel to shut up the words and seal the book he’s not saying to keep them a secret. Daniel is to seal the book and its words for “safekeeping, not secrecy” (Ryan Boys).

Danny Akin explains, “God’s people need this word from our Lord, especially as we move forward to the end of the age.”

Now the end of verse 4, as most commentators admit, is somewhat obscure: *“Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”* In view of Amos 8:12, some interpret verse 4 to mean that in the last days many will seek knowledge but because they’re looking for it in the wrong place or with the wrong heart, they will not find the knowledge they need. In fact, as someone has noted: “Education without God produces clever devils.”

But if we interpret verse 3 in its full context, it’s very likely that it’s an encouragement to increase in the knowledge of God. As Stephen Miller explained: “As the time of fulfillment draws nearer, the “wise” will seek to comprehend these prophecies more precisely, and God will grant understanding (“knowledge”) to them.”

This interpretation is very plausible, especially in light of the fact that the reason that Daniel was receiving this prophecy was because he sought understanding in the word of God and through earnest prayer.

Likewise, all believers today are made wise through the word and prayer so that we might live unto God and seek to make others wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15).

This brings us to our second point.

2. Rise up from slumber through the illuminating Spirit of God

The glory of God not only causes us to wise up unto salvation through the sanctifying word of God, His glory causes us to rise up from sleep through the illuminating Spirit of God.

Keep in mind that what the angel reveals in verse 3 about the wise, who turn many to righteousness, and shall shine like the stars forever, is both a future hope and a present reality. In other words, if you've received Christ as your Savior, as the Apostle Paul explained in 2 Corinthians 3:18, the liberating Spirit of God is at work in you so that you can behold the light of the glory of the Lord. And as we behold the glory of the Lord, we are progressively transformed into the likeness of Christ to reflect His glory in the world.

So, for the believer, although sharing in the fulness of the glory of God is yet to come, through the Spirit we already share in His glory now. Similarly, although Gabriel is speaking of a future resurrection that *awakens those who sleep in the dust* in verse two, there is also a spiritual resurrection that all believers experience in the present (Eph. 2:1). This spiritual resurrection by the Spirit awakens all, who were dead in sin, to see, savor and spread the glory of Christ.

To the people of God, who were groping in darkness, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed: *“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his*

glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.” (Isaiah 60:1-3).

How can those who are asleep spiritually and dead in sin rise up and shine? “We need a redeemer, ONE who is light, ONE who will give sight to the blind and life to the dead. Only such a redeemer can cause us to rise and shine” (P.G. Matthew).

Remember also that Daniel, who was a man of the word and a man of prayer, received greater insight into the glories to come for the people of God through divine assistance. And he’s being given this divine insight so that he could rise up in faith and strengthen others to also rise up in the light of the Lord.

With this in mind, we read in verse five: *“Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. 6 And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, “How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?” 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished” (Daniel 12:5-7).*

While Daniel is being given insight into the wonders to come for those who are made wise unto salvation, his eyes behold two other divine beings. Remember that in chapter 10, while standing on the banks of the Tigris’ river, Daniel also saw a man clothed in linen. The description given of the man in linen has led many commentators to believe that what Daniel saw was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. In verse 5 then, Christ reappears to further encourage Daniel, who was greatly loved, about the wonders that were just revealed to him (v.5).

Now, while seeing the vision of the two divine beings opposite each other on the banks of the Tigris’ river, Daniel hears an angel saying to

the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters, *“How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?”* (v.6b).

Most commentators agree that precisely what the angel is asking is not clear. Is he asking how long before the glories being revealed will take place or is he asking how long will these end time events last? Exactly what the angel is asking, we don't know for sure. One thing we can say is that even the angels do not fully understand these end time events (Mark 13:32).

Now before giving the answer, which is even more complex than the question, the Lord raises both his hands, and because there is none greater, swears by himself that the revelations revealed will surely come to pass in the time appointed. Furthermore pertaining to the period in which these events will occur, the Lord revealed that: *“...it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished”* (v.7b).

Some commentators suggest that the Lord is speaking of the latter half of the seventieth week of the prophecy recorded in Daniel 9:24-27. In Daniel 9:24 we read: *“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness,”* (Daniel 9:24).

Remember the seventy-week prophecy decreed upon Israel are seventy weeks of years not days which add up to 490 years. The final week of this prophecy—the final seven years of great tribulation, like the world has never seen, has yet to be fulfilled.

As I said, some suggest that the answer the Lord gives to the angel about *“time, times and half of time”* is referring to the latter half of the great tribulation period, which occurs before the millennial reign of Christ. Some also suggest that because the final week (7 years) is decreed for Israel and not the church in Daniel 9:24, the church will be raptured by Christ before the tribulation begins.

Although I hold to the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, I think we need to resist being overly dogmatic about the timeline of end time events. In other words, there's some room for debate. However, what is absolutely clear in scripture and is not up for debate is that Jesus is coming for His church.

If you're struggling to understand the revelation given of the timeline of end times events, be encourage by the fact that Daniel didn't fully get it either. Notice his response to the Lord's answer: *"I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?" 9 He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end"* (Daniel 12:8-9).

The question that Daniel asked is different than the angel's question. The angel seemed to ask about the timeline of end time events. Daniel, on the other hand, seems to be asking about the outcome or purpose of end time events in which his people will go through great distress.

Interestingly, in response, the Lord didn't first give Daniel an explanation, but an exhortation.

How many of you know, when we got saved, God didn't give us a roadmap about our future; He gave us a relationship with the Father. He gave us a relationship because it's growing in intimacy with the Father and not our understanding of why we are going through tough times, that will give us the strength to persevere.

I appreciate Danny Akins commentary here: "Verse 9 gives [Daniel] his answer, but probably not the one he wanted. Respectfully Daniel is told, 'Go on your way, Daniel, for the words are [to be kept safe] and sealed until the time of the end.' 'Go on about your life and business, Daniel. You have received all you are going to get, and it is enough.' This prophecy and it's understanding will become more clear only 'as God unravels history's unseen future' (Ferguson). The word is protected, and it will be preserved. Everything will happen as God intends at the right time. Be faithful. Trust him. Be patient. As Adrian

Rogers so often said, ‘God is never late, and he is never early. He is always right on time.’”

How many of you know, whether you believe in a pre-trib, mid-trib or post tribulation rapture of the church, God never promised that believers will be exempt from tribulation in this life. On the contrary, Jesus said: *“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33b).

The grace that enables us to rise up in a dark period in our lives and press on is not that the Spirit of God illuminates us to know all things. Rather the Spirit of God awakens us to know the glory of the God who does know all things and promises to work all things for good to those who love God and are called according to His purposes (Romans 8:28).

In difficult times the light of the glory of God’s sovereignty and love revealed most splendidly in our risen Savior doesn’t tell us to get over it; instead His glory assures us that we will get through it. As Job declared in his day of trouble, which he struggled to understand: *“But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold”* (Job 23:10).

This brings us to our final point:

3. Light up like stars in view of the coming Son of God.

The glory of God not only causes us to wise up unto salvation through the sanctifying word of God, and rise up from sleep through the illuminating Spirit of God; His glory causes us to light up like stars in view of the coming Son of God. After exhorting Daniel, who could not fully understand the outcome of what was being revealed to him, the Lord continued:

“Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand” (Daniel 12:10).

There were things about the end times, and how long his people had to endure before they were delivered, which Daniel couldn't understand. In response to his question, the Lord not only exhorts Daniel to go on with the understanding that he already had, but He also reveals that the wise will be purified and refined through the coming trials and tribulation. The wicked, on the other hand, will continue to act wickedly.

Why will the wise be purified by the trials ahead, but the wicked continue in their wickedness? Because unlike the wise, the wicked do not know God nor understand the ways of God. They look to the ways of the world for security and escape, which leads to more wickedness.

Now, like Daniel, the wise are wise not because they understand everything about God, but because they know their God—they know He's sovereign and that evil will not thwart His redemptive plans.

They don't know precisely when the end will come, but they know the people of God will win in the end.

Job in the midst of his trials said, *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth"* (Job 19:25).

Likewise, as children of God, we can endure trials and be purified through them to light up the darkness because our Savior lives. We know He lives not only through His sanctifying word and illuminating Spirit. But like the old hymn says, if you ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart.

Moreover, our Savior, who was cut off for our sin, as Daniel prophesied, not only lives in our hearts so that we might live for Him now, He is coming for us so that we might live with Him forevermore.

Now after explaining to Daniel that the wise will be refined in the days ahead, the Lord continues: *"And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. 12 Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days"* (Daniel 12:11-12).

Notice that in answer to the “how long” question, the Lord reveals that from the time the burnt offering stops and the abomination that makes desolate is setup, there will be 1,290 days, which is roughly 3-1/2 years.

Most commentators agree that one cannot say with certainty what these 1290 days refer to. Some suggest they relate specifically to the time between Antiochus Epiphany’s defilement of the temple in 167 BC until the temple’s rededication in 164 BC. Others suggest that it’s a reference to the latter half of the seven-year tribulation during the end times.

Bryan Chapel’s suggestion was helpful to me: “It seems that when God answered the angel about the end-time, the Lord zoomed to the end of time to describe the tribulation to come, but when Daniel asked, “Why these things?” God returns nearer to Daniel’s time and says there will be another 1,290 days (or approximately three and a half years) of tribulation then. There will be great trouble at the end of all things, but there will also be much trouble in the lives of God’s people prior to that time. Now in the text the days are [more than a literal period of time], but are representative of half of God’s judgment. It takes both of the times of trouble (i.e., that of Antiochus Epiphany and that of the antichrist) to fill up the judgment that will fulfill God’s purposes.

Ultimately the purposes of the vision are not simply to inform us or to warn the wicked. The visions are to ignite the faithful in God’s purposes. There is an additional promise made to God’s people through Daniel with this intended effect. The Lord says, “*Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days*” (v. 12)—that is, just a little longer (a month and a half), after the period of judgment. I have not found a single commentator who will dare to speak with certainty about what this period of time represents. Does this extra time represent the coming of Christ after Antiochus Epiphany, or the coming of Antiochus’s death after the abomination he caused?

Many explanations have been offered, but the common thread among them is the understanding that God promises his blessing in his time to those who are faithful through their trials. This has been the ultimate purpose of all of Daniel's revelations. God intends for the prophet's visions to give people confidence in the present through the revelations of God's hand upon the future."

What was the primary purpose behind these great prophecies that Daniel, a man greatly loved by God, received, which also reassured Him that God answers prayer? The primary purpose is found in the Lord's personal words to Daniel at the conclusion of the book: "*But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days*" (Daniel 12:13).

Notice, after giving Daniel further insight into the future which is in God's hands, for the second time the Lord exhorts Daniel to *go your way till the end*. In other words, he's exhorting him to carry on and to stay faithful to the end of his earthly days.

Daniel is not to be preoccupied so much with the timeline of the end times, but with the fact that his time, his future, his eternity is in God's hands. This is the promise for all the redeemed.

And when it was time for Daniel's earthly days to come to an end, (v.13) he would enter into his eternal rest and stand in his allotted place, the place that the Lord has prepared for him and also all the wise who know Him, love Him and live in light of the glory to come. This is our blessed hope. (John 14:1-3)

Conclusion

May the light of the crucified, and risen glory of Christ shine in our hearts and cause us to **wise up** through His sanctifying word, and **rise up** in prayerful dependence on the Spirit from the corruption of this world so that we might **light up** the darkness in the sure hope that Jesus will come for us in His perfect time.

Rise up and shine to the glory of Christ. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.