

135  
68  
41  
-----  
244

**Sermon Manuscript: Daniel 12:1-4**  
**Four Reasons to Celebrate Christ's Coming**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of End Time – Saints Triumphant – November 14, 2021

---

*"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people — everyone whose name is found written in the book — will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge." [NIV]*

---

My dear brothers and sisters whom the Lord has made wise so that you shine like the brightness of the heavens,

What was the best celebration you have ever attended? There are many occasions we celebrate: births, baptisms, confirmations, birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, reunions and homecomings, and even funerals. In my life there have been many of these and some stand out in my memory more than others. But none parallels our wedding. Besides the obvious joy of being united in marriage that day, there were all those that we knew and loved gathered together to join us in that most wonderful day. It's no wonder that the Lord uses the picture of a wedding banquet to describe what heaven will be like! But no matter how wonderful any of these celebrations may have been, they are lame compared to the greatest celebration of all time which will take place when Jesus returns and we enter glory. Today, Daniel shares a vision of the end and from his words will we see **FOUR REASONS TO CELEBRATE CHRIST'S COMING**. The first of these is our rescue from this world's distress.

### **1. Our Rescue from This World's Distress**

Daniel lived in some troubled times and the visions that the Lord gave him made that trouble even more vivid for him. The last half of Daniel's prophecy is filled with these visions and from them, Daniel records a terrifying message. Daniel was one of the exiles in Babylon and had risen to a high position under Nebuchadnezzar. He was at the heart of the clash of empires and the political world of his time. He would get swept up in the fall of Babylon and the ascendancy of the Persian Empire under Darius. In his visions he was shown by a messenger who was most likely Christ himself that this empire too would fall and be replaced first by the Greeks under Alexander the Great and those who would divide his empire. Then he sees the rise of the Roman Empire that would crush all resistance under its feet. God's people would suffer great hardship and persecution under these kingdoms. His prophecy foretells the continuing of "wars and rumors of wars" and the clash of peoples and nations throughout the rest of human history. Jesus quotes and adds to Daniel's prophecies as does John in Revelation. And if this isn't terrifying enough, we see behind the scenes to a spiritual battle for

the souls of men going on between the forces of God and the forces Satan. Michael, one of the archangels or chief angels, will fight to protect God's people from the forces aligned against them.

These visions of Daniel aren't limited to Old Testament times. The terrifying things that he foretells are still at work in our world today. The methods of the Roman Empire are still at work crushing resistance in our world as world powers use military force to crush each other. In society we see decline all around in crime, violence, lovelessness, moral decay and turning away from God and his truth. We can be terrified of what lies ahead when we hear these prophecies of persecution and as Daniel describes: *a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations*. And then there are the spiritual forces that war against God's people. Paul warns us: *Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* [Ephesians 6:11-12] These forces seek to lead us into sin and rebellion against God and into the falsehoods that deceive us from the truth. Satan and his allies would destroy us all. And we must admit that too often we have been defeated and have earned God's anger against our sin. This too is terrifying.

But God holds out hope here at the end of Daniel's visions. Even though many terrifying things will be revealed as the world comes closer and closer to the end, there is hope for God's people. Christ tells Daniel, *At that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered*. Christ will come into the world to defeat the forces of Satan. He will conquer sin and rise again to overcome death. He will cleanse us from our rebellion. And when he comes on the Last Day, his people will be freed from all the threats that the world presents. Our names are written in that book because Jesus wrote them there when he purchased us with his own blood.

Christ's return gives us reason to celebrate and the first reason is that when he comes it will mean our rescue from this world's distress. It will be like the celebration of the homecoming of soldiers who have returned from battle victorious. This world is a battleground. It is filled with both physical struggle and spiritual warfare for our souls. Every day we struggle against sin and Satan. But because of Christ we know the war has been won. Christ has won the victory. But he doesn't leave a man or woman behind. There are still soldiers to bring home before the end and so the last mopping up needs to be completed. Christ has freed us to fight in this part of the war when he came to the world the first time. When he comes again on the Last Day he will free us from the fight altogether. We will be going home! And that is why his coming gives us reason to celebrate. It will be our victory day. The end of this war is our first reason to celebrate. The second reason is our resurrection to eternal life.

## **2. Our Resurrection to Eternal Life.**

At the end of this world's struggle, not even the dead are left behind. But without Christ's return, death would seem to be the end. Because of sin, death has invaded God's world and

attacks all of us. All have sinned and so all will die. The fear of death is the greatest fear and is the result of sin. People try to deal with death in many ways but it seems most would prefer to think that it is the end of everything. When we die, we are no more. Multitudes hope in that death is only a "sleep in the dust." If this were so, then there would be no consequences to sin. There would be no Maker that we would have to meet. There would be no judgment to face. It would just be over. But the truth is that this is not the case. We all intuitively know this. That's why people dread death. Sin will run its course down to the grave. God will have to be faced. Sin will have to be judged and paid for. The same God who flooded the world of Noah, fired the city of Sodom and fed Jezebel to dogs in judgment is still the judge of the world. His judgment cannot be avoided.

All who are in the grave will be raised when Christ returns. All will be judged. But we have reason to celebrate this because the judgment for those who believe in Christ will mean resurrection to eternal life. We are tempted to think that death is the end of life. We think of it as the opposite of birth. But really death is the prelude to Christ's coming when we will begin the complete new life that Jesus has made possible. We have been given new life because he lived and died to take away our sins. He rose again as a guarantee of our own future resurrection to this new life when he comes again. No one will be left behind whose name has been written in his book. And so when he comes we will celebrate like a birth or a baptism because it will mean the real beginning of the life God intended for us. Our eternal life is the second reason to celebrate Christ's coming.

### **3. The Recognition of Our Service**

Christ goes on to tell Daniel: *Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.* This wisdom is the wisdom that comes from faith. As the Psalmist says: *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.* [Psalm 111:10] The fear of the Lord is to humble ourselves to him and look to him alone for the mercy and forgiveness he gives us in Jesus. And with this wisdom we are equipped to live to follow his precepts. This is all done through the grace of Christ. But living for Christ isn't easy in our sinful world. True wisdom knows to put its trust in God's power. *It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.* [Philippians 2:13] And when we live in this wisdom Christ tells us that we will shine and lead others to righteousness. This means that our actions, influence and witness will help others to find the righteous that Jesus has won for us all.

When Jesus returns, the results of this shining service will be made known. This will be like the celebration of a retirement after long and faithful service. The service has been done willingly and humbly. It has been done out of love for our gracious God. And God treasures us for it and gives us the privilege to serve in his kingdom. He will celebrate things we don't even think about. And so the works God has accomplished through us will be the third reason to celebrate.

#### 4. The Reality for Our Hope

The fourth reason to celebrate will be the greatest of all. It will be the greatest because when Christ comes, all that he has done for us and all that he has promised to us will reach its final and complete fulfillment. Our present hope is based on knowledge that comes from the Word of God. Daniel is given the command here to seal up the message he has been given to preserve it for the future. It was preserved for those who so desperately need it as the end approaches. Daniel is told that *many will go here and there to increase knowledge*. But they won't find it except in the Word of God. We live in a time when people will believe almost anything as long as it's not in the Bible. We live in a time when people *turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths*. [2 Timothy 4:4] Superstition is on the rise in our society as people become ever more interested in the occult with their fascination about zombies, vampires and false ideas of angels, demons and heaven. They know a few rumors of what's in the Bible but are so far removed from actually knowing God's truth that they become filled with lies. And we must ask ourselves if we do the same. Do we know God's Word as well as we like to think that we do? We need to open up that scroll and not leave it sealed. God's Word is the only source of true wisdom that we truly need. *From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*. [2 Timothy 3:1]

When Christ at last comes, the hope we have learned from God's Word will become our reality. And so the celebration will be like a wedding. The bride and groom have been filled with hopes and dreams of love and a life together that has been waiting to be fulfilled. When the wedding day finally comes, all these hopes and dreams are fulfilled. And so it is with Christ's return.

All the freedom from sin and death, all the peace and comfort of heaven, all the glory and joy of being with God forever will now no longer be something we are waiting for. Instead they will be something that we now are enjoying. This will be the greatest celebration of all.

Because of this, we are able to take a "long view" as we live through the last days of this world. We will do all we can to remain prepared by keeping ourselves close to God's Word and Sacraments so the Spirit can fortify our faith. We will look forward eagerly to Christ's coming by not getting caught up in all the trivial distractions of this present life. We will live lives of joyful hope and purposeful witness so that others may see the brightness of God's grace shining through us. This final completion of our redemption when Christ returns is and will be the fourth and greatest reason for us to celebrate.

We celebrate many things in our lives. But the celebration of triumph that will be ours in Christ when he comes again will be greater than all of them put together. Look forward to that day like you've looked forward to no other! Amen.