

LESSON 13 *December 18-24

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?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

Key Text: *Daniel 12:3.*

Teachers Aims:

1. To assure God's people that the book of Daniel is unsealed and that knowledge concerning these prophecies has increased.
2. To examine how precise God's timing is in the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies.

Lesson Outline:

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

- A. This expression appears only in the book of Daniel.
- B. Seventh-day Adventists believe the time of the end commenced in 1798.
- C. Daniel 12 reveals that we are standing on the threshold of eternity.

II. Michael Will Rise Up (*Dan. 12:1*).

- A. Michael is Jesus, the Prince and the Messiah.
- B. Michael means "who is like God."
- C. Because of Christ's victory over death, the righteous dead will be resurrected at Christ's second coming.

III. The Book of Daniel Is Unsealed and Open (*Dan. 12:4, 9, 10*).

- A. Many of Daniel's prophecies were hidden for centuries.
- B. We are privileged, today, to see many of Daniel's prophecies fulfilled.
- C. The solemn judgment-hour message is being proclaimed by God's remnant church.

Summary: "We are living in the most solemn period of this world's history. The destiny of earth's teeming multitudes is about to be decided. . . . We need to humble ourselves before the Lord, with fasting and prayer, and to meditate much upon His word, especially upon the scenes of the judgment."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 601.

COMMENTARY

I. Michael—Archangel and Christ?

Seventh-day Adventist scholars have traditionally identified the archangel Michael in Daniel 10:13 as Christ Himself. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* states that while his identity is not obvious, "a comparison with other scriptures identifies Him as Christ."—Volume 4, p. 860.

This conflicts with the views of other denominations that view Michael as an angel and thus a created being. Some have used this as a basis for the claim that Seventh-day Adventists do not fully recognize the divinity of Christ. One website, in attempting to refute this view, asserts that "Calling Michael a created angel Christ, is

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?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

bearing false witness against Christ's deity as God."—"Is Michael Christ?" <http://www.truthorfables.com/Is_Michael_Christ.htm>.

If we as Adventists believed the assumption that Michael is an angel, and went on to identify him with Christ, we would be holding unorthodox views about Christ's nature. The Jehovah's Witnesses combine a belief that Michael is Christ with the belief that Christ is merely the greatest of created beings. (See "Jehovah's Witnesses—Michael," <http://www.gospelfense.org/quote_list.php3?keyword=Michael&group=Jehovah's%20Witnesses>; see also "Jehovah's Witnesses' Beliefs and Practices," <<http://www.religioustolerance.org/witness3.htm>>.)

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary clarifies this, however, by saying that they believe that " 'Michael' is one of the names of Christ . . . not as the chief angel but as ruler over the angels."—Volume 7, p. 706.

Seventh-day Adventists identify Christ with Michael for two primary reasons. First, such texts as Jude 9 place Michael in a mediatorial role similar to that attributed to Christ. Second, both Michael and Christ are said to be the individuals who will call the righteous dead from their graves (John 5:28, 1 Thess. 4:16; cited in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 860).

II. Useful Quotes About Michael the Archangel.

"Michael ranks as the greatest angel in all three of the major monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. . . . He is traditionally considered to be chief of the order of virtues; chief of archangels; prince of the presence; angel of repentance, righteousness, mercy, and sanctification; and ruler of the fourth heaven, conqueror of Satan. . . . In addition, he has been identified as the angel who stayed the hand of Abraham when the latter was on the point of sacrificing his son Isaac."—James R. Lewis and Evelyn Dorothy Oliver, *Angels A to Z* (New York: Gale Research, Inc., 1996), p. 275.

"And what is the value of knowing that Michael is not a created being but is, in fact, our divine Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?"

"For one thing, this knowledge helps us to keep the vision of Daniel 10–12 in proper perspective. The vision begins with a revelation . . . about Jesus at the second coming. The history . . . here presented begins and ends with the Lord of history. Once more we are reminded that God cares, that He is in control.

"Knowing that Michael is Jesus also helps us to remember that the principal focus of Daniel's prophecies is neither on Antiochus Epiphanes nor on the antichrist. The focus is always on Jesus Christ."—C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 1 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1981), p. 273.

"Who was Michael, who came to Gabriel's assistance? The term signifies, 'He who is like God,' and the Scriptures clearly show that

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 *The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 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?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

Christ is the one who bears this name. Jude (vs. 9) declares that Michael is the Archangel. . . . In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Paul states that when the Lord appears the second time to raise the dead, the voice of the archangel is heard. Whose voice is heard when the dead are raised?—The voice of the Son of God (John 5:28). Taken together, these scriptures prove that the dead are called from their graves by the voice of the Son of God, that the voice which is then heard is the voice of the Archangel, proving that the Archangel is the Son of God, and that the Archangel is called Michael, from which it follows that Michael is the Son of God.”—Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review and

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *Daniel 11:40–12:13.*

- ① Daniel 11 introduces new and puzzling symbols to the prophecies we have studied so far. Yet, some common elements remain—mostly in connection with rebellion, force, and violence—a reminder that no religious or political power can reflect Heaven’s ideals when it forces someone to choose God. The only “force” sanctioned by Heaven is the force of unconditional love. In which events have you experienced the power of God’s love? How have you used His love to win others for Christ?
- ② Heaven’s books are symbols that God knows who belongs to Him. Implied is that some people may *imagine* they belong to God, when in fact their true allegiance is elsewhere. Although we are saved by grace, we are judged by our works. In what ways does this make sense? *Read Matt. 25:31-46.*
- ③ Underlying the broad issue of judgment is the concept of ultimate truth and justice. We may have to endure lies and injustice between now and the coming of Christ, but God’s promise is that truth and justice will prevail. Does that assure you or frighten you? Why?
- ④ We dare not study these passages without asking ourselves whether the negative aspects of these prophecies might apply to us in any way. What temptations might apply to us, either as individuals or as a church?
- ⑤ Often the only way to truly interpret prophecy is by way of hindsight. Most of Daniel’s prophecies can be explained in terms of recognized historical events. *Read John 13:35, 1 Corinthians 13.* What is more important than being able to interpret prophecy? List five practical ways we can reflect God’s love to people.

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?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

Herald, 1944), p. 229.

“As we know from Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7, Michael is Christ. He appears in many places in the Bible, in both Old and New Testaments, with various titles that express his various functions in the plan of salvation. The name Michael is used particularly in situations where there is conflict over the people of God. Michael comes to fight for them and protect them and deliver them.”— William H. Shea, *Daniel 7–12* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1996), p. 215.

III. What the Bible Says About Michael

Witnessing

We have all experienced times of deep disappointment in our lives. In retrospect, we now see that some moments were so inconsequential that they have faded from our memory; we simply can't recall the pain or the details at all. Other memories still haunt us, especially those that happened during our tender growing-up years. While these issues seemed capable of splintering our hearts into many tiny shards of glass at the time, we have found that the farther we move away from the experience, the more perspective we are able to apply. We have also found that, in time, depending on each individual situation (and the amount of emotional entanglement involved), the painful memories of the hurt have stopped and we think less and less about them until, eventually, they no longer matter to us.

Not all disappointments, however, are resolved in this way, with what appears to be little, if any, lasting scars. Some are so devastating to us personally (physically, emotionally, or spiritually) that they seem to have damaged our very soul. Afterward, we feel we are never really whole again. So it was with some who experienced the Great Disappointment of 1844.

Looking back on their experience from a twenty-first-century perspective, we might wonder why they interpreted prophecy in quite the manner they did, but this is not the point. What is important is that some were so spiritually and emotionally damaged by the event that they were never able to contribute as they had to the work of the fledgling new group of believers. What a tragic loss to God's work. Nevertheless, the little band regrouped under God's leadership and continued their search for truth in God's Scriptures.

What a witness these struggling young believers then became to those around them! No obstacles were allowed to stand in their way; their hearts burned with fire for God's message. They remain our example; their commitment to witnessing is a marvelous standard. Every day we must remember their beginning—out of great disappointment came the great advent movement. What a blessing and privilege it is to be a part of it!

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?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

the Archangel.

“ ‘At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise’ ” (*Dan. 12:1, NIV*).

“But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ ” (*Jude 9, NIV*).

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back” (*Rev. 12:7, NIV*).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Daniel heard directly from heaven that he was guaranteed eternal life. Can you even begin to imagine how he felt? He knew, without a doubt, without reservation, that he would be with God throughout eternity. You, too, have been offered the same guarantee. You must decide whether to accept the offer of salvation, but the offer is clearly on the table. What will be your thoughts and actions (the results of the choices you have made using your free will) that will confirm or release your heavenly reservation? Review how you are living your life and the choices you are now making; make any necessary adjustments. Be absolutely certain that there can be no doubt as to your full acceptance of God’s offer of eternal life. Guarantee your reservation!

Thought Questions:

- 1 We, as Seventh-day Adventists, believe we are living in the time of the end, the latter days. Prophecy time lines confirm this, and world conditions seem to leave no doubt. What specific events have taken place that confirm, for you, that the end time is truly unfolding? Is there the possibility of mistake? Explain.
- 2 Why is it important for Seventh-day Adventists to believe in the revelation that Michael is Christ?

Application Question:

We have been given the opportunity for insight into latter-day events beyond those provided to Daniel. It is our very proximity to the closing hours of earth’s history that makes us better able to interpret the visionary message. What is the inherent danger to ourselves and to others if we refuse to accept our responsibility and share God’s end-time message?

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.”