

“Our Final Destination”

Allan Pole on Saturday evening March 19th, 2022



Theme: The Lord gives us the freedom to choose our final destination.

Text: Daniel 12:1-13

Here's a thought: An African proverb observes, "If you are filled with pride, then you have no room for wisdom."

During a momentous battle, a Japanese general decided to attack even though his army was greatly outnumbered. His destination was an enemy's base camp to the north of his position. He was confident they would win, but his men were filled with doubt. He set his direction, NORTH. On the way to battle, they stopped at a religious shrine. After praying with the men, the general took out a coin and said, "I shall now toss this coin. If it is heads, we shall win. If tails, we shall lose. Destiny will now reveal itself."

He threw the coin into the air and all watched intently as it landed. It was heads! The soldiers were so overjoyed and filled with confidence that they vigorously attacked the enemy and were victorious. After the battle, a lieutenant remarked to the general, "No one can change destiny." At that point, the general showed him the coin, and both sides were heads.

The general's direction determined his destination. His destination determined his direction. *Your* direction determines *your* destination! What is your direction, your life's direction right now? That direction determines your destination (<http://www.riversidechurch.ca/sermons/sermons-from-2018-to-2019/the-path/your-direction-determines-your-destination/>).

Where is your nose pointing? On what path are you?

Daniel 12:1-13 describes two very different paths:

1 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. 2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 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. 4 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. 5 Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. 6 One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?" 7 The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed." 8 I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" 9 He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. 10 Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. 11 From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. 12 Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days. 13 As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance." NIV

A final destination awaits:

The Wicked



An angel, probably the archangel Gabriel, continues from the end of chapter 11 to explain to Daniel what will happen in the end times when the Antichrist is doing all he can to destroy and annihilate the Jewish people. Many people call this "The Great Tribulation" when referring to the last 3½ years of the seven years of Tribulation that is to come. This view is the most popular in Evangelical churches, but the debate continues about the end times.

Jesus describes these end times in Matthew 24 before he returns in His glory. Daniel 12:1 prophesies, "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise." Daniel 10:21 refers to the archangel Michael as the prince of Israel. Revelation 12:7-9 describes how Michael fights against the dragon or Satan and his demons and hurls them from heaven to earth.

There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. The Bible often uses sleep to refer to death, which has led some to believe there is no consciousness after someone breathes their last breath. However, other references describe one being taken immediately into eternal separation from God.

Before we get to that, one child made this observation about the Bible. During His life, Jesus had many arguments with sinners like the Pharisees and the Republicans. Jesus also had twelve opossums. The worst one was Judas Asparagus. Judas was so evil that they named a terrible vegetable after him.

Did you know that Jesus talked about hell more than heaven? In fact, Jesus spoke about hell more than any other person in the Bible. In His parable about the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, Jesus tells of a rich man dying then suffering torment in hell, unable to cross a great chasm where Lazarus might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. Jesus also speaks in Matthew 25 of separating people into two groups, one entering into His presence, the other banished to “eternal fire.”

Gavin Ortlund writes (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/j-i-packer-on-why-annihilationism-is-wrong/>):

The traditional doctrine of hell is currently undergoing significant challenges from both within and without the church. Many question the reality of hell outright, while many others opt toward annihilationism - the belief that the damned won't suffer eternally but will instead have their consciousness extinguished at some point.

The Bible uses the adjective “eternal” or “everlasting” to describe this torment or contempt. The Hebrew word used here in Daniel 12:2, *olam*, can be translated as “everlasting, forever, eternal or perpetual.” We all have a beginning but no end. Someone asked the pastor and theologian R. C. Sproul (1939-2017) which doctrine he struggled with the most. He replied, “Hell.” I share this struggle. It should not be used flippantly or as a curse word. I would prefer that it didn't exist and that it was not forever. However, I believe God inspired the Bible, and I submit to His and His word's authority. Therefore, I believe that everlasting contempt awaits the wicked who reject God and His ways. The Bible refers to the wicked not as we would today – the worst of the worst, the serial killers and the rapists. This popular view would say a tiny minority of the population is headed to everlasting contempt. The Bible refers to the wicked as those who reject the way of God and choose their path over His.

Much to popular opinion, this is *not* the *tiny minority*, but according to Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14, it is the *vast majority*:

13 Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the

road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. NIV

How should this idea of eternal damnation for the wicked affect us as followers of Jesus? It should impress upon us the urgency of our message and priorities. People who refuse to believe in the Lord and submit to Him are all around us. There is no joy in this realization but sadness over what is coming for those who reject Him. We should do all we can to intercede, inspire and invite them to change their ways and turn to Him. We get a sense of urgency when we understand what is at stake.

Do you believe what we read here in Daniel chapter 12? Do you feel a more significant burden for those heading to shame and everlasting contempt?

A final destination awaits:

The Wicked

and

The Wise



Some will awake or arise to everlasting life in the resurrection to come. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. The wise not only understand and obey the way of salvation, but they also turn others to the way of righteousness. Wisdom is not a high I.Q., but the tendency to make good decisions. As Jesus said in Matthew 11:19, wisdom is proved right by her actions.

The Apostle Paul advises his young protégé, Timothy, in 2 Timothy 3:14-15:

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. NIV

While the Bible is clear that salvation is by grace through faith, there are eternal rewards for those who build on the foundation of Christ with good works – by doing what He directs us to do and saying what He leads us to say. Daniel 12:3 describes the opportunity to shine like the brightness of the heavens and like the stars forever and ever.

As Daniel stood beside the Tigris River in 12:5-6, he saw three persons, one on each side of the river and one above the river. The two on the river banks are different angels from the ones Daniel already saw. The one above the river, dressed in linen, might be the pre-incarnate Christ. In explaining how long it will take to fulfill these events, the man in linen explains it will be a time, times and half a time. In other words, it will be about 3½ years or 1,290 to 1,335 days.

What time is it when a hippopotamus sits on your hat? Time to get a new hat.

Chapters 7 and 11 of Daniel speak of a king who was to come that would oppress God's people for 3½ years by abolishing the daily sacrifice and bringing about the abomination that causes desolation. Antiochus Epiphanes, the Greek ruler of Syria from 175 to 163 B.C., was known as one of the cruellest tyrants. Antiochus gave himself the name "Epiphanes," which means "illustrious, manifestation," for he claimed to be a revelation (epiphany) of the gods.

Antiochus Epiphanes committed his worst offence against the Jewish people when he replaced the temple sacrifices. Attempting to loot the temple a second time, Antiochus tried to buy off Jewish officials and stop the daily sacrifices. With the abomination that causes desolation, he sacrificed a pig to the Greek god Zeus. Antiochus did whatever he wanted – for a while. He chose the Sabbath as a day to worship *him*. He went far beyond his predecessors in arrogance. He did not rely on the pagan gods but his own financial and military might. You could say that Antiochus Epiphanes foreshadows one who is to come that will show more arrogance – the Antichrist. Revelation chapter 13 describes the beast who will blaspheme or curse God and exercise his authority for 42 months or 3½ years.

It's possible that the 3½ years of severe oppression marked by abolishing the daily sacrifice and abomination that causes desolation was fulfilled in the evil Antiochus Epiphanes or will be fulfilled in the evil Antichrist just before Christ returns. The second interpretation hinges upon the resumption of animal sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem, which came to an abrupt end in 70 A.D. when the Roman army destroyed the temple and the city.

We can lose the significance of Daniel chapter 12 by speculating on the timing of the fulfillment of these previews of the future. The main point to remember is that the Lord gives us the freedom to choose our final destination. While the wicked will rise to shame and everlasting contempt, the wise will rise to everlasting life. In the same way that damnation is eternal, so salvation is eternal. Eternal life speaks not just of quantity but quality. God intends for life *in* Him and *with* Him to begin when we accept His Son, Jesus Christ, as our Lord and Saviour. This decision launches our journey with Him through life here on earth *and* life in the hereafter.

An African proverb observes, “If you are filled with pride, then you have no room for wisdom.” The road to wisdom is found by those who are humble.

A person might feel they have gone too far, and there is no hope to turn off the wicked road to head down the wise road. Listen to what Jesus said just before He died on the cross in Luke 23:39-43:

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” 40 But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” 42 Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” 43 Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” NIV

The words “destiny” and “destination” share the same root, but they can mean entirely different things. Some would say that destiny is fate that we cannot control. Others would say that we choose our destination. Some would say that God predestines our future, so we don’t decide where we eventually arrive. Others would say it’s all about our choices. I maintain God’s sovereignty and our free will work together in mysterious ways that we will not comprehend this side of eternity. He calls us and draws us, but we can choose to accept or reject Him and His ways.

Someone points out (<http://www.riversidechurch.ca/sermons/sermons-from-2018-to-2019/the-path/your-direction-determines-your-destination/>):

Whatever road, whatever highway, whatever path I’m on will determine where I end up. I can want to end up somewhere else. I can pack my beach towel, sunscreen, and Spanish dictionary with every hope that I can spend a week in Mexico, but if I head north instead of south, I’ll end up in the Arctic, not Mexico.

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