Wait, Arrive, and Be Blessed

Daniel 12

 One of our biggest struggles as people is with waiting. Typically, we don’t want to wait for anything. Just think for a moment: when the light turns green but the car in front of you doesn’t see it and continues to sit there without moving. Sitting in the waiting room of the doctor’s office. Stuck in traffic on the interstate. Waiting for your spouse to continue getting ready. Standing in line at the grocery store. Consider this real-life testimony of an individual in that position. I was at the grocery store with a sandwich and a pint of milk in my hands, barely on time to pick up my daughter from school, and I had picked the wrong line. The clerk in my line had abandoned it to talk with her manager, and I watched as a man got in the other line, moved steadily forward, checked out, and left with his groceries, while I stood still. I was growing impatient. I considered switching lines, but the other line had grown longer than when I had arrived. So, I left. I walked to the front of my line, plopped down my sandwich and milk and walked out of the store. I got in my car and drove to another grocery store a mile down the road and bought lunch there.

 Taking stock of our lives in this way makes it pretty evident that impatience is a clear symptom of our sin nature. When we want something, we want it now. Immediate gratification so appropriately defines what drives us in life. But in addition, the word of God tells us this as well. In fact, I think it is clear from Scripture that one of the most God-glorifying things you can do is wait – on Him. Consider these words of Scripture.

 Psalm 123:2. Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us. Psalm 27:14. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord! Psalm 25:5. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. Isaiah 8:17. I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. Isaiah 40:31. But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. Hosea 12:6. So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.

 Today, we arrive at the end of Daniel. Given all the difficult things we’ve seen, all the images of difficult things that have happened, are happening, and will happen, we end the book of Daniel with a clear word from God – Wait. Be patient. Trust me with all of this. All you have to do is wait on me and you will be blessed. In a way that should no longer surprise us, the truth that God’s ways are not our ways comes out yet again. What is paradox to us is not to Him. Again, reinforced as the theme of Daniel is this – when trouble comes, nothing is more glorifying to God than to simply trust in Him and WAIT for deliverance. And in a way that is partially terrifying and partially a sweet taste of honey on our lips, Daniel 12 makes it clear that the greater the trouble, the greater the glory given to God when we wait. That seemingly nothing glorifies God more than His children experiencing great trouble, “a time of trouble such as never has been,” and patiently waiting for His deliverance. Wait. Arrive. And Be Blessed.

“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. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. 2And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3And 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. 4But 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.”

5Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. 6And 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?” 7And 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. 8I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?” 9He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. 10Many 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. 11And 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. 12Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. 13But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.”

 From this text, I want to look at 3 things that will help us wait. 3 things, that as John Piper often says, you can keep in your boat as ballast, that when the storms coming and waves slam against your boat, you can stay steady and wait. First, WORDS matter. The Bible is a book full of words. We are to take them for what they mean. If we do so, we can know these words of Daniel are yet future. Second, in God’s plan, trouble DELIVERS the wise and PUNISHES the foolish. Therefore, trouble, when viewed from an eternal perspective, is good. What is paradoxical to us is not to God. Third, there is a set TIMETABLE of these things. They will not last forever. And that helps us to wait.

 So first – words matter. How can we know what God is revealing in Daniel is still in the future? That it is coming and something we must wait for and through? We simply read the words. You see, our society has, for some time now, tried to diminish the objective nature of words. Words do not have a set meaning. Definitions are fluid depending on emotion and feeling. This stems from the concept of relativism which simply means there are no universal truths, only points of view. Words themselves don’t have universal meaning, rather they are intended to convey a certain perspective. The most obvious example in contemporary society is the definition of the words “male” and “female.” Many declare that those are not objective definitions, but rather expressions of feeling and personal preference. Someone is a man because they feel like a man in their judgement.

 For some reason, this phenomenon has existed with the Bible for even longer. Because the Bible is seen as a “spiritual book,” people generally feel more free to interpret the words of the Bible based upon emotion and feeling. For example, Romans 3:10-11. None is righteous, no, not one; 11no one understands; no one seeks for God. This is a very straightforward statement when taken objectively – literally. And yes, context matters. But in the context of Romans, Paul is simply making the point that Jews and Gentiles are not different in this regard – that EVERYONE is under sin.

But, BECAUSE it is talking about everyone, including ourselves, emotion quickly becomes involved and we start to shift the meaning of some of those words. Our experience tells us that we DO understand and we seek God, so we begin to think that it must mean something else. But there is a problem. If you knew a friend was hosting a party the night before, and you asked him how it went, and he said “no one came to the party,” would you follow that up with the question, “so who came?” Would you assume in saying “no one” that he really meant “someone”?

Again, given the context, there may be a time when someone says, “Man I was so frustrated, I felt like no one came.” That would clearly be different. The context, both before and after, make it clear that it was a feeling – many less people came than they expected to come. The words were clearly used in emphasis, with exaggeration, to make a point of the emotion.

But that is clearly not what is happening in Romans 3. So, as those desiring to know God as He is, we have no choice but to take it on the very meaning of the words. The words matter. They prevent us from creating an inaccurate picture of God.

 Or the converse example in the Bible. 2 Peter 3:9. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. We wouldn’t follow up that statement with, “But God must desire that some perish, that some should not reach repentance, because that’s what happens.” No, that’s not true. The grammar and the words matter. God wishes that no one perish!!

 Again, context does matter. Peter is highlighting God’s patience, which will not run out until the end. His patience is demonstration of his desire that none perish. He is patiently giving all an opportunity to believe. But the point is – WORDS MATTER. We must take them on their definition – their objective definition. If every word you use has a definition dependent upon what you are intending to convey, we can’t have a conversation. And because God has chosen to reveal Himself to us IN WORDS, this issue becomes infinitely important.

 Now you are probably asking, what does this have to do with Daniel. Great question. I have an answer to that prepared right here. We have given much attention throughout Daniel to the question of which parts of the book are historical and which are yet future, specifically in chapters 11 and 12. My contention is the verses Daniel 11:1-20 are historical and Daniel 11:21 – the end of Daniel 12 are yet future. And a major reason for that is that words matter – pronouns matter – grammar matters. Look at the picture on the screen showing Daniel 11:1-20 and the pronouns that appear. The different colors indicate different antecedents – therefore each of the different colors represent a different person – a different ruler – strictly according to the grammar. Now look at Daniel 11:21 – the end of Daniel. Drastically different. When you follow the grammar, the literal meaning of the words, you find that starting in Daniel 11:21, the story follows a single person throughout. The words are telling us that from Daniel 11:21 on, we are dealing with one person – and thus one period of time.

 THAT is important because of the first words of Daniel 12:1. “At that time.” What time? The time of the antichrist that we have looked at in Daniel 11, the time of the resurrection of the dead, the time of the salvation of the Jewish people, the time of deliverance of the people of God and judgement of those who reject Him. All of those are the same time – because that’s what the grammar says. We may not like it. It may toy with our emotions. But we CANNOT allow our emotions to change the meaning of the words of the Bible. If we do, we can no longer know God as He is. And I contend there is nothing more important in all of the universe. Words matter. We must guard their meaning.

 As we look forward to this end of the age, there is another reason words matter. Because words are the only thing we will have to hold onto when deep trouble comes. As I referenced last week during the Fighter Verse time, when we face difficulty in this life, there is not a pill we can take that makes it better all by itself. There are times when pills can help, please don’t misunderstand. I am not speaking against that method of coping with difficulty at certain points of time. The point is, a pill cannot be our main source of coping. It can supplement, but it cannot be the center of our hope. Nor can psychological strategies or help groups or accountability partners. All of those things must be grounded upon the very words of God.

 John 1:1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Jesus Himself is the Word. The Word made flesh. The revelation of God in physical form for us to see. The Creator God has chosen to reveal Himself to us in words. And that is deeply important. It is why we have to be very careful with things like The Chosen. There are many things that are conveyed by that show that can influence us – sights, sounds, emotions, innuendos – and they can be contrary to the WORDS of God. When we begin to inform our view of God with anything outside of the clear and simple message of Scripture, in written and spoken word, we are in danger of being led astray – of not glorifying Him – of being counted with the foolish that do not understand.

 As the people of God, we have to commit to being comforted during difficult time PRIMARILY by the very words of God. We memorize and meditate upon the Fighter Verses. And as we attempt to do so, we find that it is a fight first and foremost to rely upon words. Our difficulty in memorizing verses stems directly from the lack of weight we put into God’s Words. We comfort ourselves with conveniences and food and toys. We are used to that. So much so that we question the power of mere words. How can words help me? Words? Show me actions. Show me something meaningful.

 All the while, the point is that God’s words are as good as actions. Take this coming week’s fighter verse for example. Matthew 5:3-6. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. The Word of God is the same as an action. If you are poor in spirit – if you humble yourself and don’t see the need to exalt yourself – if you fight against the spirit of the antichrist and REFUSE to exalt yourself, if you remain poor in Spirit, you WILL receive the kingdom of heaven. And if you are at a point in your life where those around you who are exalting themselves seem to be getting ahead, seem to be doing better than you, seem to be prospering in their own way, meditating on these words brings deep help to you because the words matter. Stay poor in spirit Joel, that leads to the kingdom of heaven.

 And then your mind shifts to the words of the Bible about the kingdom of heaven. Like Matthew 13:45–46. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. You know that those words are as reality itself. That the kingdom of heaven is so great, so full of joy, that anyone, upon seeing it and experiencing it would sell everything they had in order to have it. Everything. And as you fight to remain poor in spirit as those around you who are exalting themselves and prospering, you find great strength in words. Because the words matter. They define reality. The truths they convey are more real than the pew, or the chair, you are sitting on this morning. And the Lord said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. Those words mattered in the sense that they brought light out of darkness. They made it come to be. And as you continue to fight, continue to hold onto those words, you find that they have the power to change your reality also. They bring joy in being poor in spirit. Because the words of God matter.

 Now go back to the first three words of our text today. “At that time.” This is not a point in history past. It can’t be. The words won’t allow it to be. It is a future time. A time of great trouble. Unlike any trouble the world has ever known. And you are blessed if you wait for that time and if you wait through that time.

 But brothers and sisters, one thing is certain. As that time draws near, we will not be able to wait without meditating on, and fighting with, and holding onto the words of God as we lay on the ground in the fetal position at times. We won’t be able to wait. The words of God matter. They have power. And we must rely on them, much more than many of us have relied on them up to this point. And when you rely on His words, you bring glory to Him. And you are given the kingdom of heaven. You will be comforted. You will inherit the earth. You will be satisfied. Because the words of God say so, and they matter.

 Conclusion: 1) Do not waiver from the plain meaning of the word of God. 2) Grab hold of those words, meditate on and memorize them as if your life depended on it. Because it does.