

Is Your Name Written in the Book?

Daniel 12:1-3 (NIV)

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.

When you read a book, do you ever flip to the last page or read the last chapter before you actually get to the end? Maybe you do this because the suspense is agonizing and you really just want to know the end to be relieved. Maybe you do this because you have put time into reading this book, but you're not sure if you want to continue; so you check the end to see if it will be a worthwhile read, that your time invested in this book will pay off. Today, we get a peek at the end, so to speak, from the book of Daniel.

The book of Daniel was written during the 6th century B.C. Daniel, the author, was one of the first Jews exiled by the Babylonians. He did not witness the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple personally, but he heard the reports and knew what had happened. He also knew from the prophet Jeremiah - a contemporary of his - that in 70 years God would bring a remnant of the Jewish people back and restore Jerusalem and the temple. Happy times were ahead, chapters of restoration and joy, but later Daniel received another vision of a man who explained what would happen to his people beyond the chapters of restoration. Our verses today are part of that vision.

The vision the man gave to Daniel was a vision of the end of the world. There would be a great distress, greater than the distress he and his people went through with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, greater than any distress he had ever known. The great prince or general of the angels, the archangel Michael, would come. He would protect God's people, Daniel's people, and he and all God's angels would gather the elect - the believers chosen before they ever came to believe - from the ends of the earth and the end of the heavens, as Jesus said. All the dead would rise. "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." (verse 2)

This is the last page of the story of earth as we know it. We call it the Last Day or Judgment Day. That prophesied time of distress – we could argue that that time is now. There is always a war going on and rumors circulating of another. Christians are persecuted, hated, suppressed, killed – even if this is not your personal experience. The love of many has grown cold. Jesus told us all of this would happen leading up to the end, the Last Day. Can it get worse? Oh yes. Sadly, it can. The wars, persecutions, the hate – all of these can intensify. It makes you wonder, "Can we make it through such a story?"

Where does your story fit with all of this? There is a book with you written in it. King David wrote in Psalm 139, "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." (Psalm 139:16) That's not just for David, but for all people. What's in that book? How does it end? Can I edit it?

We live in a day and age where so much of what we say or write is recorded, archived, and preserved. One slip-up, one crude joke, one lie, one bad deed from any time in our past is enough to destroy our present and our future. Hollywood is a microcosm of this reality. James Gunn, who directed both Guardians of the Galaxy movies was fired this year (2018) from directing any more Marvel movies because of distasteful and offensive jokes that he had tweeted back in 2008 – 10 years ago! Marvel & Disney were done with him now because of things done at another point in his life. Apologies didn't matter. Character testimonials didn't matter. Time didn't matter. He was done. Kevin Spacey's acting career came to a screeching halt and was destroyed when someone came forward with allegations of sexual misconduct that happened 30 years ago. He lost his Netflix show and was even digitally removed from a movie and was replaced by another actor before it hit theaters.

This are prominent people in entertainment, but what about little ol' you. Think of the book where God has everything written that you have ever done, said, or thought. Are there tweets, Facebook posts, e-mails, or letters you wish that every record would be destroyed? Transcripts of phone conversations and internet search histories you wish to have expunged? Actions that you wish you could erase from memories, from ever having transpired? If only we could edit the book of our life because the Lord says, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book." (Exodus 32:33) He says that anyone who does not have their name in his book will

be thrown into a lake of fire, into hell, for all eternity. These are the ones who on the Last Day at the resurrection of the dead will wake “to shame and everlasting contempt.” (verse 2c) We all know enough of our story to know that this should be us.

Try as we might, we do not get to edit our book of life. God is the author. He should rightly blot our name out, tear it out of his book. That should be the end of our story. However, God wrote us a new story with a new ending. He writes our names in because our Great High Priest, Jesus, gave his own life to take away our sins. As we heard in our second Bible reading, “By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” (Hebrews 10:14) God has dressed us in the brightness of heaven as he has made us perfect forever by the blood of the Lamb, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

It is with the blood of Christ that God writes a new story for our lives with a new ending, that he writes our name in his book. The book from the vision given to Daniel contained the names of those who will be delivered when the Last Day, the end of the world, comes. This is God’s book of life. God writes our names in, and then he writes our story to make sure that we are delivered on the Last Day, that after we have slept in the dust of the earth, we will awake to everlasting life at the resurrection of the dead to be with God forever.

We know the ending of our story. Because of Jesus’ blood, God will never blot our names from his book. As we are clothed with his righteousness, having been made perfect by his sacrifice once for all, God will read off our name on the Last Day when all the dead are raised back to life. The last page of our story is one of victory and a happily ever after because our names have been written by God in his book of life.

Today we have read the last chapter, the final pages, of our book of life. We don’t know the time or place of the end of our days on earth, but we do know how it ends. God has written our name in his book with the blood of the Lamb because Jesus by his one sacrifice has made us perfect forever. We are God’s people. Until we hear the last page of our lives read to us, we know that God sends his angels, angels like Michael, if not Michael himself, to guard and protect us, no matter how great the distress in this world gets. We will be delivered. We will rise on the Last Day with the multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth, awakened for everlasting life and to shine like the brightness of the heavens, like the stars forever and ever.

We know the last page of our story in God’s book, but there are others who don’t. We can share that ending of their story with them. We can impart on them this knowledge so that they too will be wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. We can lead them to the righteousness that God has won for us through Christ’s sacrifice. When the time comes and you find yourself at another funeral, you can comfort your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ with the knowledge that they have their name written in God’s book of life, written in by the blood of the Lamb. That person now shines like the brightness of the heavens clothed with Christ’s perfection. You can share this ending with those who do not share your faith. You can tell them that God has already written your story, that your name is written in his book of life because of what Christ, the hero of our story, did. You can tell them of your certainty of your end, your last chapter, because the book was written by God, not you.

Today, God has shared with us the end of our story. Our names are written in his book. On the Last Day, he will raise our bodies so that we shine like the brightness of the stars forever and ever. God will deliver us in the end because he has written our story, saving us by the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ by which he has made us perfect forever. Amen.