

In the End, the Church

Daniel 12:1-3, Mark 13:1-6, Hebrews 10:11-25

Three passages, all dealing with the 'last days' – or do they?

In **Daniel 12**, a coming time of distress, rescue for those with their names in the book, judgment and glory and (v.4) increased knowledge and mobility. Are we there yet?

In **Mark 13**, the destruction of the Jewish temple, false Christs and (reading on) a long description of signs of the end of times. What do we recognise here? What can we tick off the list?

But **Hebrews 10**? What does that have to do with the end times? This is all about what God has done for us in the Lord Jesus, how he is the great priest over the house of God, our access to the Father through him and the results in our own lives, individually and together.

There are some hints, though! **V. 16** says “*after that time*” and **v.25** says “*as you see the Day approaching*”.

Verses 16 & 17 are quoted from **Jeremiah 31:31-34**, a passage already quoted in **Hebrews 8:8-12**, and one of the clearest statements of the difference between the old and new covenants:

The Law of God in our minds and hearts – not in a rule book.

Real forgiveness, and failure forgotten – not held against us.

Each one knowing God in reality – not just a theory being taught.

And then (v.19) there is a ‘**therefore**’ and, as the old preacher said, “when you see a therefore or a wherefore, look and see what it’s there for.”

What does it mean? ‘As a result of all that we have been talking about up until now, let us do these things . . .’

He does **not** say, “we **should** do these things”, or “it would be **nice in theory** if we did these things”, or even “let’s **make a plan** to do these things at a suitable time in the future.” He just says, “**Let us . . .**”

So, let us do . . . **what** ?

1) Make sure that we are in a **real** right relationship with our Father, able to stand confidently in his presence on the basis of the blood of Jesus. Clean conscience, sincerity, confidence and assured faith (**verses 19-22**). No room for play-acting and pretence **or** self- condemnation. It is important to get this sorted out before moving on.

2) *“Hold unswervingly to the hope we profess”*. That sounds like a tall order, especially the ‘unswervingly’ bit! The word translated here as ‘profess’ (‘confess’ in many translations) means ‘say the same thing as’. So what’s the process? God speaks to us and shows us something – perhaps a Bible truth we have supposedly ‘known’ for years – and we ‘see’ it and begin to believe it, which leads to us speaking it out, maybe just sharing it with some other believers. In other words, we begin to ‘say the same thing’ that the Lord has spoken to us. Speaking out has great value; somehow it confirms things within us (See **Romans 10:8-10**). Better still, *“he who promised is faithful”* – and will faithfully keep affirming what he has shown us.

3) *“Consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds”*. That word ‘consider’ means more than just a casual thought about it. The Greek word implies a full deployment of our minds to find ways to help each other forwards. And then he lists ways to get started:-

a) *“Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing . . .”* This meeting together is a getting together of those who are learning to do 1) and 2) above, and the Greek word means ‘a complete collection’. Complete to include **all** believers, and complete to mean a **real** getting together. Just being in the same place with others does not automatically achieve this!

b) *“. . . but encouraging one another . . .”* This word ‘encouraging’ means ‘called alongside to help’ and has the same root as the word translated ‘Comforter’ as a description of the Holy Spirit.

So here is a brief description of corporate life in the Church! It is both group sharing and personal sharing, all geared towards *“love and good deeds”*. In other words, a commitment to help each other grow,

“. . . and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

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Does all this have anything to do with the ‘end of times’ ? Very much so! God’s purpose is for the Church (us!) to be transformed in preparation for the return of the Lord Jesus and to be increasingly visible as his Body, demonstrating the reality of the Kingdom of God in our lives, individually and together. Our personal transformation is a vital part of God’s end time plan.

“For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.” (Romans 8:19)

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