

Proper 28

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November 16, 2003

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit, that always keeping in mind the end of all things and the day of judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of life here and may live with you forever in the world to come, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Or

Almighty and ever-living God, before the earth was formed and even after it ceases to be, you are God. Break into our short span of life and let us see the signs of your final will and purpose, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Daniel 12:1-3

{1} "At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. {2} Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. {3} Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Chapters 10-12 "...belong together as a single whole and tell of a single revelation supposedly made to Daniel in the third year of Cyrus by a heavenly being who sketches for him in considerable detail the history of the Selucid period up to and including the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes...the end of Antiochus Epiphanes and of what is to come thereafter."

[1] "The first four verses of chapter 12 are the completion of the long section which began with chapter 10. They give in remarkably brief compass and restrained language the writer's expectation of what the divinely appointed end would be like." [2]

1. Michael: The name means "Who is like God?" He is the patron angel of Israel (Daniel 10:23; 12:1), and intercessor for Israel (Tob. 12:15) and the world (Isaiah 9:23 (Latin)). In the New Testament Michael fights two battles, in Jude 9, with the devil for Moses' body, and in Revelation 12:7 with the dragon. He may also be the archangel who will announce the parousia in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

*a time of anguish...*at that time your people shall be delivered: "that time" will be the time of the eschaton when those who have opposed God will be punished and those who have been loyal to God will be delivered.

Everyone who is found written in the book: See Psalm 139:16: "In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed." The emphasis in the Psalm is the omniscience of God, who knows ahead of time what our lives will be. Here, what is written in the book is a record of the life lived by the exiles who will be delivered. See also Philippians 4:3; Revelation 13:8; 17:8; 20:15. In Exodus 32:32 Moses asks to be blotted out of the book which God has written.

2. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth: The dead will rise, some to everlasting life and some to shame and contempt.

3. Those who are wise: The wise are those who are wise in the ways of the Lord.

those who lead many to righteousness: These are teachers who have taught the ways of the Lord by word and example.

shall shine like the brightness of the sky...like the stars forever: They will be rewarded for their faithfulness by eternal recognition.

Psalm 16

{1} Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge. {2} I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." {3} As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight. {4} Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips. {5} The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. {6} The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage. {7} I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. {8} I keep the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. {9} Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure. {10} For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit. {11} You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

3. *the holy ones in the land:* "The Levitical priests are the 'saints,' because Yahweh is in their midst (Num. 16:3). In this case we would have to translate 'the saints on earth,' for we would have to think of the terrestrial counterpart of the heavenly beings who surround and serve Yahweh." [3]

4. *their drink offerings of blood:* In the sacrificial worship of Israel there were no drink offerings of blood, so they are the offerings of a foreign cultus that the priest-psalmist has turned away from the Temple. In Israel blood was the carrier of life, and life belonged to Yahweh, so human beings were forbidden to drink blood (Genesis 9:4).

take their names upon my lips: The psalmist will not even say the names of the other gods.

5. *my chosen portion...my lot...boundary lines...heritage:* These words are appropriate to the distribution of land. "In Israel the land was assigned to the tribes in a sacral act of distribution by lot.... Only Levi was exempt from this process of land distribution." Levi had no land, instead Yahweh was her portion, lot, and heritage (Deuteronomy 10:9; Joshua 13:14; Numbers 18:20).

9. *my heart is glad...my soul rejoices...my body also rests secure:* This reflects the three components of the Israelite understanding of human nature, body, soul, spirit, and simply means the whole person. The same psychology is present in the admonition to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

10. *Sheol...the Pit:* The underworld, the grave. Israel's horror of death and its associations was absolute. One became "unclean," that is, ritually disabled, by any association with death, even having one's shadow fall on a place where a body was buried even though no one knew it was there. The priest-psalmist is particularly thankful that Yahweh has preserved him/her from ritual uncleanness.

11. *the path of life...your presence...your right hand:* "The closing verse speaks of the bliss of the nearness to God, which in the midst of death opens up a way of life, on which one may walk with joy." [4]

Hebrews 10:11-14 [15-18] 19-25

{11} And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. {12} But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," {13} and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." {14} For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. {15} And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying, {16} "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds," {17} he also adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." {18} Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.] {19} Therefore,

my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, {20} by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), {21} and since we have a great priest over the house of God, {22} let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. {23} Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. {24} And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, {25} not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

11. every priest...Christ: The contrast between the historical priesthood and Christ's unique priestly service continues.

12-13. "he sat down at the right hand of God".... "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet: See Psalm 110:1 for the source of the imagery. In the New Testament the phrase is used to express the exaltation of Christ. Psalm 110 is an acrostic on the name Simon Maccabaeus, and may have been written for him.

[*16-17:* Jeremiah 31:31 and 34.

18. no longer any offering for sin: The sacrificial system has been abrogated.]

19-21: We have a new and living way opened for us into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus.

22-24: Three exhortations built on the three virtues of faith, hope and love.

25: Love is further defined as to "meet together," that is, to live and work as a large extended family.

the Day: The eschatological day of the Lord, the day of judgment and redemption.

Mark 13:1-8

{1} As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" {2} Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down." {3} When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, {4} "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" {5} Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. {6} Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. {7} When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. {8} For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

Mark 13:1-37 is Mark's "little apocalypse."

1. what large stones and what large buildings: These are the kinds of statements one would expect from a country bumpkin in the city for the first time.

2. Not one stone will be left here upon another: Jesus' reply predicts the destruction of the Temple in the lifetime of the present generation (13:30). Micah (3:12) and Jeremiah (26:6, 18) also predicted the destruction of the Temple.

4. when will this be and what will be the sign: The desire to know when disaster will strike seems to be universal, whether it concerns the stock market or the eschaton. It is important to remember that what is at issue here is the destruction of the Temple.

5-8: Jesus' response is to advise caution in looking for signs. Claims to speak for Jesus, reports and rumors, even natural disasters will come and go, but they should not be viewed as signs of the end. Later in this chapter Jesus warns against false Messiahs and false prophets who will produce false omens and signs to lead people astray (13:21-23). Jesus says that God alone knows the timetable on which the creation is running (13:32, about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father). The focus of the faithful should be to be faithful at all times, not just when the end is immanent.

Reflection

The lessons for this Sunday focus on the coming time of judgment and redemption. The portion of the wise and holy is the Lord who will show them the path of life. Christ has opened a new way for us into the presence of God through the offering of his own blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Now we may live in faith, hope, and love.

The interest in the Gospel in determining when the Temple will be destroyed is transformed in our communities into an interest with the time of the end and its signs. The wise disciple will not be misled by the claims of false Christs, but will wait with patience and confidence for God to finish his work. The wise disciple knows that in Christ all that is necessary has been accomplished and that the faithful are written in the book, that they are safe before God's throne. The wise disciple takes refuge with God, for in his presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forever. What is important is not *the time*, but that at *that time* the wise and faithful disciple will be delivered and will awake to everlasting life.

Hymns [5]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

323 --E--O Lord of Light,	727s --II--The King of
355 --D--Through the Night	230 --G--Lord, Keep Us
692v --I--For All the Faithful	421 --G--Lord Christ, When
730v --P--My Soul Proclaims	713v --G--Lord, Let My Heart
302 --II--Jesus, Your Blood	309, 460, 318, 351

Prayers of the People [6]

Almighty God; we near the end of another year in the church calendar. We celebrate with Elkanah and Hannah God's answer to their prayer, the gift of pregnancy. We celebrate with the writer of Hebrews, the assurance that we can have confidence in Christ and what he has done for us. And we celebrate with all the followers of Jesus that we need fear nothing when we put our trust in him alone. God of our future **hear our prayer**.

Bless us on our life journeys that young and old alike may live with confidence in Christ Jesus our Lord, knowing that baptised into Christ's death we shall live with him in newness of life. Quell our anxieties, whatever the fearful signs. Calm our fears. Give us focus. Help us live fully in the faith handed down to our ancestors. God of our future **hear our prayer**.

Or [7]

Presider or deacon

As we wait for the sign of the end, let us offer prayers to God through Jesus who offered his blood.

Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

For all peoples and their leaders, and for justice and righteousness in the world.

For good weather, abundant fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times.

For the sick and the suffering, travelers and refugees, prisoners and their families, and the dying and dead.

For our city and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

Lifting our voices with all creation, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God

through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

God of all times and places, hear the prayers we offer this day, send your angel to deliver your people, and awaken those who sleep in the dust, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

[1] Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965, p. 149.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

[3] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988, p. 236.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

[5] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclb9900.txt>

[6] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/pray_b2.txt

[7] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>