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4-A: Deliverance! (12:1-4)

Up to this point, Gabriel's discussion has focused on the wars and intrigues swirling around Israel and in the Middle East; this included persecution of God's people, and culminated in the apparent victory of the *"king of the north"*, the Antichrist, establishing himself in Israel.

Now in the next chapter 12 comes a dramatic scene change: a supernatural intervention into the affairs of humankind. At long last, the words that Daniel so wanted to hear are spoken: *"at that time your people shall be delivered."* But this deliverance comes only after *"a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation."* (12:1)

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12:1 "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book."

***"Michael… the great prince"* was mentioned earlier (in 10:13,21) – the powerful archangel (*"one of the chief princes"*) who *"stands watch over the sons of your people"*, who also aided Gabriel against the demon *"prince of Persia"* and the soon-coming *"prince of Greece"*. Michael appears to be the "army chief", the one who leads the armies of the Lord as they wage war in the celestial realm against the forces of evil who seek to destroy the people of God.**

"At that time Michael shall stand up". **What is going on here, we might ask? The Book of Revelation explains,**

> ***And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.*** **(Revelation 12:7)**

The great struggle going on in the Celestial Realm *"at that time"* will have its repercussions in the earthly realm, which is why Gabriel says, *"There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was."* And the Book of Revelation explains further:

> ***The great dragon… was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him… Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman*** **[followers of the Light of Christ]*… And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the remnant of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*** **(Revelation 12:9,13,17)**

And besides the persecution aspect for God's people, the Book of Revelation reveals that this *"time of trouble"* will also feature plenty of trouble for the world at large: numerous plagues in chapters 8-9 and a horrific war, detailed in chapters 17-18. But that is a big subject beyond the scope of the present study.

So it was no exaggeration when Gabriel told Daniel here that *"there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time."* The Book of Revelation explains it in these words: *"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."* (12:12)

Christ used similar language to describe this *"time of trouble"* that would precede His Return, calling it the *"great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."* (Matthew 24:21, Mark 13:19; also mentioned in Revelation 7:14)

That such a *"time of trouble"* will come is easy enough to predict, even

without the benefit of the above prophetic passages in the Sacred Book. Looking at the present chaotic state of our world – at our capacity to destroy ourselves through nuclear weapons; pollution of the environment; the all-pervading greed that causes so much war, misery, and poverty – it is not hard to foresee that, sooner or later, the forces of Darkness will have their day as they bring about Earth's final *"time of trouble"*. (On this subject, much has been written. Here is one example: "Humanity keeps discovering brilliant new ways to destroy itself" by Leo Mirani)

***"Sons of Your people."* Most likely, Daniel understood this to mean the Jewish people. But Daniel was unaware of the great changes – the inclusion of the Gentiles – that were to follow in later centuries after the coming of Christ. Jesus taught that the true *"children of Abraham"* were those who did *"the works of Abraham".* (John 8:39) He warned His fellow Jews that the *"sons of the kingdom"* (pointing to those who were not doing the works of Abraham) *will be cast out into outer darkness"* while others (Gentiles) would *"come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 8:11-12) He even went so far as to say to His Jewish enemies, *"How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"* (Matthew 23:33 – KJV)**

So how do we know who are the people of God in this day and age, we might ask? Perhaps it is summed up best in the words of John the apostle, who stated that whoever *"does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."* Faith and works go hand in hand. One cannot come to the Light without any effort (without *"deeds… done in God"*), nor can one *"who does the truth"* do so unless they are in the process of coming to the Light of God. (John 3:20-21)

To clarify then what is meant by *"your people"*, the angel throws in the qualification that they are *"everyone who is found written in the book."* This throws the gate wide open – to all nations (not just the Jewish people); yet at the same time it narrows it down to those who are worthy, that is, those who came to the Light because they were doing *"truth"* and their *"deeds"* were *"done in God"*.

And we can be sure that, if this is God's *Book*, it will be without bias, showing no favoritism, listing only those who have followed God – to love

Him and their neighbor as themselves. Denominational credentials, religious observances, genealogical descent from Abraham, and any other forms of outward show don't get to the heart of the matter.

Coming to Christ is a spiritual journey, an experience unique to each individual. Jesus compared the process of being *"born of the Spirit"* to the wind which *"blows where it wishes"*. (John 3:8) So there is no standard formula. Perhaps the best we can say is that if a person is coming *"to the light"*, then, by whatever means they make that journey, they will, sooner or later, accept Christ who is the Light. And that is how they come to be *"written in the book."*

(Well, this is a broad subject and is covered more thoroughly in other posts, "Who Are God's People?" and "The Book of Life".)

***"At that time your people shall be delivered."* Here at last are the words Daniel was waiting for. Way back then during the captivity of the Jewish people in Babylon and now Persia, this had been Daniel's great concern: the deliverance of his people from worldly oppression and re-entrance into their "promised land". At the time Daniel's understanding of what this meant was probably confined to the Jewish people and the land of Israel – combined with the hope (premature) that their deliverer would be none other than the long-awaited Messiah.**

But the reality, as we understand from the New Testament (and from the Old Testament, especially the prophet Isaiah), is somewhat different. The "promised land" is the Kingdom of God on Earth (with Israel perhaps being the location of its government headquarters) and the *"people"*, who will be citizens/rulers of that Kingdom, will be drawn from nations all over the earth. And the Messiah (who came in the person of Jesus Christ) has already brought spiritual salvation to mankind – salvation from the oppression and captivity of sin, both in this life and the next.

As for the physical salvation, that is also on the agenda, not just for Israel, but for the whole of planet Earth – that glorious day when it shall be freed from the grip of evil rulers. But for the time being, we will have to wait for the (soon-coming) Return of Christ in magnificent heavenly power (spoken of in many places in the Bible, but especially in Revelation 19).

Although Daniel may have been thinking in terms of ancient Israel's deliverance, Gabriel has already thrown out plenty of hints that his message extends much further than that. Most of his message so far has focused on events that were to see their ultimate fulfillment at the close of the present Age. For example, the troubles and persecution for God's people were to continue *"until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time."* (Daniel 11:35)

And now he's saying that *"there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time."* The world has seen many *"a time of trouble."* But the phrase *"that time"* points us to the specific era known as the End of the Age. Then in the next verse Gabriel jumps completely beyond any earthly concepts of physical, political liberation.

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12:2-3 "Many of those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace. (NLT)
"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." (NIV)

Gabriel here offers further clarification about the sons of your people who are to be delivered. This great event will happen in the most unusual way imaginable – not merely political liberation as Daniel probably expected (the Jewish people's return from Babylonian captivity) – but a removal entirely from the world scene into the Celestial Realm. This is known today as the "Rapture", but long ago it was known as the *First Resurrection*:

> **And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those… who had not worshiped the beast or his image… And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years… This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. (Revelation 20:4-6. Other Scriptures on this subject include Matthew 24:31, 1Corinthians 15:51-54, 1Thessalonians 4:14-17)**

The mention here of the *"beast"* and *"his image"* again confirms the timing of the *"deliverance"*, that it happens at the End of the Age when the Antichrist *"beast"* will be the object of worship via a peculiar *"mark"* that enables its bearers to buy and sell (as outlined in the Revelation Book, especially chapter 13). And more than mere political liberation, the resurrected saints (God's people who have learned how to live and love according to God's will) are given the privilege and responsibility to become the new rulers of planet Earth.

Another feature of this deliverance that stands out: It extends to all those who've passed away (*"who sleep in the dust of the earth"*), meaning the people of God of all ages. It is not limited to the Jewish people of Daniel's era, nor to those who happen to be struggling through the final *"time of trouble"*. Again, this goes along with what was written in verse 1 – *"everyone who is found written in the book."* The names recorded in the *"book"* were evaluated, presumably, on God's record of their deeds and decisions of faith. Mention of these "records" appears in Revelation 20:12, *"The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books."* (NIV)

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"Some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt."

According to this passage, some of those who are raised in the *Rapture*, or *First Resurrection*, will be raised *"to everlasting life".* They will be *"invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"* – a special victory celebration in the Heavenly Dimension for those who are clothed *"in fine linen, bright and clean"*, symbolic of *"the righteous acts of the saints."* (Revelation 19:8-9, NIV)

Others, however, will be raised to *"shame and everlasting disgrace."* Here are those who came to Christ but later turned away. To arrive in the Heavenly Kingdom is a wonderful blessing in itself, but that does not mean that there are no times of judgment – or perhaps this is better expressed as "the review and consequences of our earthly lives".

> ***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body… whether good or bad.***

(2Corinthians 5:10)

A few years earlier, Paul had exhorted the Corinthian church to spend their earthly lives wisely:

> ***Let each one take heed how he builds on it*** **[the foundation of Jesus Christ]. *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear, for the Day*** **[judgment seat of Christ] *will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*** **(1Corinthians 3:10, 12-15)**

A similar thought shows up again in 2Timothy 2:

> ***The solid foundation of God stands… But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.*** **(2:20-21)**

In God's Kingdom there are levels of reward – from those who *"shall shine like the brightness of the heavens"* or *"like the stars"* down to those who will have to endure *"shame and everlasting disgrace".* Regardless of reward, however, Christ promised, *"Whoever comes to me I will never cast out."* (John 6:37, ESV)

Still, the difficult question remains, how could they be *"sons of your people"* who are *"delivered"* and yet it seems that some of them *"shall awake… to shame and everlasting disgrace"*? Understandably, it is difficult for believers to see how this could apply to them, even though the passage's context is plain enough in this regard.

In a nation there are many levels of society – from prisons and reformatories to the highest levels of elite rulers. But regardless of anyone's station, all are citizens of that nation. Likewise, all who come to Jesus receive the right of citizenship in God's Kingdom, and that in itself is a wonderful blessing. And even those who land in the "reformatory" level

will be glad to be there, rather than have to dwell as non-citizens who must be separated from the presence of God – in what the Revelation Book refers to as the *"lake of fire"* (19:20, 20:10) – a domain that is "home" for the incorrigibly rebellious, the rejectors of God, who will have to dwell then in the not-so-pleasant company of the first beings – the Devil and his angels – who refused to bow to God's dominion . (Refer to Post "Lake of Fire – What Is it For?")

For those who once knew God but later turned away from following the Light of Christ, chances are they may have to be restricted and denied freedom, or the honor, to participate in affairs and activities that could have been theirs to enjoy. In our earthly realm, to be sent to a reformatory, although shameful in some respects, is necessary if its inmates want to rehabilitate and become ready to function well in society.

Likewise, those who wind up in *"shame and everlasting contempt"* are citizens of the Kingdom, as Christ has promised to all who come to Him, and no doubt glad to be in Heaven. But, as we do with those who commit offense in our Earthly Realm, they will be denied some of the privileges of citizenship, at least until such time as they are ready for release.

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, Jesus told the story of the *"wise"* virgins, whose *"lamps"* were *"ready"* and were accepted by the *"bridegroom"* into the *"wedding"*. But those who were *"foolish"* were caught unprepared and locked out of the bridegroom's chamber and heard the bridegroom's explanation, *"Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you."* (Matthew 25:1-13) The message is clear: our faithfulness in this life has everything to do with how things pan out in our Afterlife.

From this Parable and from what we have seen so far, two features about the Resurrection seem to stand out: 1) all who come to Christ will be resurrected, but 2) not all will be ready for the grand celebration, known as the *"marriage supper of the Lamb."* They don't have a wedding garment; they're not ready. (See parable in Matthew 22:11-14.) Whereas it says of Christ's bride, *"His wife has made herself ready."* She has the wedding garment – "*arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright,"* symbolizing *"the righteous acts of the saints."* (Revelation 19:7-9) But the others did not have the needed garments (*"righteous acts"*). They are blessed to be in the Kingdom, but chastised by having to be shut out from some of its

greatest blessings and privileges.

So these Scriptures and Parables about shame and disgrace, the foolish virgins, and several others are speaking of God's people. They are meant as a warning, just as a loving father warns his children against bad behavior and the consequences. This inspires a healthy fear and respect, knowing that our Heavenly Father loves us enough to chastise us when we need it.

In our earthly penal systems, the threat of jail and punishment has deterred many a would-be criminal from veering down the wrong path. And would not God in His great love also seek to deter us, His children, from unfruitful paths of disobedience – not to make life difficult for them, but to make their lives happier and more blessed?

Now whatever correction we may have to endure in the Afterlife, one thing is certain: it will be done in a loving manner. Maybe it could be compared to being in a reformatory where a "tough love" environment is maintained and designed to help wayward teenagers rehabilitate until they are ready to enter society… or in this case, to enter the Heavenly Realm and partake of its blessings and privileges.

Even in this life we can recall such experiences. When we are undergoing a period of re-training, correction, or rehabilitation in our personal lives, although it is difficult, when we know God, we can sense the comfort of His presence… and the knowledge too that it is *"for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness"* and that *"afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness."* (Hebrews 12:10-11) *"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."* (Revelation 21:4) And likely, none of us will be exempt from some correction; we all have things to learn. *"For we must <u>all</u> appear before the judgment seat of Christ."* (2Corinthians 5:10)

To conclude: With these perspectives about the Afterlife in mind, we can better understand the meaning of Gabriel's words – that God's people *"shall awake, some to everlasting life"* and *"some to shame and everlasting contempt"*. Within the general category (of those who have *"passed from death into life"*), there are many levels of reward, or lack of reward. Those who followed God during their lives will be rewarded, and

those who didn't will have to bear the shame of their misspent lives. But eventually, all will find restoration and rehabilitation as they come to terms with what the heavenly existence is all about. And they will all know that they are loved.

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12:4 "But 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."

Finally, Gabriel is coming to the end of his message. Here again is another indication that the major thrust of his message was not intended for Daniel nor for ancient times, but rather, for *"the time of the end".*

For here Gabriel's mentions two peculiar features of our modern era: *"many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."* Travel (many running *"to and fro"*) and scientific *"knowledge"* have mushroomed in the past one or two centuries. When compared with the slow pace of travel and the basic science of yesteryear, humanity's recent progress in these areas is unique and outstanding. Gabriel foresaw these peculiar features 2,500 years in advance and could see that they would differentiate this closing era from the entire past history of humankind. (Here are two video "shorts" about the modern day increase in travel and knowledge.)

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Continue to 4-B: The End of the End