

**Daniel 12:1-3**  
**A Weather Report on the Last Days**  
**1. There's bad weather ahead, so dress accordingly**  
**2. Don't be afraid to go outside, because brilliant sunshine will follow**  
**Saints Triumphant Sunday**  
**November 15, 2015**

*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. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. 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. (NIV84)*

Maybe this is true only for me, but it seems that the older a person gets, the more interest they take in weather reports. I'm not quite sure why that is. (To some extent, it would seem that if anyone should be concerned about the weather, it should be children, since they are usually the most likely to plan activities that will take place outdoors—recess, trampolining, looking for bugs.) But for whatever reason, we adults seem to feel a need to know what the weather will be like tomorrow on the 20 second walk between our car and Fry's.

Maybe the weather report intrigues us because it is the only part of the newscast that **predicts** the news. If there's going to be good weather tomorrow, we like to be able to start looking forward to that already today. And even knowing that the weather will be bad tomorrow allows us to feel a little bit more prepared than if we woke up the next morning and were caught totally off guard. There's something about knowing what's **going** to happen that just makes us feel prepared.

Our reading for today should help us to feel prepared for the End Times. Because in our text, Daniel predicts the news. In fact, you could even say that Daniel gives a weather report on the Last Days. Let's take a closer look at that weather report, and see how it can help us to be prepared.

**1. There's bad weather ahead, so dress accordingly**

Much of the book of Daniel falls into the category of prophecy. Like Revelation, Daniel contains visions and some very symbolic things to explain what will happen in the future.

As Daniel begins chapter 12, he offers us a word of advice. He tells us that in the last days *"there will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then."*

I'd guess that nearly all of us would say that this is a time of great distress in the world--and has been for quite a while.

I don't know what was more disturbing this past Friday—that I opened up the internet to read that seemingly coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris had killed over 100 people, or that I was so utterly unshocked by it.

Now that doesn't necessarily prove that the distress in the world now is *"such as not happened from the beginning of nations."* Certainly World War II was a time of considerable "distress." But when I look at the sheer numbers of people fleeing the Middle East and the impossible to comprehend number of people who have been killed in places like Syria, and when I see how violence and poverty are an undeniable fact of life for so many even in first world countries...

When Paul wrote that "creation is groaning"—how much more must it be groaning today, 2000 years after Paul wrote?

And how much more is it going to be groaning as we draw ever nearer to Judgment Day? To look at the world as it is today—and to then realize that it will get worse between now and Judgment Day is a frightening thought!

Even if we look at our lives and see bright sunshine, we need to realize that there is bad weather ahead, so we need to dress accordingly.

But to be able to do that, we need to make certain we understand what the bad weather consists of. Yes, there will be physical distress—the sorts of things Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24 when he told his disciples what the last days would be like—wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines.

But those distresses that can damage or even take our physical lives pale in comparison with the distresses that threaten our spiritual lives. Jesus made clear that the distress described by Daniel—and also pictured vividly in the Book of Revelation—would not just be physical, but spiritual.

And unless we're dressed accordingly, we'll die.

People who go out on hikes with clothes suitable only for the warmest part of the day can sometimes be surprised at how quickly the weather changes, how far the temperature drops at night, and how long the night can be. Many of them are warned ahead of time, but they ignore the warnings. Some even die as a result.

Maybe right now isn't a time of spiritual distress for you. Maybe right now Satan isn't attacking you with all of his icy fury. But he will—and you'd better be ready. The world has never been particularly warm to Christianity, but it has become increasingly, openly hostile in recent times.

The best way to be ready is to be bundled up in God's Word, whose gospel will keep you warm even in the face of subzero spiritual temperatures in the world.

And yet in spite of warnings like Daniel's, people keep wandering out into what eventually becomes a storm. People who stop going to church will often assure those who are concerned about them that their faith is fine. The fact that they aren't coming to church is already a pretty good sign that their faith is windbreaker-thin. And the fact that they think it's going to be enough means that they have no understanding of the distress of the times in which they live and the even greater distress of the times which are approaching.

Too many times, those people end up being found spiritually dead because they had not dressed for the storm.

Are you bundling up for that sort of weather?

As a time of spiritual winter approaches, are you preparing for it by dressing accordingly? Are you winterizing your soul with more faithful church attendance than ever before? At home, are you more in danger of wearing out your Bible than you are in danger of wearing out your remote control? Are you regularly receiving the assurance of God's forgiveness in Holy Communion

Don't be deceived. Daniel's weather report is dead on. There is stormy weather ahead that will threaten our faith. Dress accordingly.

## 2. Don't be afraid to go outside, because brilliant sunshine will follow

But not only is there stormy weather ahead; there is also brilliant sunshine.

A number of years ago a friend and I went to Egypt. One night we went with a bunch of people to Mount Sinai. We started climbing. It was dark out. But we kept going. We climbed a bit more. It stayed dark out--in fact, it may even have gotten darker. But we kept going. We got to the top. It stayed dark, and now it was colder than it had been all night. But we stayed there. Why did we put up with such weather? Why didn't we go back inside? Because soon there was an absolutely brilliant, stunning sunrise, along with considerable warmth.

Now I'm not suggesting that it a daring act of faith to have continued on in the dark and the cold. Even if we hadn't seen the weather report before leaving, we knew that the sun was going to rise—and therefore we were able to look forward to its light and warmth.

But you can be just as certain. Yes, it may be dark and cold now—and even getting darker and colder. But don't be afraid of this time of great distress, don't be afraid to face it and even go out into it—because great rewards, stunning triumph, and brilliant sunshine **will** follow. Daniel's forecast of stormy weather is guaranteed, but so also is his forecast of a triumphant finish guaranteed.

And the suddenness of the change will be shocking.

Have you ever driven in a rainstorm that was so violent that your windshield wipers could hardly keep up, so that you almost considered pulling off the road? If you have, then maybe you have also seen how quickly it can change, how suddenly you will be out of the rain, and the sun will be shining brilliantly, how peaceful everything becomes.

Daniel indicates that a similar situation will occur at the end of the world. There will be a great distress, the threats of Satan will be howling in our ears, the chill of his attacks will be whipping through us, everything will have reached a fever pitch, and then, Daniel says, "*At that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered.*"

At that time everything will halt. Judgment Day will take place. Certainly there are those who will arise for that judgment to shame and everlasting contempt. Shame because their sins will be revealed, and everlasting contempt because they failed to dress accordingly for the judgment.

But others will arise to everlasting life. How do we know that we will rise to everlasting life—especially since we still feel shame and self-contempt when we think of some of the sins we have committed? How do we know that we won't rise to a storm of God's wrath that makes any foul weather—physical or emotional or spiritual—that we have encountered here on earth feel like a gentle rain or mild breeze by comparison?

Because that storm has already taken place at Calvary, where Jesus was crucified and suffered for our sins. Like that storm that rages ferociously until it has nothing left and is replaced with bright sunshine, God has nothing left for us whose names are written in the book of life through faith in Jesus.

Actually, he does have something left for us. You know that bright sunshine of forgiveness, which in turn leads to the bright sunshine of Heaven? He will give us some of that light. Daniel prophesies, "*Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens.*"

The wisdom of which Daniel speaks is not the type that leads to 4.0's and Phi Beta Kappa keys. That's the world's wisdom. The wisdom of which Daniel speaks is the wisdom that has been worked in us by the Holy Spirit—the wisdom that has led us to place our trust in Jesus, knowing that he is our shelter from all storms—especially the storm of Hell.

We may have not looked like much to people here. We may not have looked very wise—especially as we suffered through the End Times. But in the end we will “*shine like the brightness of the heavens.*”

But there’s still more!

The reading closes by saying that while the wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, those “*who lead many to righteousness*” will shine “*like the stars forever and ever.*” Not only will those who are wise, those who believe in Jesus shine like the brightness of the heavens, but those who have demonstrated that wisdom, those who have witnessed their faith both by the testimony of their lives and by the testimony of their mouths--and therefore have led many to Christ and the righteousness that he brings--those will shine still more brightly. They will shine like the stars forever and ever.

So look carefully at Daniel's weather report for the Last Days. Those occasional storm clouds you see? They're coming your way, and the weather they bring will be every bit as bad as it appears. So dress accordingly. Put on the stocking cap of Christ's holiness. Put on the gloves of God's Word. Put on the winter jacket of truth. Protected by that, you will be prepared. And there's no need to be afraid. In fact, to some extent we welcome the stormy weather, because we know that when the storm has huffed and puffed and been unable to blow our house of faith down, after that has happened, we know that Judgment Day will follow. For us that day will be a day of brilliant, triumphant sunshine. From that day on we will shine like the brightness of the heavens. Amen.