

# SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ November 13, 2016



**<sup>1</sup> “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. <sup>2</sup> Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup> 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. (Daniel 12:1-3)**

*Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

The origin of phrases has always interested me. Sometimes phrases are easy to understand – like “six of one, half dozen of the other,” (describing two different choices as being equal to one another) while other times, a phrase with the exact same meaning is difficult to understand, like in the case of “a horse, a piece.” This morning, I would like to share with you another phrase, a phrase that accurately describes the text before us, that’s the phrase SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED.

For certain contracts involving land, large items, or official documents there are legal requirements to make the contract or document official. Like many phrases, it’s difficult to determine its original usage, but it detailed the method for making a purchase, say of land, official. The seller would need to sign the document, then it would be sealed, sometimes with an impression on hot wax, and then finally delivered to the purchaser before the transaction was official. Even today, we follow similar practices. Notary’s stamp official documents like birth certificates with a raised seal. When buying or selling a house, your signature is needed (often more than once), and the contract is concluded when the opposite party receives said document.

But people can use the phrase, “SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED” in other ways as well. It can be a phrase to describe the certainty of a particular task being taken care of and complete. When we take a look at the book of Daniel this morning, we see Daniel describing something as SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED. But it’s something worth far more than a house or purchase of land. He is talking about you and me, and how we have been SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED for heaven by our God.

1. Protected from distress
2. Awakened to joy

(1)

It was two Sundays ago that we turned our attention to the book of Daniel in the sermon. Then we heard the narrative account of three men who stayed faithful to God’s Word under threat of death, only to be vindicated for their faith by a powerful God. This section of the book of that we

consider today might seem completely foreign to what we heard two weeks ago, and that's because it is. You see, the book of Daniel is divided into two distinct sections – one historical, the other prophetic. In one section he shares the events that happened to him and his friends, in the other, he describes what is going to happen in the future.

And so, beginning in Daniel 7, he records the visions of the future that God granted to him. These visions were so detailed and recorded exactly what the immediate future was going to hold for the Middle East region from the nations that would rise to power, to specific individuals (like Antiochus Epiphanes) who would come. But while those prophecies had an immediate fulfillment in the decades and centuries that followed Daniel, there were also some prophecies that had in mind an even greater fulfillment. Such is the case before us this morning, when Daniel talks about the time when Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead.

Much of the prophecies that are contained in Daniel would cause a Christian to wince at that absolute chaos and fighting that will go on in the world, and will continue to go on in the world until the end. In fact, the very chapter before the one we considered, describes warring forces against God's church, specifically the Antichrist. All of this could leave a Christian feeling down and out. But then comes chapter 12, where Daniel describes how we are SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED, protected from distress.

Daniel knew a thing or two about deliverance. God has already delivered him at least twice that he records in his book. God famously delivered him when he was thrown into the lion's den, and then delivered him again through the change of governments in that God allowed him to keep his high government position. But this isn't the deliverance Daniel has in mind here, it's much greater than that. Listen again to his opening words: **"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."** This matches up with what Jesus said in our gospel for this morning, **"But in those days, following that distress, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'"**

It doesn't sound like something too pleasant, right? It doesn't sound like something that you would like to find yourself going through, right? And even though we have not reached that level of terror or chaos as it is described in the Bible, we see trouble and chaos all around us, right? We've just gone through a very emotional election cycle in our country, an election cycle that has brought out the ugly side of humanity. But we don't need to look very far to see that ugliness. We don't need to point fingers anywhere out there, but right here, with me. I need only to look at how I have treated my neighbor or how I have thought about my enemy. I need only to look at the chaos I have helped facilitate in my family and among my friends. I need only to look at the times when I have worried (or gloated) more about the results of an election, than worried about the place my soul and others will spend eternity. We can see the darkness in the world, but we can also see the darkness in ourselves.

**"But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered."** In the midst of this chaos, in the midst of this horror, God reminds us that he will deliver his people, those whose names are written in this book. What book is he talking about? It is the book of life, all those whose names are written in it will go to heaven with him. This is the only book that will matter on Judgment Day.

How do you know if your name is written in the Lamb's book of life? Did Jesus die for you? There's any number of passages in the Bible that describe how Jesus died on the cross, not just for the world's sins, but also for you. You are connected to that forgiveness of sins which he won on the cross when he brought you to faith when the Word of God entered your ears, when that water of baptism was sprinkled on your forehead. This is what guarantees that your name is written in the Lamb's book of life.

Listen to Daniel's words again, **"At that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered."** This promise of God says that we are SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED, the deed is done, the deed is complete, without you having to worry about it one way or another. Because we are SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED, we are protected from distress. Let the world worry about the next natural or manmade disaster, let the world worry about politics, let the world worry about the changing climate. As Christians, we will still endure through the chaos, but we do so knowing that our God is watching over us, just like he has watched over our souls.

(2)

As Christians we are SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED by God and for God. But that doesn't mean that our lives are meaningless, that doesn't mean we do nothing while waiting for heaven. Because we are SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED it gives us the very best meaning to live, it gives us the very best reason to live our lives to the fullest.

Being a Christian gives us the best reason to care for God's creation we are living in. Being a Christian gives us the best reason to care for those around us who are less fortunate. Being a Christian gives us the best reason to show love to all people, but especially believers. Being SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED gives us every reason to be able to care for the material needs of those around us. But being SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED means that we will want to share with them so much more.

Hear again the last verse of our first lesson this morning from Daniel, **"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."** "Those who are wise" do this. Those who are wise recognize that material kindness has temporary value, but spiritual kindness has eternal value. Those who are wise realize this.

I know there are some very wise people in this room right now. There may be some who are wise in the ways of the world, but I know that all of you are wise in the way that Daniel is talking. You are not wise because you chose to cling to Christ, but because Christ chose to bind himself to you. You are wise because he placed his Holy Spirit in your heart to believe the good news. You are wise because you recognize it's important to tell people about how Jesus has forgiven their sins.

But do you know what another characteristic of wise people is? Wise people are never done learning. Wise people will never stop searching for more and more wisdom. And that's what we need to remember about our spiritual wisdom too. We grow in our spiritual wisdom as we immerse ourselves in God's Word so that we can continue to grow in faith. We grow in our spiritual wisdom as we look for opportunities to comfort and encourage our fellow believers. We grow in our spiritual wisdom as examine ourselves so that we might learn how we can better share our faith those around us. You are wise people, now strive to be wiser people.

We are reminded today how we are saints, those holy ones who are privileged to be with God in heaven, not because of anything we have done, but because of what our God has done. This alone makes us wise. For we have been SIGNED, SEALED & DELIVERED by God. May you use what you know and believe to shine like a star. To shine like a star by not only looking out for the material needs of those around you, but shine like a star by leading people to a Savior who lived, died and rose for them. In short, go be the saint you already are. Amen.