

Daniel 12:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

Analysis

The divine command "shut up the words, and seal the book" uses legal terminology for preserving important documents. The Hebrew chatam (חֲתָם, "seal") indicates authentication and protection from tampering, similar to sealing official decrees with wax and signet rings. This sealing doesn't mean hiding the prophecy but preserving it intact for future generations who will understand it more fully. The phrase "even to the time of the end" (ad et qets, עַד תְּקִנְתָּן) indicates the vision concerns eschatological fulfillment requiring long-range preservation.

The statement "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" has two primary interpretations:

1. increased travel and communication in the end times, making the gospel accessible globally
2. diligent study of Scripture, particularly prophetic passages, resulting in increased understanding as fulfillment approaches.

The Hebrew shut (שָׁעַט, "run to and fro") can mean physical movement or mental searching. "Knowledge shall be increased" (tirbeh daat, תִּרְבֶּה דָּעַת) suggests growth in understanding, particularly of prophetic truth as events clarify earlier predictions.

This verse teaches that some biblical truth becomes clearer through progressive revelation and historical fulfillment. Daniel didn't fully comprehend his visions (v.

8), but future generations, aided by fulfillment and New Testament revelation, understand more completely. This demonstrates Scripture's divine origin—prophecies written centuries earlier become comprehensible through subsequent fulfillment. The sealing ensures authentic preservation until appointed time when understanding increases. This points to Christ as the ultimate key unlocking prophetic meaning—He is the fulfillment toward which all prophecy points (Luke 24:27, 44).

Historical Context

The command to seal the book (circa 536 BC) ensured Daniel's prophecies would be preserved through centuries until their fulfillment made them fully comprehensible. The Dead Sea Scrolls (dating to 2nd century BC-1st century AD) include Daniel manuscripts, confirming the text's reliable preservation. As prophesied events occurred—Persian rule, Greek conquest, Roman occupation, Messiah's coming—earlier obscure prophecies became clearer, validating Scripture's divine inspiration and Daniel's prophetic authority.

The phrase about increased knowledge became particularly relevant with the Reformation's emphasis on biblical literacy and later technological advances (printing press, mass literacy, modern transportation and communication) enabling global gospel spread. Many interpreters see acceleration of travel and information exchange in modern times as fulfilling this prophecy, creating conditions for gospel to reach "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6) before Christ's return.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that prophetic comprehension increases through historical fulfillment affect your interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy?
2. In what ways has increased knowledge and global connectivity accelerated gospel advancement in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy?

Interlinear Text

ה אַתָּה	דָּנִיָּאֵל	סֵתֶם	פְּדָבָרִים	יְחִתָּהּ	בָּסְפָּר
H859	But thou O Daniel	shut up	the words	and seal	the book
	H1840	H5640	H1697	H2856	H5612
עַתָּה	זְמִינָה	יְשַׁטֵּט	כָּבֵב	וְתַרְבֵּב	
even to the time	of the end	shall run to and fro	many	shall be increased	
H6256	H7093	H7751	H7227	H7235	
פִּדְעָת					
and knowledge					
H1847					

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 12:9 (Word): And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

Revelation 22:10 (Parallel theme): And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.

Daniel 8:26 (Parallel theme): And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.

Daniel 8:17 (Parallel theme): So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man; for at the time of the end shall be the vision.

Revelation 10:4 (Parallel theme): And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

Isaiah 8:16 (Word): Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

Isaiah 32:3 (Parallel theme): And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.

Daniel 12:13 (Parallel theme): But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

Isaiah 11:9 (Parallel theme): They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Matthew 24:14 (Parallel theme): And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.