

The Certain Hope of Believers #2

Daniel 12:2-3

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What happens to believers after the Second Coming of Christ when Jesus raises the dead (both just and unjust) and judges them? Does the believer's hope end with the resurrection of the body? Does everything come to an end at that time? Surely, there is a divine purpose for our bodies being raised in glory and in conformity to that of Jesus Christ.

Yes, our certain hope extends beyond glorified souls and bodies to an eternal paradise (the New Heaven and New Earth) that can hardly be imagined (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). Just as all who trust in Jesus Christ alone for their eternal salvation and evidence that faith in their loving obedience to His commands have a certain hope of their bodily resurrection at Christ's Second Coming, so they have a certain hope of an eternal world that surpasses the beauty of the original paradise of Eden, which God created and in which He placed Adam and Eve, and even a certain hope that surpasses the glory of the present state of souls in heaven. This New Heaven and New Earth is the ultimate destination to which our salvation in Jesus Christ brings us.

Having begun this sermon on the certain hope of believers from Daniel 12:2-3 last week, we considered first, The Resurrection of the Dead (Daniel 12:2); and now we come to the second main point, The New Heaven and the New Earth (Daniel 12:3).

I. The New Heaven and the New Earth (Daniel 12:2-3).

A. Review

1. After the coalition of nations that are instigated by the Papal King overwhelm an unbelieving Israel and bring upon her great suffering, "at that time" (Daniel 12:1) Michael (who is the Lord Jesus) will stand up as a mighty Prince/King to supernaturally pour out His grace upon Israel who will as a people/nation turn in faith to Christ and will miraculously be delivered from the dominion of these nations by Jesus.

2. Gabriel then reveals (in Daniel 12:2—no time indicator) what will become of the just and the unjust at the end of the world—namely, the simultaneous resurrection/judgment of the just and the unjust—the just raised to everlasting life and the unjust raised to everlasting contempt (Matthew 25:31—at Christ's Second Coming).

3. I submit that the salvation of Israel in Daniel 12:1 may carry us prophetically through and include the millennium, bringing us to the resurrection of the dead (Daniel 12:2). If that is the case, then there is no actual time gap between Daniel 12:1 and Daniel 12:2. It is not uncommon in Christ's eschatological parables in Matthew 13 to pass from the present age to the resurrection/judgment (not mentioning the millennium, but incorporating the millennium as an extension of the present age—the tares are allowed to grow alongside the wheat until the resurrection/judgment at which time the separation occurs—that may be what is revealed in Daniel 12:1-2). The millennium is included in Israel's salvation by the Lord Jesus and then comes the resurrection/judgment.

B. In Daniel 12:3, Gabriel reveals the blessedness of resurrected believers in their enjoyment of everlasting life (the New Heaven and the New Earth).

1. The "wise" are all those who are wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15). This is not a mere academic knowledge of salvation, but an application of that knowledge by faith in the crucified/resurrected Lord Jesus (James 3:17). It is not simply how much we intellectually know about Jesus or the Catechism that makes us wise, but how much we apply what we know every day that reveals whether we are wise.

2. Those who are wise unto salvation are promised here to shine forth in everlasting glory after the resurrection of the just. Paul likens the glory of the stars that shine forth in the heavens to the glory

of the resurrected body of believers at the Second Coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:41-42).

3. Ministers are called stars by Jesus in Revelation 1 (the 7 stars in Christ's right hand) by way of their office in reflecting Jesus to the Church, but all believers are to be stars in reflecting Jesus to a dark world (Matthew 5:16). That is what is meant by those who "turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

4. Why should one expect to be such a star in reflecting forever the glory of Christ in the New Heaven and New Earth if there is no desire to do so now? Many don't really want to be that star that shines for all eternity reflecting the glory of Jesus. They simply prefer to be that star that shines forever in the New Heaven and New Earth because they do not want to be that branch that burns forever in the Lake of Fire. Shining or burning cannot be a mere preference—it is the difference between faith/unbelief, love/routine, sincerity/pretense, obedience/words, and desire/appearance.

5. It would seem that Jesus draws from this very language here in Daniel 12:3 when giving to the multitudes the Parable of the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30,37-43). In this parable, even those who have pretended to be like the good seed (tares) are finally judged (everlasting Lake of Fire), whereas the good seed that trust in Christ (the righteous) and bring forth fruit are vindicated and shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Notice the difference between "his kingdom" (Matthew 13:41) and "the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43). This is the difference between the Kingdom of Grace and the Kingdom of Glory (1 Corinthians 15:22-28). This is the difference between the present age (which includes the millennium) and the age to come (the New Heaven and the New Earth).

C. After the one Coming of Christ, after the one resurrection of the just and the unjust, and after the one judgment of the just and the unjust comes the New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 21:1-8—not new in time, *neos*; but new in quality, renewed, *kainos*)—a fuller description of the wise shining as the stars of heaven in Daniel 12:3.

D. The New Heaven and the New Earth is a Paradise restored and renewed to a greater glory/beauty than even the glory/beauty of the original Paradise in Eden, and to a greater glory/beauty than the glory/beauty of Heaven. Why is that the case?

1. This is a Paradise in which the Covenant of Grace is fully realized (Jesus obeys and we live forever, never to die). In the original Paradise God covenanted with Adam under a Covenant of Works (obey and live—disobey and die). The original Paradise was **probationary**. The Paradise to come is **eternal**. The original Paradise was **subject to change** (sin/death). The Paradise to come is **unchangeable** (no sin/death). The original Paradise Adam/Eve had **mortal bodies** (and a mortal creation). The Paradise to come consists of redeemed humans in **immortal bodies** (and a creation in which there is no death—Romans 8:16-23). The New Heaven and New Earth is the end/goal of our salvation.

2. Heaven is presently the home of holy angels and all saints (Old Testament and New Testament) who have died—"the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23). Heaven is the place where God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) especially dwells with His people in perfect communion and joy. But the New Heaven and the New Earth will even surpass the glory/beauty of Heaven, for our salvation will be complete. Our souls in heaven will be reunited with glorified bodies (like the body of Jesus) to enjoy a renewed/perfected creation and to enjoy our blessed Savior forever in body and soul.

3. In 2 Corinthians 12:4, Paul was taken to heaven and heard words and beheld the glory of heaven, but he says it was not lawful to express what he heard and saw. If that was true of heaven, how much more true is it of the New Heaven and New Earth? How do you explain a place so full of holiness and righteousness, so complete in joy and happiness, so perfect in peace and security, so abounding in uninterrupted fellowship and communion with God/angels/saints, that anything to which you compare it would only scratch the surface?

4. All the misery of this life will forever be removed. All sin (even those besetting sins),

temptation to sin, desires to sin, all hurts, heartaches, fears, and loneliness will be swallowed up in the joy, peace, and contentment in the Lord.

5. The New Heaven and New Earth will be filled with constant activity—serving God, enjoying His perfected creation, communing with the saints/angels (those whom we have known and not known—the disciples knew who Moses and Elijah were), praising God for creation/providence/redemption, growing in our knowledge and love of God, communing with Him in the nearest/closest relationship. No one will be bored in the New Heaven and New Earth. To the contrary, we will be filled to overflowing with the greatest excitement/peace/joy like a cup that is not just full but continues to overflow because it cannot contain all the blessings that are being poured into it.

6. That is the certain hope that is reserved for us who do not simply prefer the New Heaven and New Earth over the Lake of Fire, but who hunger and thirst for that place of righteousness with Jesus, who believe that future home is infinitely more valuable than anything we have in this world, who understand/believe/practice that the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

7. This certain hope of the New Heaven and New Earth is revealed to us now in this present life so that we may persevere in hope through all trials, afflictions, suffering, heartaches, persecution, and death (2 Peter 3:13-14). It is easy to want to give up in this life without a certain hope, but this is the certain hope that Jesus gives to carry us through this life and through death. This is not escapism. This is certain, biblical hope.

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