

Daniel 12:1-2

Introduction

Over the last couple of weeks, we've followed along in the "book of truth" all the way from the beginning of the Persian empire under Cyrus to the beginning of the Greek empire under Alexander the Great and then to the kings of the north and the south (the Seleucids in Syria and the Ptolemies in Egypt), all the way to the eighth king of the north (the infamous Antiochus Epiphanes), and finally to that end time king, "*the King*"—the Caesar—of Rome in the days of the fourth beast. Specifically, we came to the first official emperor of Rome, Caesar Augustus (11:40-43), in whose days Jesus, the Messiah, was born. And then we came to Nero and his successor Vespasian (11:44-12:1) in whose days the Old Covenant temple and city were finally destroyed. We saw how it was in those days of the great tribulation that Daniel's people were delivered, everyone whose name was found written in the book. The early Jewish Christians were delivered physically when they fled from Judea after having been warned by God ahead of time. But more importantly, they were all delivered spiritually from that ultimate fate of being cut off from the covenant – a fate graphically pictured in the destruction of Jerusalem. While the earthly city and temple were destroyed, this spiritual remnant of the Jewish people whose names were found written in the book were made citizens of the heavenly city and temple that can never be destroyed. The Apostle Peter exhorted the Jews on the day of Pentecost:

➤ Acts 2:40 — Save yourselves [be saved/delivered] from this crooked generation.

And all those who heeded the message that Peter preached were indeed *delivered* "at that time," just as the angel said to Daniel.

So far everything has been moving along nicely in a clear orderly succession. But then we read these words in verse 2 of chapter twelve:

➤ Daniel 12:2 — And of those sleeping in the dust of the earth multitudes shall awake,¹ some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The clear implication is that the deliverance of Daniel's people "*at that time*" (in the days when the Old Covenant temple and city were destroyed, in the 1st century AD)—the clear implication is that the deliverance of Daniel's people "*at that time*" would consist in their resurrection from the dead. But has the resurrection already happened in the 1st century? Or have we finally come to that place where we're forced to insert our own "gap"? (**See chart on p. 8.**) Here's that million-dollar question yet again: How do we get from the birth of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem in the 1st century AD (where we left off last week in verse one) to the physical and bodily resurrection of the dead on the last day (where we pick up again this week in

¹ וְרַבִּים מִיִּשְׁנֵי אֶדְמַת-עָפָר יִקְוּצוּ "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake" (NIV). "And the multitude of those sleeping in the dust of the ground [will] awake" (YLT). The plural *rab-bim* does not here connote a part of a whole (many, but not all), but rather an "abundance"/"multitude" (cf. Num. 20:11; 24:7; Deut. 7:1 [numerous]; 2 Sam. 22:17; 24:14; 1 Kings 4:20; 1 Chron. 21:13; Neh. 9:19, 27, 31; Ps. 97:1; 109:30 [throng]; Ezek. 17:5, 8; 31:5, 7; Zech. 2:11; 8:22).

verse two)? To answer this question, we first need to go back to where we started in our very first message in Daniel.

I. The Death of God's People in Exile

The entire book of Daniel is set against the backdrop of exile – of the Jewish people being forcibly removed from their land and relocated over a thousand miles away to live in the land of Babylon (1:1-7). We can't fully understand the message of Daniel unless we understand the meaning of exile – not just what exile *is*, but what it *means*.

The Jews weren't the only people group to suffer exile. The Assyrians and the Babylonians were both committed to the practice of relocating the peoples they conquered to other lands, far away from their homeland. Can you imagine the effects of this relocating? Exile was intended to strip nations of their identity as a people with their own culture and traditions and language and gods, and so what exile amounted to in the end was the *death* of a *nation*. But that's probably still too tame. In the end, what exile amounted to was the violent murder of a nation – of the life and identity of an entire people. We hear the word “exile” and we don't have any emotional response to that word. That's partly because we've never experienced anything *like* “exile” and partly because as Americans we don't have the same sense of national identity as a people group bound together by a common ancestry, a common religion, and a common ancestral homeland. At some level, exile is something impossible for us to understand. But when ancient peoples heard the word “exile” (*galuth*) that word was to them the sound of death. Think of what this would mean in the case of Israel. If exile (*galuth*) means the death of Israel *as God's people*, then wouldn't that also mean the death of all God's promises and the hope of salvation?

II. The End of Exile in the Resurrection of God's People

If exile is the *death* of a people, then what would it be if an exiled people was gathered together again to live in their own land? What would that be? Even from the very beginning, before Israel had even entered the land of Canaan, God had already foretold the “death” and the “resurrection” of His people.

- Deuteronomy 30:1–6 (cf. Lev. 26:33-42; Deut. 4:25-31) — When all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, **and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you.** And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. **And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.**

Are you beginning to see what a miracle this would be? Are you beginning to see why it's no exaggeration to call this restoration a resurrection from the dead? And did you see why this is far more true in Israel's case than for any other nation? The resurrection of Israel will involve more than just their return to the land; it will also mean the circumcision of their heart to love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul, that they may *live*. It's in this light that we're meant to understand Ezekiel's vision of a valley full of dry bones.

- Ezekiel 37:1–3, 11–14 — The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ... Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD."

For Israel, the only hope after exile was nothing less than resurrection – that God would put His Spirit within them.

III. Daniel longs for the end of exile in the resurrection of God's people

Sixty-eight years after Daniel arrived in Babylon as a youth of probably around 15 years old we learn that he's been fasting and mourning for three weeks. Even though the exile is over in terms of the seventy years, the Jews are still a despised people with many obstacles and many enemies; they still haven't been given the Spirit or circumcised hearts. Daniel is still longing for the end of exile and the full restoration of God's people in nothing less than a resurrection from the dead. It's in response to this deep longing that an angel is sent to Daniel with the fourth and final vision of this book – a vision that ends here in chapter twelve, where we read these words:

- Daniel 12:1–2 — At that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And of those sleeping in the dust of the earth multitudes shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

We see now that this promise of resurrection doesn't just come out of nowhere. It was foretold all the way back in Deuteronomy when God promised that after exile (*galuth*) He would gather His people again, even from the uttermost parts of heaven — when he said that he would circumcise their hearts so that they might love the Lord *and live* (Deut. 30:1-6). In the end, the *full* gathering in of the people from their long exile will only be accomplished in the physical and bodily resurrection of the dead.

But where is it that we see this resurrection? Where does this resurrection begin?

IV. The future resurrection of the dead has already begun — Hosea 5 & 6 and 1 Corinthians 15

We read in Hosea chapter five:

- Hosea 5:13–14 — When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to the great king. But he is not able to cure you or heal your wound. For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and no one shall rescue.

Here we have pictured the “death” of God’s people in exile. But then we read in chapter six:

- Hosea 6:1–2 — Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. **After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.**

Here we have pictured the restoration of God’s people in resurrection – the end of their exile. And here in the resurrection of the *people* on the third day is a prophetic foreshadowing of *Christ’s* resurrection from the dead on the third day.

- Luke 24:45–46 (cf. 18:33; 24:7) — Then [Jesus] opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “**Thus it is written**, that the Christ should suffer and **on the third day rise** from the dead.”

Paul writes:

- 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 — For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was **raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.**

Now when is it that Christ was raised from the dead on the third day? That was almost 2000 years ago in the 1st century AD! And so we see in this that the resurrection has already begun. Indeed, in the resurrection of Christ on the third day is the resurrection of His people. As one person says: “In the New Testament, it is Jesus’s resurrection that takes place on the third day, but because he is the firstborn from the dead, this is also the beginning of the resurrection of the people of God.” (Michael Shepherd; KEL Commentary on the Book of the Twelve). Paul describes Jesus as the “firstfruits” of those who have fallen asleep and the “firstborn” from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20-23; Col. 1:18). Very rarely do we ever fully appreciate the reality that one like us—one *of us*, a true human being—has already entered fully into resurrection life (the only one to this point who has ever done so). And so it’s in this resurrection of Christ that we see our own resurrection – already here.

How is *my* resurrection already here in *His*?

V. Jesus came not just to guarantee our bodily resurrection in the future, but to bring—in part—the experience of that future resurrection life in the present.

The Bible is clear that we have already entered into the experience of resurrection life through our union with the risen Lord and the Spirit of the risen Christ who dwells within us (cf. Rom. 8:9). Even now, the Bible says, we are a “new creation”—a “new man”—walking in newness of life (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; Rom. 6:4). The resurrection has begun already. Christ’s resurrection is not just a past historical event; it’s a constantly working reality in the present. His resurrection life today not only guarantees our own bodily resurrection in the age to come but has actually brought the powers of that future age—of resurrection life—into our own present experience. So the writer of Hebrews says that we have tasted already the powers of the age to come (Heb. 6:4-5). That’s not just fancy talk. None of this is. The writer of Hebrews shows how this is practically possible when he says that we are those who share in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:22–23; 2 Cor. 1:21–22; 5:4–5; Eph. 1:13–14; 1 Pet. 4:14). The indwelling Holy Spirit mediates to us the resurrection power and the resurrection life of Christ already, even as we still await the full experience of that resurrection when even our bodies are made like His glorious body (cf. Phil. 3:20-21).

We can—and we must—say that the resurrection has already begun because we can never artificially separate between the bodily resurrection and our spiritual resurrection. The future resurrection of the *body* is a resurrection to *spiritual* life – a life that has in a very real way already been given to us to enjoy in the present. We could say it like this: That future resurrection of our bodies is simply the culmination of the resurrection that began the very moment our dead hearts came to life – the very moment that we were raised up with Christ through faith. So listen to what Jesus says in John chapter five:

VI. The future resurrection of the dead has already begun — John 5

- John 5:24 — Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me *has* eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but *has passed* from death to life.

As one commentator says, “If some have [indeed] ‘passed from death into life’, then ‘the dead’ have come alive, and this means resurrection” (Michaels). This explains why Jesus goes on to say this:

- John 5:25–27 — Truly, truly, I say to you, **an hour is coming [not yet], and is now here [already]**, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to **execute judgment**, because he is the Son of Man.

When Jesus says “an hour is coming *and* is now here” what does this mean? He’s saying that the *future* is now *here* and “the long-expected resurrection is under way” (Michaels). D.A. Carson says: “Here... the coming hour already is: the resurrection life for the physically dead in the end time[—that very resurrection life—]is already being manifest as life for the spiritually dead.”

- Ephesians 2:4–6 — But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.
- Colossians 2:11–13 (cf. Deut. 30:1-6) — In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.
- Romans 6:12–13 — Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Returning now to John, what about those who don't hear and who therefore don't "live"? What about those who remain dead in their sins? The Son has received authority not only to give eternal, resurrection life, but also to "execute judgment." And so we see that the final judgment, too (to which the unbelieving dead will be resurrected), is already at work in the present.

- John 12:31 (cf. 16:8-11) — Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.
- John 3:18–19 (cf. 9:39) — Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

Can you feel the urgency of these words? Are you still loving the darkness rather than the light that has come into the world? If so, then you are standing even now, at this very moment, under judgment and condemnation. Won't you then repent and believe and "love" the light?

For all those who have heard the voice of the Son of God in the preached Gospel and been raised to life, can you hear in these words the eschatological joy that is already ours? As Leon Morris says: "In [Christ] the last age is vividly present." When was it that Christ appeared? The writer of Hebrews says that "He has appeared once for all **at the end of the ages** to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). Therefore, as Paul says, we are those "on whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11). If the resurrection of the dead has already come in the resurrection of Christ then the "end" is obviously already here. We are those who live in the Spirit, in the presence and power of the resurrected Christ. And do we know what this must mean? After saying "the hour is coming, and is now here" Jesus goes on to say:

- John 5:28–29 — Do not marvel at this [that the future is already here], for **an hour is coming** when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Jesus isn't trying to rein us in again and make sure we don't get too excited about the eschatological realities of our present, lived experience. Not at all! Jesus is simply rooting the eschatological realities of our present lived experience in the realities of that day that's still to come. As Herman Ridderbos puts it: "There is no question of two mutually exclusive eschatologies or of an 'apocalyptic compensation' in vs. 28 and 29 for the 'now' in vs. 25. We see, rather the inseparable connection between the present and the future." Jesus wants us to see that our present resurrection life in Christ through the Spirit is simply our experience in the present of the powers that belong in their fullness to the age to come. In the same way, the judgment and condemnation under which people stand today is simply the present reality of a future condemnation when they will be raised physically only to experience the second death. Jesus said:

- John 12:48 — The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has [even now] a judge; the word that I have spoken [already] *will* judge him on the last day.

In light of all these things, listen now to this exchange between Jesus and Martha when her brother Lazarus was still dead and in the grave.

- John 11:23–26 — Jesus said to [Martha], "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" [not yet]. Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life [already]. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."

And then what did Jesus do? He went to the tomb of Lazarus and told them to take away the stone and then He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out" (Jn. 11:38-43). And Lazarus heard His voice and came out. Why did Jesus do this? In order to help us all see that the resurrection of the dead has begun and is already here in Him, because He *is* the resurrection and the life. Now, then, we can see that it's in this resurrection (already and not yet) that the true end of exile—for which Daniel longed—has come (already and not yet). Jesus said:

- John 10:16 — I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.
- John 11:51–52 — [Caiaphas] prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

Looking back from our vantage point after the mystery of the kingdom has been revealed, we can see why the angel locates the *future* resurrection even in the days of the first century – because that's when the resurrection *began* in the resurrection of Christ and in our being made to share with Him, already, in His resurrection life. Because that's when the bones of God's dead *Old Covenant* people were raised to life in the *New Covenant* – when God put His Spirit within them, and within all of us. Therefore, it's also in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that the final, eschatological judgment has become a present reality for all who refuse to come to Christ.

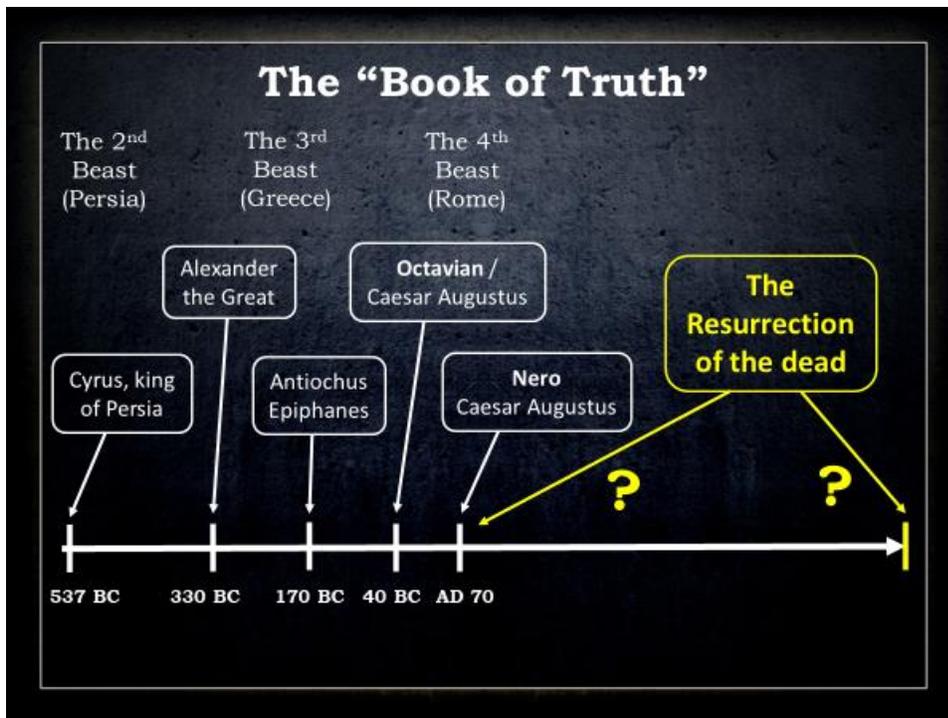
Conclusion

There is no “gap” of any kind in Daniel 12 – or anywhere else in Daniel. There is only the wonderful, and also the sobering reality of the future already powerfully here in our present. (See chart on p. 9.)

- Daniel 12:1-2 — *At that time* shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time [the destruction of Jerusalem in 67-70 AD]. But *at that time* your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And of those sleeping in the dust of the earth multitudes shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

It's only in the resurrection of Jesus that the exile of God's people (cf. Dan. 1:1-7) is finally ended.

On that final day, will you awake to everlasting life or will you awake to shame and everlasting contempt? Are you living today under the sentence of death and condemnation or are you living today as one who has been raised up with Christ to walk each and every day in the power and the joy of His resurrection life?



The "Book of Truth"

The 2nd
Beast
(Persia)

The 3rd
Beast
(Greece)

The 4th
Beast
(Rome)

