

Non-dispensational debates on eschatology have become big news. The topic of the resurrection is often at center stage. What passages deal with the physical resurrection of the “self-same bodies” (Westminster Confession of Faith: 32.2) and “the very same body” (Larger Catechism Q/A 52) at the physical return of Jesus at some time in the future? Larger Catechism Q/A 87, “What are we to believe concerning the resurrection?” uses Daniel 12:2 as a proof text: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

There’s a lot of debate about Daniel 12:2. Kenneth Gentry, a vociferous critic of full preterism, does not agree that Daniel 12:2 refers a future physical resurrection:

In Daniel 12:1-2 we find a passage that clearly speaks of the great tribulation in AD 70: “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued” (12:1). But it also seems to speak of the resurrection occurring at that time: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt” (12:2).

How are we to understand this passage? Does Daniel teach that the eschatological, consummate resurrection occurs during the great tribulation in AD 70? No, he does not. Let me explain.

Daniel appears to be presenting Israel as a grave site under God’s curse: Israel as a corporate body is in the “dust” (Da 12:2; cp. Ge 3:14, 19). In this he follows Ezekiel’s pattern in his vision of the dry bones, which represent Israel’s “death” in the Babylonian dispersion (Eze 37).[1] In Daniel’s prophecy many will awaken, as it were, during the great tribulation to suffer the full fury of the divine wrath, while others will enjoy God’s grace in receiving everlasting life. Luke presents similar imagery in Luke 2:34 in a prophecy about the results of Jesus’s birth for Israel: “And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, ‘Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed.’”

So the resurrection in Daniel 12 does not associate the consummate resurrection with the AD 70 tribulation. Daniel only picks up on resurrection imagery and, like Ezekiel, applies that to corporate

Israel. He is teaching that in the events of AD 70, the true Israel will arise from old Israel's carcass, as in a resurrection.[2]

When I pointed out Gentry's position to Andrew Sandlin, a strident critic of full preterism and not much of a fan of partial preterism his comment was, "I follow Calvin." That's it? No exegesis needed. Calvin has spoken. Let's move on. But no attack on Gentry's position.

The following is from James B. Jordan's commentary [*The Handwriting on the Wall*](#) published by American Vision:

Verse 2 [in Daniel 12] is often cited as proof that there was a belief in the resurrection of the body in the Old Testament times. In fact, though, this verse does not teach that. From a Christian standpoint, the resurrection of the body from the grave is clear in the Old Testament (e.g., Job 19:25-27),[3] and so no such "proof text" as this is necessary. In other words, we do not need to cling to this text in such a way as to fear exploring other alternatives.

There are six possibilities that present themselves here. The first is that this refers to the physical resurrection and judgment of all persons at the end of history. The problem is that this event takes place at the end of the period being described, when Michael delivers Israel and brings the gospel. Also, it only applies to "many," not to "all," alluding back to Daniel—it is Daniel's people who are spoken of. Thus, the last judgment does not fit the context.

Second, N. T. Wright has suggested that verse 2 is a promise of eventual resurrection, placed here because Jesus' own resurrection involves the eventual resurrection of all mankind to blessing or judgment. That is, the physical resurrection of all mankind is part of the reality brought by "Michael," and so it is mentioned here, though it only happened to Jesus Himself at this time.[4] The problem again is that only "many" are raised.

The third option is that this refers in general to the spiritual resurrection of believers. This won't work because wicked people are also being raised.

A fourth possibility is to refer this verse to the "life from the dead" resurrection of Romans 11, when a large number of Jews repent and turn to Christ. I believe this event took place before the destruction of Jerusalem and is also portrayed in Revelation 7.[5] The resurrection spoken of in Romans 11, however, applies only to the saved, and wicked people are also raised here in Daniel 12:2.

A fifth possibility is that this refers to the emptying of sheol into heaven when Christ ascended there. This is a concept less familiar to us today, and will be explained below.

And a sixth possibility is that the resurrection here is a national resurrection like the one portrayed in Ezekiel 37. This is the only credible possibility.

Looking first at the fifth possibility, ascension to heaven: Until Jesus went into heaven, nobody went into heaven. Those who died from Adam to Christ went to sheol, which the New Testament calls hades. The righteous went to Abraham's Bosom, also called in theology *Limbus Patrum*, while the wicked went to an uncomfortable place. After Jesus' death He descended to sheol and sorted the dead. When Jesus ascended into heaven, He emptied Abraham's bosom and brought all the righteous dead to heaven with Him. The wicked in sheol, however, are not brought up to

heaven until the end of time, when they are cast into the lake of fire that is before the throne of God (Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10-15).

It is possible that the first resurrection of Revelation 20:4-6 refers to the ascension of the Old Covenant saints to heaven, to be seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father, and to reign with Him as kings and priests for a thousand years. Meanwhile, Christ and the Church on earth are binding Satan from deceiving the nations for the same thousand years (Rev. 20:1-2; Matt. 16:18-19). On the basis of Revelation 6:9-11, and the fact that Revelation 20 comes after Revelation 19, my guess is that the ascension of the Old Covenant saints to reign with Christ happened in ad 70, not ad 30.[6]

It is likely that Daniel 12:13 refers to this event. Daniel is told that he will enter into rest and then rise for his allotted portion at the end of the days. In context, the end of the latter days refers to the coming of Christ, for throughout Daniel the prophetic period is the Restoration Era, and that is what "latter days" and "time of the end" refer to.

Thus, possibly the resurrection of Daniel 12:2 refers to this same event, especially since it appears right after the statement about the Great Tribulation to come. We have to discard this possibility, however, since Revelation 20 says that the wicked in sheol do not rise for their judgment until after the millennium, at the last judgment.

In context, those who sleep in the dust of the earth are parallel to Daniel, who fell into deep sleep with his face to the earth when God appeared to him at the beginning of this vision. Daniel's resurrection is a type and foreshadowing of the resurrection spoken of here.

The resurrection of verse 2 seems to connect to the evangelistic and teaching ministry spoken of in verse 3; thus, it is some kind of historical resurrection that is spoken of, a resurrectional event in this world, in our history.

The solution to our difficulty is found in Ezekiel 37. There the prophet is told to prophesy to the dead bones of the idolaters scattered all over the mountains of Israel (see Ezekiel 6:5). Ezekiel prophesies and the bones come to life again. This is explained in Ezekiel 37:11 as the national resurrection of Israel after the captivity. The language used by God is very "literal sounding," to wit: "I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves" (vv. 12-13). Yet, this graphic language refers to the spiritual resurrection of the nation.

Now clearly, the resurrection of the whole nation does not mean the salvation of each individual. Thus, Daniel 12:2 tells us that in the days of Jesus the nation will undergo a last spiritual resurrection, but some will not persevere and their resurrection will only be unto destruction. The Parable of the Soils fits here (Matthew 13:3-23): three different kinds of people come to life, but only one of the three kinds is awakened to persevering, everlasting life.

During His ministry, Jesus raised the nation back to life. He healed the sick, cleansed the unclean, brought dead people back to life, restored the Law, entered the Temple as King, etc. Then, as always, the restored people fell into sin, and crucified Him.

Thus, a resurrection of Israel is in view. The wicked are raised, but do not profit from it, and are destroyed. The saints experience a great distress, and live with God forever and ever.[7]

What, then, is the great distress? Many are persuaded that the Great Tribulation predicted by Jesus in Matthew 24 must refer to an event just before His second coming at the end of history. Hence, they feel forced to see the coming of Michael as the second coming, and the resurrection as a literal physical resurrection. This view, however, will not stand close inspection.

The Great Tribulation was clearly something that happened in the days of the Apostolic Church. The whole context of Matthew 23-25 is judgment upon the world, centered on the Jews and Jerusalem, shortly after Jesus' vindication. This is clear from Matthew 23:35-36 and 24:34, which say that the judgment will come upon "this generation," a term that never means "this race of people" but always means "this particular generation of people." These facts, and others that also prove the position, have been pointed out repeatedly. The literature on this is enormous, and it is nothing short of perverse for commentators to continue to insist that the Great Tribulation is still in the future.[8]

The statement "And there will be a time of distress, such as never was since there was a nation until that time" perfectly matches what Jesus said in Matthew 24:21, "And at that time there will be a Great Tribulation, such as has never occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall." This statement by Jesus makes it clear when the "time of distress" took place, and also makes it clear that nothing like it will ever happen again. There will be no "Great Tribulation" just before Jesus returns, though there will be a "small tribulation" (Revelation 20:7-10).

Jesus repeatedly predicted the coming destruction of Jerusalem, and made it clear that this event was the vindication of His mission. Jesus came to die for His people, and until His own people underwent their own death and resurrection, His work was not publicly vindicated. His own resurrection vindicated Him personally, though this was not a public event because it was seen by only a few. The death of the Church in the Great Tribulation, and her resurrection after that event, were the great proof that Jesus had accomplished the work He came to do. The fact that the Church exists today, nearly 2000 years after her death in the Great Tribulation, is the ongoing vindication of Jesus' work.

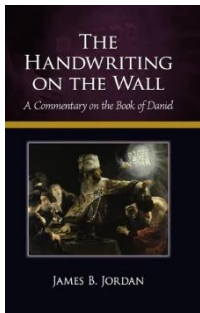
Looking now back at the text of Daniel 12:1-3, we can see from the fulfillments that the events associated with the coming of Michael are presented in reverse historical order, though in an important thematic order. In verse 1, we find that when Michael stands up the result will be a Great Tribulation. The ascension of Jesus to rule was the great provocation of the apostate Jews, as we see in the book of Acts. We see it particularly in Acts 7:55-56, where Stephen saw Jesus "standing" at the right hand of God, the position of rule, and then said that he saw the "Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." We read in the following verses that the crowd was enraged and rushed *en masse* upon Stephen to kill him. As Jesus had predicted, they said in effect, "We will not have this man [the Son of Man] to rule over us" (Luke 19:14).

We find at the end of Daniel 12:1 that the elect will all be delivered, as Jesus Himself also said (Matthew 24:21-22). Those who are delivered are "your people," Daniel's people, that is, those who are like Daniel in their faith.

We then read in verse 2 *why* there are people like Daniel. Before the Great Tribulation, Messiah Michael's ministry will raise Israel from sleeping in the dust of the soil. Daniel was raised from

the dust precisely so he could hear the word of God coming from God's angel. In the same way, Daniel's people will be raised from the dust by the ministry of Michael so that they can hear His Word. Some will accept that gospel, and others will reject it. It is those who awaken to everlasting life who will be delivered in the Great Tribulation.

Those who awaken to everlasting life will be set on high as rulers, as stars. This is picked up in the New Testament in two ways. First, all the saints are pictured as those who appear as "starlights" (*phosteer*) in the world (Philippians 2:15). Second, the pastors of churches are pictured as "stars" (*asteer*) in Revelation 1:16 and 20. Both faithful pastors and faithful saints are those who "turn the many to righteousness like the stars."



The Handwriting on the Wall

Unlike "liberal" commentaries, The Handwriting on the Wall takes seriously the claim that Daniel and his contemporaries put this book together. In this respect, this commentary stands within the mainstream of all Jewish and Christian commentaries. But unlike most "conservative" commentaries, the author, James B. Jordan, refuses to jump the prophecies off until the end of time, but takes seriously what they meant for those who heard them. [BUY NOW](#)

[1]"See: *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times*, 148. Thus, Da 12 does not directly teach individual, bodily resurrection. Nevertheless, the fact that it uses such language shows that a literal bodily resurrection lies behind the image, and so it indirectly affirms the future bodily resurrection."

[2]Kenneth L. Gentry, "Resurrection in Daniel 12:2" (Nov. 21, 2014): <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2014/11/21/resurrection-in-daniel-122/>

[3]Not all commentators agree with Jordan in their interpretation of Job 19:25-27. See Gary DeMar, "[Job, the 'Resurrection,' and His 'Miserable Comforters'](#)"

[4]*The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 109ff., *et passim*.

[5]See James B. Jordan, "The Future of Israel Reconsidered," *Biblical Horizons Occasional Paper* 18 (Niceville, FL: Biblical Horizons, 1994).

[6]On how this is presented in the book of Revelation, see James B. Jordan, *The Vindication of Jesus Christ: A Brief Reader's Guide to Revelation*, 3rd ed (Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press [1999] 2008).

[7]On death and resurrection in Daniel, and further support for this interpretation of Daniel 12:2, see chapter 4 of the present book.

[8]See the following partial listing: Gary DeMar, [Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church](#), 4th ed. (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999); Gary DeMar, [Is Jesus Coming Soon?](#) (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2006); R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 333-368.

