

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## Eternal Shining

*And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. (Daniel 12:3)*

This week's Gleaning is from Elder Rodgers' pen. Enjoy the sweet comfort.

As we come to the end of the vision given to Daniel, we are reminded of the concern that Daniel had as he fasted for three days and then was found praying by the bank of the river (10:4). He had been in captivity for essentially his entire life, beginning with his teenage years to now as an elderly man. During this entire time, Daniel was faithful and longed to see Jerusalem and Israel restored as a glory unto the Heavenly Father. No doubt he realized that he would not return again to that city on the hill where God met with His people above the ark of the covenant. But what about the people of the living God?

Although Daniel was informed of the more near-term events already described in previous writings, the messenger closes the "thing...revealed unto Daniel" by establishing a truth that stretches beyond this world. Yes, Daniel, the remnant will be tossed to-and-fro in a tug-of-war between nations, but as disturbing and disappointing as that may be there is hope beyond. There is coming a day...!

Through the ages there have been those who believe in an eternal existence but who reject a bodily resurrection. They believe that upon death we become spiritual beings that float about somewhere or that become part of the "energy of the universe." Others have totally discarded the idea of a resurrection and thus of God himself! The apostle Paul dealt with this issue with some in Corinth (1 Cor. 15) where he made the point that if there is no resurrection then Christ is not raised. And if Christ is not raised then we are all in our sins, making our faith nothing but vanity. Further, if this is the case then any hope we have in Christ is limited to this life only, with the result being that we are the most miserable lot of the whole bunch of humanity! Thankfully this is NOT the case! We are assured that Christ did arise from that tomb, and that he was the first of many that will follow. As has already been described in the previous writing, there will be a resurrection. It will be a general resurrection of both the just (to everlasting life) and the unjust (to everlasting contempt).

Verse 3 then hones in on those just and what will be their final state. The apostle Paul once said that he had learned to be content in whatever state (condition, circumstances) he faced here in this world. I believe that now, and for all of eternity, our brother Paul is much more than contented! The scriptures give us several examples of transformation from one status to another. Importantly God does not just deliver us from, but He also delivers us to. Please allow me to illustrate using Biblical concepts. God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, and He delivered them to the promised land of Canaan. David tells us in Psalm 40:2 that God delivered him (and I believe us also) out of the miry clay of the horrible pit and delivered him to a solid rock. Paul assures us in Colossians 1:13 that we have been delivered from the power of darkness and delivered to the kingdom of Jesus. Likewise we are told in the vision given to Daniel that not only will we be delivered from death, but we will be delivered to everlasting life. Furthermore, instead of our light being snuffed out, we will instead shine brightly forever.

No doubt we are to shine brightly in our current life. Jesus stated as much in what is typically referred to as the Sermon on the Mount. "Ye are the light of the world." We are not to hide that light, but rather should let it "so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven." Paul encouraged the saints at Philippi to "be blameless, and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world..." As told to the church at Ephesus, although we were sometimes darkness, now are we light in the Lord..." But our light in this world is temporary. What the Heavenly messenger reveals to Daniel goes beyond this realm into the reaches of everlasting glory. Daniel is told that the "wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament" and that those who turn to righteousness "as the stars for ever and ever."

Whenever I read about being wise, I immediately think of what Solomon teaches us regarding wisdom – and what a great teacher he is on that subject! The fear of the Lord is the

beginning of wisdom. I will iterate here that “fear” does not indicate being afraid of the Lord as though he might do harm, but rather having a respect for God because He is God. I believe one of the most relevant reasons why our nation and our world seems to be quickly headed in the wrong direction is that so many do not respect God as God. Of course, countless numbers of people do not even believe God exists, but even among those who do there is a loss of respect. There is no wonder, then, that there is also a loss of wisdom when there is such a dramatic loss of respect for God.

Similarly, there is an equal decline in the pursuit of righteousness. Again, Jesus encourages us to “hunger and thirst after righteousness” and to “seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” We are reminded of what the apostle Paul said about so many of his natural Jewish brethren, stating that they were going about trying to establish their own righteousness rather than realizing that the only true righteousness is that of Jesus Christ. Righteousness cannot be established in an unrighteous person any more than a leopard can change its spots. We are altogether unrighteous and there is none righteous, no not one.

What then is our hope? Our text, when “rightly divided” in concert with other scripture, gives us the answer. We are blessed with that “wisdom from above” and are created as a new man “which after God is created in righteousness...” Those whose names have been written in the book and chosen by God before the foundation of the world, being given that wisdom and clothed with that righteousness which is of God, will, upon their resurrection at the last day, “shine as the brightness of the firmament...as the stars for ever and ever.” Jesus also addressed this same sentiment, stating, “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Following the resurrection, when God shall gather His people and transport them from this temporary dwelling place called Earth to live forever in that placed called Heaven, then we shall be blessed to shine forever as little lights in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness!

One of the blessed points is that this situation will not be temporary, but eternal. Our existence there will not be one of looking to a deadly demise as we do here, but rather will be one of eternal bliss and Heavenly pleasures. What a message of comfort and hope was given to that dear saint, the faithful servant Daniel, as he stood there by the bank of the river in his old age concerned for the people of God. How he must have agonized over the temporal events revealed unto him as he envisioned the Israelites tossed

about as pawns in the chess game of history. But certainly he must have wept with joy at the thought that “every one that shall be found written in the book”, whether living or having died, shall be taken away to live forevermore!

But, we may ask, did Daniel really understand all of this? Did he really know what was being revealed to him? Did he comprehend the eternal aspect? Most certainly he did. Go back and read again those words in chapter 10 verse 1: “and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.” Daniel definitely understood! But do we have an understanding? Do we understand that, after our temporal existence, seemingly as a pawn in this chess game of life, that we, too, shall enter into that eternal existence with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Do we understand like Daniel did that, although the forces of this world may thrust us to and fro, we will eventually be delivered? Yea, verily, not just delivered from, but also delivered to. Even so Lord Jesus, come quickly!

Elder Mike Rodgers

As I read Mike’s thoughts, I recalled a captivating paragraph from C. S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia*, the final paragraph in *The Last Battle*.

And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.

The reality depicted in Lewis’ thoughts here serves as a bright reminder that our faith does not end with defeat, disillusionment, or disappointment, but with a glorious fulfillment beyond what we can now imagine. It does not end per se. It guides us through the dark shadows of this life until we arrive in glory. Faith is not the skeptic’s “blind leap in the dark,” but rather a most glorious leap into the light!

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Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.

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