

Daniel 12:1-4

Daniel 12:2,3 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

This brief passage in Daniel is said to be the most explicit Old Testament description of life after death. "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt..." Daniel was one of the last of the Old Testament books to be written and so some have concluded that life after death was not a concept that occurred or was even a concern of the Old Testament saints. These conclusions seem unwarranted to me and I think that a case can be made that the issues of the human state after death have always been of concern, going back to the beginning.

First, the concept of a life after death is part of the human consciousness that God created when He made us. Apart from Biblical revelation, humankind has always been concerned about what happens to us when we die. In the absence of an

authoritative source on the subject, we tend to become quite fanciful as we tend to always project our preferences into our concepts of reality. A great example would be the Hindu concept of reincarnation which is very ancient and which also has no connection to reality. Native Americans had their happy hunting grounds and the Egyptian pyramids were built to assure the eternal existence of their kings. There is something inside of us that needs to believe that physical death is not the end of our existence. This is a God created consciousness.

The Bible begins the story of human life with our creation by God into His own image. What does it mean for us to be made in the image of the eternal God who has always been and always will be? It does not follow that who we are could be limited to the brief experience of our three score and ten here in this life. The Tree of Life was in the original garden of Eden. To eat of it would be to live forever. Enoch walked with God and he was not for God took him. Took him where? Into what? Logically, Enoch was taken into God's presence where he enjoyed a conscious relationship with God. Elijah was also similarly transported but in a chariot of fire. Saul sought to make contact with the dead prophet Samuel

through a medium. The medium seemed quite surprised when Samuel showed up and spoke to Saul from the dead. Samuel could not have "come back" if he had ceased to be. David, upon the death of He and Bathsheba's son said, "I shall go to him but he shall not return to me." So David expected to have a conscious experience with his son in the afterlife. David also expressed certainty about his eternal state in the 16th Psalm, "Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope for You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

The New Testament perspective understood the Old Testament saints as being consciously motivated by a faith that believed in and anticipated eternal reward for their obedience to God. Of the ancient saints from Abel to Abraham and Sarah Hebrews says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth..." From the beginning, we have known that this life is not all there is.