

Daniel 12:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

This verse contains the Old Testament's clearest resurrection prophecy: "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." The phrase "sleep in the dust" represents death using common biblical euphemism (Psalm 13:3, John 11:11). The verb quts (קָוַת, "awake") means "to rouse" or "wake up," indicating resurrection as awakening from sleep. The word "many" (rabbim, רַבִּים) can mean "many" or "multitudes," possibly indicating all the dead rather than merely some.

The bifurcated resurrection—"some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"—introduces moral distinction in afterlife outcomes. This isn't universal salvation but differentiated destiny based on righteousness. "Everlasting life" (chayei olam, חַיָּה עַלְמָן) describes eternal existence in God's presence with resurrection bodies. "Shame and everlasting contempt" (charafot ledor'on olam, חָרָפּוֹת לְדָרְעָיוֹן עַלְמָן) depicts eternal conscious punishment—ongoing awareness of disgrace and divine rejection. The word "everlasting" (olam, עַלְמָן) appears twice, emphasizing that both destinies are permanent.

This prophecy established foundational eschatological truth that New Testament expands: bodily resurrection, final judgment, and eternal destinies of blessing or curse. Jesus taught this explicitly (John 5:28-29), as did Paul (Acts 24:15). The doctrine of resurrection undergirds Christian hope—death isn't final, and justice will be served when all rise for judgment. This points to Christ's resurrection as

firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:20), guaranteeing believers' future resurrection and demonstrating God's power over death.

Historical Context

During Daniel's time (6th century BC), Jewish understanding of afterlife was developing. Earlier Israelite theology emphasized corporate blessing in the land; individual resurrection became clearer through prophetic revelation. Daniel 12:2 provided crucial foundation for later Jewish beliefs. By Jesus' time, Pharisees affirmed resurrection while Sadducees denied it (Acts 23:8), indicating this doctrine's controversial nature.

This prophecy especially encouraged believers during persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, when many faithful Jews were martyred for refusing to compromise. The promise of resurrection assured them that physical death wasn't final defeat—God would vindicate the righteous through resurrection to eternal life. Early Christian martyrs similarly found hope in resurrection promises, trusting that present suffering was temporary but future glory eternal.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does understanding resurrection as bodily rather than merely spiritual change your perspective on physical existence and material creation?
2. What does the parallel duration of "everlasting life" and "everlasting contempt" teach about the permanence of both heaven and hell?

Interlinear Text

אַלְהָ	אֵלֶּה	יְצָא	עַפְרָה	מִשְׁנֵה	וְרַבּ	יִם
shall	be	awake	dust	of them that sleep	of the earth	many
H428	H6974	H6083	H127	H3463	H7227	And
עַזְלָמָה	לְדָרָא	וְלִדְרָא	וְלִפְרָא	וְלִפְרָא	וְלִפְרָא	לִפְרָא
everlasting	everlasting	everlasting	some to shame	some to shame	contempt	life
H5769	H428	H2781	H428	H2781	H1860	and
וְלִפְרָא	וְלִפְרָא	וְלִפְרָא	וְלִפְרָא	וְלִפְרָא	וְלִפְרָא	and
everlasting	everlasting	everlasting	everlasting	everlasting	everlasting	everlasting
H5769	H428	H2781	H428	H2781	H1860	H5769

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 26:19 (Parallel theme): Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Matthew 25:46 (Eternal Life): And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Ezekiel 37:12 (Parallel theme): Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

Revelation 20:12 (Parallel theme): And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Acts 24:15 (Parallel theme): And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 (Parallel theme): For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Isaiah 66:24 (Parallel theme): And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

Jeremiah 20:11 (Eternal Life): But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

Hosea 13:14 (Parallel theme): I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

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