

**Written by Rev. Dr. Charles D. Alley (Chuck), Rector of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia**

## **DANIEL 12:1-5    STARS**

<sup>1</sup> *“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. <sup>2</sup> Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup> Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. <sup>4</sup> But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”*

Once the Antichrist has had his way with the world, the result will be unparalleled suffering. But with the advent of divine intervention, the final vindication will begin. Not only will the living be brought into the presence of God and his judgment, but also the dead will be raised and stand before the throne. The wise who have remained faithful to God, those who in life witnessed to the truth of God, both the living and the dead, shall shine with the glory of God. The consequence of such a life is eternal life, a promise that rarely appears in the pages of the Old Testament, but is very familiar to readers of the New Testament.

To whom is the promise of eternal life given? The recipients of the promise are those who are termed wise. The *“wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness [are] like the stars.”* They are the ones who know the Truth and share the Truth with others. Throughout human history, man has been guided by the stars. The regularity and resultant predictability of the movement of the celestial lights have allowed humankind to navigate the featureless vistas of desert and sea. Those who follow God provide a reliable and consistent witness to the direction of the way to God and encouragement for others to follow Jesus.

How are we to become bright stars in the dark night sky of this world? The first step is to follow Jesus. That means that you must put his will before your will and do what God calls you to do. This obedience is both a response to the general commands found in Scripture, as well as the specific leadings of the Holy Spirit. The second step is to share what you know about Jesus with others. As God told Abram, we are blessed to be a blessing to others (Genesis 12:3). Our call in this world as followers of Jesus is to witness the Truth to others, in word and deed. The wise are those who obey God. God has commanded us to love our neighbors. The wise love their neighbors by leading them to God.

**Father, show me the way of righteousness that I might follow it in obedience to your perfect will. Send me into the world as a witness to you and empower me to love my neighbor without fear. Give me the courage to**

live my faith openly before those around me so they might see you, know you, and follow you. Amen.