



# **WELCOME TO BIBLE HOUSE OF GRACE**

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## **Sleeping in the Grave and Sleeping in Christ.**

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

# Sleeping in the Grave and Sleeping in Christ.

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## Topics.

- The dead will not awake nor be roused from their sleep.
- The stouthearted stripped of their spoil have sank into sleep.
- God sweeps mankind away as with a flood; they are as a sleep.
- Kings of the nations, all of them, sleep in glory.
- They may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake.
- Those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.
- Many bodies that had fallen asleep were raised.
- The story of Jesus waking Lazarus out of his sleep.
- David, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.
- Christ, the firstfruits of those that sleep.
- Many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.
- Whether we wake or sleep we should live together with him.
- Through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

**NOTE:** the purpose of this document is not to do an in-depth study on each topic, but simply to put the word sleep into its context to discover its meaning when it is linked to death.

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## SLEEP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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The following verses show that God's faithful are referred to as sleeping.

- The LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt *sleep* with thy fathers (Deut. 31:16).
- When thy days be fulfilled David shalt *sleep* with thy fathers (2 Sam. 7:12).
- For now shall I (Job) *sleep in the dust* and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be (Job 7:21).
- It will come to pass when, My (Bathsheba's) lord the king (David) shall *sleep* with his fathers (1 Kings 1:21).
- Hear me (David) O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest *I sleep the sleep* of death (Psalm 13:3).

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**JOB**

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## The Dead will not awake nor be Roused from their Sleep.

- **Job 14:10-15:** But man *dies* and is laid away; Indeed he *breathes his last* And where is he? <sup>11</sup>As water disappears from the sea, And a river becomes parched and dries up, <sup>12</sup>So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, They will *not awake* Nor be roused *from their sleep*. <sup>13</sup>“Oh, that you would *hide me in the grave*, That you would conceal me until your wrath is past, That you would appoint me a set time, and remember

me! <sup>14</sup>If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, *till my change comes*. <sup>15</sup>You shall call, and I will answer you; you shall desire the work of your hands.

This chapter begins with Job saying, "Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble, he comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not" (v1-2) which shows us that Job has all mankind in focus and not just those who are faithful to God. Job is in extreme sorrow, suffering and despair he views the grave as a place of escape from his deep despair and pain (as many do who suffer under terrible sicknesses and family loss often do). Notice Job says:

- Man lies down and does not rise *until* the heavens are no more (v12).

This immediately takes the mind of the ardent Bible student to the book of Revelation and the following words of John:

- Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them (Rev. 20:11).

Prior to this verse those who are sleeping in Christ have been raised in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) to rule and reign with Christ as priests of God and of Christ during his glorious millennial reign as King of kings and Lord of lords on earth. The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

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John tells us that over the group that attains to the first resurrection the second death, has no power (Rev. 20:4-6). The second death takes place at the end of Christ millennial reign as King of kings and Lord of lords on earth. At the end of Christ's glorious Kingdom age there is a battle between the Kingdom of men and the Kingdom of God (Rev. 20:7). The kingdom of men is destroyed by fire from heaven and then God descends to earth on a Great White Throne and from His presence earth and heaven are spoken of as fleeing away (Rev. 20:11). Then we are told that the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead who were in them.

This no-doubt includes the rest of the dead who did not attain to the first resurrection and who John said will not live again until the Lord's millennial reign had finished (Rev. 20:5). The great and small stand before God's throne and the Book of Life and some other books are opened, whoever name is not found in the Book of life is cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal death (i.e. total extinction) this is also called the second death. If a person name is found in the Book of Life then other heavenly books are opened and they are judged according, to what is written in these other books according, to what they had done, then death and the grave and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15) this is the second death. The following words of Job:

- They will not awake nor be roused from their sleep *until* the heavens are no more.
- Oh, that you would hide me in the grave *until* your wrath is past.
- I will wait *until* my change comes.

Clearly show that Job understood he would be resurrected from the grave and that sleep in the context of what Job is saying refers to mortal death of all mankind.

### The stouthearted Stripped of their Spoil Have Sank into Sleep.

- **Psalm 76:5-6:** The *stouthearted* were stripped of their spoil, they have *sank into sleep* and none of the men of might were able to use their hands. <sup>6</sup>At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are *cast into a dead sleep* (lay stunned in the ESV).

In this Psalm, it appears Israel has won a great battle and David is exalting God for giving them the victory. David is saying that even the courageous and brave (the stouthearted) of their enemies were left stunned and, in a stupor, because their defeat was so great and unexpected and that Israel's enemies were robbed of the spoils of war that they had expected to take from Israel. Thus, sleep in this sense carries the idea of the men of war who came against Israel being so stunned that they were left dazed and in a stupor.

### God Sweeps Mankind away as with a Flood; they are as a Sleep.

- **Psalm 90:3-6:** You *return man to dust* and say, "Return, O children of man!" <sup>4</sup>For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. <sup>5</sup>You sweep them away as with a flood; they are *as a sleep (like a dream in KJV)*, like grass that is renewed in the morning: <sup>6</sup>In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

Death in this context refers to all mankind in general and is likened to sleep or a dream. Moses in this Psalm is expressing the frailty of human life, how quickly it comes and goes and how easily it is cut short.

### Kings of the Nations, all of them, Sleep in Glory.

- **Isaiah 14:18-19:** All the kings of the nations, All of them, *sleep in glory* everyone in his own tomb; <sup>19</sup>But you (the king of Babylon) (v4) are *cast out, away from your grave* Like an abominable branch, Like the garment of those who are slain, Thrust through with a sword, Who go down to the *stones of the pit*, Like a *corpse* trodden underfoot.

The words, "The kings of the nations, all of them, sleep in glory means, that they were buried with honour, respect and in their own tombs. Isaiah in these verses is using graphic lofty language to depict God's disdain toward the king of Babylon and the type of death he will die. Isaiah is saying that the King will not be given honour and glory and be buried in a tomb as most kings are, but killed and either left to rot and decay on the surface of the earth or thrown into a pit as a twisted and mangled up corpse.

### They may Rejoice, and Sleep a Perpetual Sleep and Not Wake.

- **Jeremiah 51:39-41:** While they (Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon and his armies) (v34) are inflamed I will prepare them a feast and make them drunk, that they may become merry, then *sleep a perpetual sleep* and not wake, declares the LORD. <sup>40</sup>I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams and male goats. <sup>41</sup>"How Babylon is taken, the praise of the whole earth seized! How Babylon has become a horror among the nations!

The words, "They sleep a perpetual sleep," mean Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon and his mighty men of war will be slaughtered while they are in a stupor and sleeping because they have been feasting, reviling and

drinking an excess of wine and in this sense their sleep is perpetual because they will not wake from it since they will be killed.

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## DANIEL

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### Those that Sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall Awake.

- **Daniel 12:1-2:** And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. <sup>2</sup>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.

The words, "Sleep in the dust," clearly apply to the dead. Michael the angel of Israel will deliver Israel from their enemies when this climatic event takes place God's people who are alive and whose names are written in the Book of Life will be delivered from certain destruction and those who are dead will be resurrected some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (meaning to eternal death) (i.e., total extinction). For further information concerning the Book of Life, see the title:

- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.
- In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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## SLEEP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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## MATTHEW

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### Many Bodies that had Fallen Asleep were Raised.

- **Matthew 27:50-53:** Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. <sup>51</sup>And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split, <sup>52</sup>and the tombs were opened; and *many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised*; <sup>53</sup>and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

The difference between those who were raised out of their graves when Jesus breathed his last breath on the cross was that they only rose to mortal life whereas God raised Jesus to eternal life and eternal glory. The words, "Of the Saints" (v52) (referring to faithful believers), clearly shows that sleep in this context refer to those who had died with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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## JOHN

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### The Story Jesus waking Lazarus out of His Sleep.

- **John 11:11-14:** Jesus said to his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*; but I go, that I may *awake him out of sleep*." <sup>12</sup>Then said his disciples, Lord, if he *sleep*, he shall do well. <sup>13</sup>Howbeit *Jesus spake of his death*: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in *sleep*. <sup>14</sup>Then said Jesus unto them plainly, *Lazarus is dead*.

The following twelve steps give a brief progression of the chapter:

1. Jesus went to Lazarus and found that he had lain in the *grave* four days (v17).
2. Martha said, "Lord, if thou had been here, my brother had *not died*" (v21).
3. Jesus said to her, "Thy brother shall *rise again*" (v23).
4. Martha said, "I know that *he shall rise again* in the resurrection" (v24).
5. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the *life*: he that believeth in me, though he were *dead*, yet shall he *live*" (v25).
6. Mary hastily went out and Jews followed her saying, "She goes to the *grave*" (v31).
7. Mary said, "Lord, if thou had been here, my brother had *not died*" (v32).
8. Some said, "Could Jesus have prevented this man from *dying*?" (v36).
9. Jesus groaning in himself went to the *grave* (v38).
10. Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone." Martha, the sister of him that was *dead*, said to him, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead four days*" (v39).
11. Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth" (v43).
12. He that was *dead* came forth, bound hand and foot with *graveclothes*" (v44).

Jesus tells his disciples Lazarus is asleep, but he will go and wake him, the disciple thought this is good Lazarus is only sleeping, so Jesus told them Lazarus is dead and has been dead for four days. Martha meets Jesus and he comforts her by telling her Lazarus her brother will rise again, Martha replies, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus tells her he is the resurrection, and the life: whoever believes in him even though they mortally die they will live again eternally. Mary then goes to the grave and says to Jesus, if he had been with them her brother would not have died. Jesus tells the woman they will see the glory of God? (The resurrection is the glory of God). They remove the stone from the tomb and Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth and he did.

**NOTICE:** though Lazarus was dead in the tomb he heard Jesus voice. This is a small glimpse of first resurrection (Rev 20:5-6) when Jesus returns to gather all who have believed in him to himself. The moment the angel calls and the last trumpet of God sounds those who are sleeping in Christ will hear his voice and be raised. The difference between Lazarus resurrection and the first resurrection when Christ returns in glory is that Lazarus was raised to die again, whereas those who are raised when Christ returns are raised to eternal life and everlasting glory. The resurrection of all those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ when he returns is called the first resurrection (Rev 20:5-6). At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory.

**The beauty and glory of Martha's faith:** she was not only absolutely confident that whatever Jesus asked of God, God would grant it, but also totally confident and clearly understood that there would be a resurrection at the end of this present age and that her brother Lazarus would be resurrected when this glorious and majestic day arrived (v22-24). For further information see the title:

- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.
- In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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## ACTS

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### **David, fell on Sleep, and was laid unto his Fathers, and saw Corruption.**

- **Acts 13:32-37:** And we (Paul and the apostles) bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, <sup>33</sup>this he has fulfilled to us their children by *raising Jesus*, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you." <sup>34</sup>And as for the fact that he *raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption*, he has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David." <sup>35</sup>Therefore he says also in another psalm, "You will *not let your holy one see corruption*." <sup>36</sup>For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, *fell asleep* and was laid with his fathers and *saw corruption*, <sup>37</sup>but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

Sleep in this context applies to both King David's death and the death of Jesus. The difference between the two deaths is that David's body decayed in the grave whereas Jesus body didn't. This is what Paul means when he says, "Jesus was raised no more to return to corruption" (meaning no more to return to mortal death).

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## CORINTHIANS

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### **Many are weak and Sick among you, and Many Sleep.**

- **1 Corinthians 11:27-30:** Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup>Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup>For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup>That is why many of you are weak and ill, and and *many sleep*.

In Paul's generation, the Lord's Supper was a proper meal brothers and sisters shared together in their homes. In these verses, Paul is not saying that we should take a deep look inside ourselves to see if there is any hidden sin before we partake of the Lords Supper. Discerning the Body of Christ in this context does not refer to our own individual body, but the collective body of Christ (i.e., our brothers and sisters in Christ). Paul is talking to the religious rich leaders who believed they were partaking of the Lord's Supper, but were not sharing their food and drink with the poor and lowly.

These religious men were so puffed up in their pride and their exalted status that they did not discern that beggars, people in sackcloth, those they considered sinners, the lowly of no estate and others who had come from pagan religions who believed in Jesus also belonged to the body of Christ. The words, "The many who are weak, ill and sleep" in this context refers to the beggars and the poor who believed in the Lord, but have died because the prideful rich religious leaders would not share their food with them.

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## Jesus was seen by Five Hundred Brethren, but some are fallen Asleep.

- **1 Corinthians 15:3-6:** For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; <sup>4</sup>And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: <sup>5</sup>And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: <sup>6</sup>After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but *some are fallen asleep*.

Sleep in this context applies to faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who saw Jesus' resurrected body, but have since died.

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## They also which are fallen Asleep in Christ are Perished.

- **1 Corinthians 15:16-18:** For if the *dead rise not* then is not Christ raised: <sup>17</sup>And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then they also which are *fallen asleep in Christ* are perished.

Sleep in this context applies to those who believe in Christ and have died. This verse clearly shows that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central focus of the Christian faith since if Christ did not rise from the dead everything else written in the Bible is meaningless.

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## Christ, the Firstfruits of those that Sleep.

- **1 Corinthians 15:20-22:** But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the *firstfruits of them that slept*. <sup>21</sup>For since by man came death, by man came also the *resurrection of the dead*. <sup>22</sup>For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be *made alive*.

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Sleep in this context applies to the Lord Jesus Christ when he laid dead in the tomb and to the dead who have died with faith in Christ. This verse clearly shows us that no-one has yet been resurrected to heaven since if they had Jesus would not be the firstfruits of those who had died and been raised to eternal life and Paul would be making a false statement. Certainly, during the New Testament certain few were raised from the dead, but they were only raised to mortal life not eternal life. All who have died in Christ (the faithful of the Old and New Testament) will be raised in one glorious display of God's awesome and breathtaking power on that majestic day when the Lord returns and all those who have died in faith of the Old and New Testament will be raised to eternal glory and everlasting life.

**NOTE:** some people find it difficult to comprehend God raising the dead, but think of it this way: we have super computers today that have in their memories literally trillions of bits of information and at the touch of a key any one of those bits is resurrected to us on a brightly coloured screen (soon it is most likely they will simply appear in the air), then with another touch of the key it all vanishes into the super memory and is gone, until we resurrect it again.

Knowing that God has given his creation a mortal mind and finite memory to be able to build such amazing computers should make it very easy to understand how God keeps us all in His immortal mind and eternal memory waiting for the right time to touch the supernatural keyboard of heaven and raise us once again to life. Added to this very few Christians have any trouble believing God created the universe that we live in so raising the dead in comparison is not such a difficult task for such an awesome, powerful and majestic God (Hebrews 11:3).

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## Through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have Fallen Asleep.

- **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:** we (the apostles) do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are *asleep* that you may not grieve as others (non-believers) do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>For since we believe that *Jesus died and rose again*, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have *fallen asleep*. <sup>15</sup>For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that *we who are alive*, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen *asleep*. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. <sup>17</sup>Then *we who are alive*, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup>Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Asleep in this context from Strong's Concordance figuratively means to be deceased or to be dead. The words, "Those who have fallen asleep" (v13) refers to those who have died with faith in Christ. Scripture refers to them as being asleep in Christ because for them death is only temporary. From God's perspective, they are simply taking a long sleep until the angel of the Lord comes and wakes them up with the sound of the last trumpet.

## SLEEPING IN CHRIST

When a person dies, the Bible says they have no knowledge and know nothing they are totally unaware of it and are in a perfect state of peace (Eccles. 9:5, 10) this state is called sleeping in Christ. Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians refers to those who have died with faith in the Lord as sleeping in Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18). In, death there is no consciousness, so there is no time. It is very similar, to when a person is in a deep sleep, for them there is no awareness of time, when they wake, they have no idea of whether hours, days, weeks or months have passed.

Since there is no time in death the moment a Christian dies, is the moment they are in the Kingdom of God, for them it is instant, even though many years may have passed in our world of time. David died thousands of years ago, but the moment he is resurrected will be like the moment he breathed his last breath, because for him there is no awareness of time, so it is for brothers and sisters in Christ the moment they die is the instant they are with the Lord.

**Death to the Christian is similar, to a person in a coma:** a person in a coma has no consciousness of time, time does not exist to them, when they wake, they often think only a day or so have gone by when in actual, fact several years may have passed, yet they think they are waking up the same day or next day after they went to sleep. Likewise, a person in death is totally unaware of any time that they have spent being dead. Death to those who belong to Christ is much the same as the person in the coma, those who are sleeping in Christ are not only in perfect peace, but also have absolutely no consciousness of time so for them, the moment they die, is the moment they are instantly with the Lord, even though many years may have passed.

**It is the same principal as a person who goes into hospital:** when a seriously sick patient is about to be operated on who has a loved one standing alongside of them is given an anaesthetic and put to sleep, surgeons cut them up and take body parts out, over the next few hours, yet the patient is totally unaware of it. They wake up in a totally different room with the loved one still standing alongside of them and have absolutely no idea of the time that has passed. So, it is when brothers

and sisters die in faith Christ is standing with them when they take their last breath and when they wake to a totally different world, he is still with them. Just as the patient under anaesthetic was totally unaware that any time had passed so too will those who have died in Christ be. Paul tells those who have faith in Christ "Not to grieve over their dead as non-believers do" (v13). Paul is teaching the Thessalonians and by extension every brother and sister in Christ to live in the mindset that their loved ones who have died are in fact only sleeping until the Lord returns in contrast to unbelievers who have no hope of being resurrected to eternal life and everlasting glory in the eternal Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul commends the Thessalonian brothers and sisters for, "Waiting for God's Son from heaven" (v10) many sceptics today attempt to demean those who trust in Christ and degrade the Christian faith by mockingly saying that people have been waiting for the Lord to return for hundreds of years, but this is the wisdom of God. The Bible is written in such a manner that every generation is able to live with this glorious hope living in their heart and mind. No-doubt God designed it this way for two reasons:

1. Because this eternal hope produces tremendous joy in the heart and mind that no-one can rob and nothing can take it away
2. It anchors the heart, the mind and the emotions through troubling times.

Added to this it should always be remembered that no believer has ever waited for hundreds of years since the instant they die is the instant they are with Christ and therefore the longest any of us will ever wait is one lifespan and to God and to eternity that is like a blink of the eye.

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### **Whether we Wake or Sleep we should Live Together with Him.**

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- **1 Thessalonians 5:10:** Jesus died for us, that, whether *we wake or sleep* we should live together with him.

This is the glory of the Christian faith. Wake in this context refers to those who are alive when Christ returns and sleep refers to those who have died with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul is saying that both those who are alive and those who have died in faith will be gathered together with the Lord to eternal life and everlasting glory.

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### **SUMMARY OF SLEEP IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT**

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We began this study not to do an in-depth study on each topic, but simply to put the word sleep into its context to discover its meaning when it is linked to death. We have found that sleep when used figuratively in certain Scriptures refers to all who are dead whether they belong to God's Kingdom or not and that those who have died in Christ are referred to as sleeping in Christ.

The words, sleeping in Christ are a perfect title for brothers and sisters who have died in Christ for the following two reasons:

1. Sleeping in Christ carries the idea that they are in perfect peace and in God's favour and protection.
  2. Sleeping in Christ carries the truth that their death is only temporary since an awesome and majestic day is coming when God's angel will sound the trumpet and they will awake to eternal life and everlasting glory.
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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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