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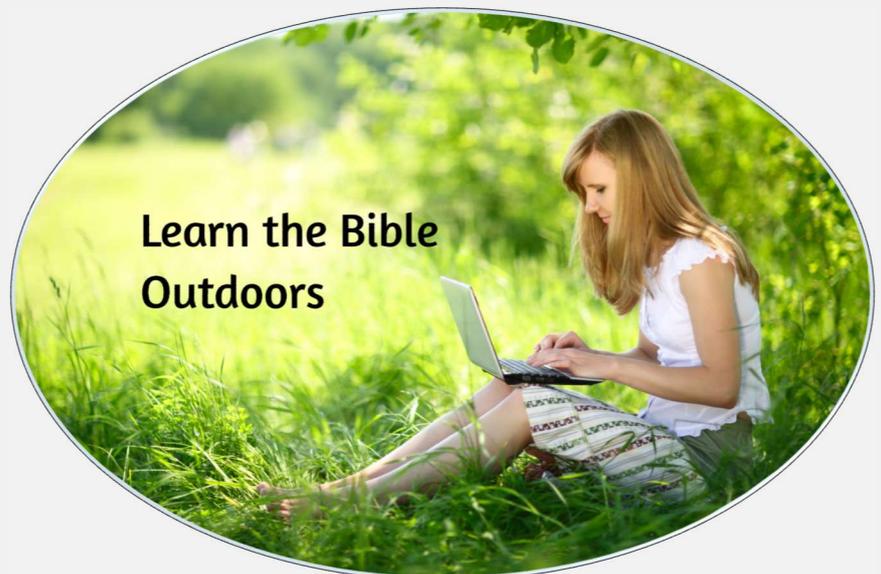
What Happens

when

We Die?

(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.

What Happens when we Die?

Topics.

- Man dies and perishes like the animals.
- Many who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.
- No-one has ascended to heaven.
- All who are in the graves will hear his voice.
- Old Testament saints died not having received the promise.
- Why are believers baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise?
- The Lord himself will descend and the dead in Christ will rise first.
- God has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.
- Absent from the body and present with the Lord.
- We walk by faith, not by sight.
- The parable of the rich man and Lazarus.
- This day you will be with me in paradise.
- Jesus Martha and the resurrection.

NOTE: This document is focused on discovering whether Christians ascend to heaven at death or remain without consciousness in perfect peace dead in the grave (i.e., sleeping in Christ) until the glorious and awesome day of the resurrection and if any verses teach or link death with eternal torment.

1

OLD TESTAMENT

THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

- **Genesis 2:17:** of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

God tells Adam that he will die if he eats of the tree of knowledge of good and evil which implies that had Adam never eaten of tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would never have died. Clearly Adam never had eternal life dwelling in him because if he had he would be like the angels who can never die, but had he not disobeyed God and eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would have continued to live in the paradise of the garden of Eden.

Man Dies and Perishes like the Animals.

- Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish (Psalm 49:12).
- For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing (Eccl. 9:5).
- Whatever you do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going (Eccl. 9:10).

These verses show that all mankind in their pride die:

- Just as the animals die.

- Have no consciousness and know nothing when they are dead.
- There is no work or knowledge or wisdom in the grave.

MANY WHO SLEEP IN THE DUST OF THE EARTH SHALL AWAKE

- **Daniel 12:2:** many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The dead will be woken-up: when death is called sleeping in Christ it is referring to those that belong to God and the family of Christ because though they are dead and know nothing meaning they are unaware of the fact they are dead because they have no consciousness of it nevertheless for them death is only temporary until they are woken up by the blast of the angels trumpet to be raised to eternal life and everlasting glory at the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5) when Christ returns in glory.

Sleeping in Christ: when a person who belongs to Christ dies, the Bible says, that they have no knowledge and know nothing, they are totally unaware of it and are therefore in a perfect state of peace, this state is called sleeping in Christ and because they have no consciousness there, is no time. It is very similar to someone in a deep sleep there is no awareness of time, when the person wakes, they have no idea of whether four, seven or twelve hours have passed. Likewise, because there is no time in death the moment a Christian dies is the moment they are in the Kingdom of God and with the LORD, for them it is instant, even though many years may have passed by in our world's 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 every Christian from death to Christ is instant.

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 has 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. The person in the coma or in death is totally unaware of any time that they have spent in the coma or being dead. Death to those who belong to Christ is much the same as the person in the coma, the dead or those who are sleeping in Christ 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 during the time they have been dead (i.e., sleeping in Christ).

It is the same principal as a person who goes into hospital for an operation: the patient is given an anaesthetic and put to sleep, surgeons cut them up and take bits out, over the next few hours, yet the patient is totally unaware of it they wake up and have absolutely no idea of the time that has passed, therefore when Paul says:

- We are of good courage, and we would rather be away (absent in the KJV) from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8).

It is a true statement, even though he may have spent years sleeping in Christ.

NOTE: a second reason a Christians death is called sleeping in Christ is because their death is only temporary, being asleep in Christ means everyone who dies in Christ is kept in the eternal mind and memory of God.

Jesus said:

- Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them falls to the ground without the father knowing it and even the hairs of our head are all numbered therefore we should not fear death because we are of more value than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29-31).

The entire person, (i.e., body, spirit, mind and consciousness) remains sleeping in Christ, until the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5) when all who are asleep in the Lord are woken up at the blast of the angels trumpet and raised from the dead to everlasting glory and clothed with an eternal and immortal body.

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 (Heb. 11:3).

NEW TESTAMENT

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

- **Luke 16:19-26:** There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³and in *hades* (the grave) being in *torment* he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side ²⁴And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this *flame*. ²⁵But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶And besides all this, *between us and you a great chasm has been fixed*, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.

Hades: (hell in the KJV) hades is of Greek origin it means unseen and refers to the grave.

Torment: means suffering extreme agony and pain or torture.

Sadly because the King James Bible has translated the Greek word hades to hell instead of the grave many have believed the sadistic teaching that the dead outside of Christ will go to a place called hell were they will live forever in an eternal state of consciousness and not only be cruelly and brutally tortured by evil creatures called demons or devils, but will also be continually scorched and burned by flames of fire for all eternity.

Consider for a moment: if this story of Lazarus is to be taken literally then it means that those who are resurrected to eternal glory will literally be able to look upon those outside of Christ who have been buried in their graves (including loved family members and friends) and see them in absolute torment because they are surrounded by flames of fire and being tortured by demons. It is hardly likely that those who are dwelling with Christ in glory will be so sadistic that they will want to view the terror of people being tormented by fire this would be more like a Hollywood horror movie than heavenly glory. Added to this when the rich man was extremely thirsty all he asks for is a tiny drop of water on the end of

Abraham's finger surely if this was a literal story the man would have asked for a glass of water at the very least. Therefore, we can conclude that Jesus is using lofty and graphic language to not only teach, but engrave into our minds a moral that he considers enormously important for us to learn.

Introduction to the parable: prior to this parable Jesus told the Pharisees it is impossible to serve God and money; no-one can serve two masters because they will favour one over the other. In response to this the Pharisees ridiculed him because they were lovers of money. Jesus tells them that their exaltation of money is revulsion in the sight of God and that though they justify themselves before men God knows their heart (v13-15). After this conversation with the Pharisees and rebuking them for their love of money he now tells this parable of a rich man and a poor man which clearly shows how God views money.

The Symbolism.

The rich man: is a symbol of the Pharisees.

The gate: refers to the gate of the temple.

Lazarus: is a symbol of the poor and suffering.

The rich man (Pharisees) never lacked for anything whereas Lazarus lacked everything, but even though he had nothing he daily sat at the gate of the temple (the House of God). The Pharisees who had an abundance of everything never once offered Lazarus any kind of help. They most likely considered him unclean and certainly not worth giving any of their time too. Lazarus desire to be close to the temple shows his heart felt passion for God so in this sense though by worldly standards he was poor he was nevertheless rich toward God. (No-doubt he was also sitting at the temple gate to collect alms, but there were many other places in the city of Jerusalem that he could have chosen to beg).

The importance of Abraham to the Jewish nation: God made the promise of an eternal kingdom to Abraham and his seed, Abraham gave birth to Isaac who gave birth to Jacob who had the twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel thus the nation of Israel came from the loins of Abraham, he is the father of the Jews. Jesus has not yet been resurrected to eternal glory so he uses Abraham as the example of those who will be in eternity because all Jews love Abraham and look up to him as the head of the Jewish race and the father of faith.

The poor man is carried by angels to Abraham's side: the rich man is buried in Hades (the grave) while Lazarus is carried to Abraham's side. To be carried to Abraham's side would be considered the greatest honour a Jew could attain to. Jesus is using the expression, "Abraham's Side" as a metaphor to show how delighted God's heart was toward the poor man Lazarus and he uses the expression torment and flames to show God's absolute disapproval toward the rich man.

Figuratively the angels carrying the poor man to Abraham's side is a symbol of the faithful being resurrected to eternal glory (v22).

A great chasm has been fixed: the great gulf between Abraham and the rich man refers to the Pharisees (symbolised by the rich man) rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the great chasm without faith in Christ no-one can enter into his eternal Kingdom. Added to this everyone's eternal destination is determined while they are alive once a person has died, they cannot alter their eternal fate.

Send Lazarus to my Father's House.

- **Luke 16:27-31:** And he said, 'Then I beg you, father to send him to my father's house ²⁸for I have five brothers —so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment ²⁹But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

³⁰And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹He said to him 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.' "

The majesty beauty and brilliance of Jesus: how fabulous and majestic is this; Jesus drops Abraham's name from this verse, so that it reads: -

- The rich man begs the Father to send Lazarus to his brothers (v27).

God the Father did send a man named Lazarus to the rich man's brothers (the Pharisees) and Jesus raised him from the dead and yet the Pharisees still refused to believe not only that, from that day on they made plans to have Jesus put to death. How true were the words of Jesus:

- They will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead (v21).

Read John chapter eleven and see how absolutely prophetic Jesus words were.

They have Moses and the prophets: Abraham told the rich man, "His brothers have Moses and the prophets (v29)." Moses spoke of the law of love since each one of the Ten Commandments regarding mankind protects the innocent from harm (i.e., do not murder, do not steal and do not commit adultery etc. The rich man's brothers (the Jews) did not listen to Moses, but instead had Jesus killed and those who followed the Lord put in prison, beaten and slaughtered. The rich man's brothers did not listen to the prophets since they clearly spoke of the coming of the anointed one, Israel's Messiah, and the rich man's brothers blatantly rejected him.

It is interesting to notice: Christ spectacularly raised Lazarus from the dead and still the Pharisees did not believe in Christ proving miracles as amazing as they maybe do not bring a person's heart to repentance, people may believe in the miracle, but that does not always translate into repentance.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE PLACE OF TORMENT

Some who believe in hell as an eternal place of torment use the rich man's words, "Lest they also come into this place of torment" to support their mistaken theory that those who deny God will be tormented in flames of fire and cruelly tortured by evil spirits called demons, but it must be remembered this is a parable that Jesus is using to teach an enormously important moral principal. The place of torment will be when Jesus returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth those who belong to Christ will be gathered together to be with Christ to rule and reign with him as kings and priests to God (1 Thess. 4:15-18) (Rev. 1:5-7) (Rev. 5:10), but there will be others who will be rejected (in this story of Lazarus it is the Pharisees who will be rejected) when they see the poor and those they despised and looked down upon as being worthless sitting with Abraham in the Kingdom of God that will be the moment of their mental torment.

The Pharisees were so full of pride, loved money more than God and were in the ministry not to serve God, but for their own selfish ambition and gain. They were full of self-righteousness and believed they deserved they were worthy of entry into God's eternal Kingdom, but Jesus rejects them saying that they were workers of iniquity. The place of torment (v28) is standing before Christ and being rejected especially if a person is so self-righteous, they believe they are far more worthy than others. The eternal torment is being cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal death (i.e., total extinction) this is why it is referred to as eternal torment their judgment is sealed it cannot be changed they are eternally cast away from the glorious light of the eternal Kingdom of God by the darkness of eternal death.

It is interesting to notice: that there is no mention of heaven in the entire parable it simply states that the rich man saw Lazarus in a far-off place. This parable cannot be used to teach doctrine as that is not the purpose of a parable. A parable is mostly a short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or teaches a religious lesson or principle. To build doctrine from a parable will only lead to false teachings.

The moral of the parable: Jesus is speaking to the very rich Pharisees who were the religious leaders of Jesus generation they had enormous authority and power over the entire nation of Israel, but were consuming their abundant wealth on themselves, oppressing the people for their own gain and never offering any help to the poor and needy. Jesus is using biblical lofty and graphic language to shine a brilliant spotlight on the following two truths:

1. The prideful, self-righteous and hypocritical religious leaders, who believed they were right with God, were in reality an absolute offense to Him.
2. To comfort all the faithful in Christ who like Lazarus are less fortunate and suffering hardships that they are worthy in God's eyes and will be highly exalted at the return of Christ.

The practical application of the principal taught in the parable is that no matter how famous, powerful or successful a person's ministry appears they themselves will be cast down to the grave if they have used their ministry to fulfil their own selfish ambition and oppressed their follows to increase their own wealth. On the other side the story is a tremendous comfort to the humble and faithful in the Lord who are lacking the riches of this world and in deep grief, suffering extreme sickness or agonising famine and hunger because Jesus in this parable is clearly teaching that they will be resurrected to eternal glory and everlasting life.

The following are other verses that picture people weeping and gnashing their teeth because they have been rejected entry into the eternal Kingdom of Christ.

(Matt. 8:10-12) (Matt. 13:40-43-50) (Matt. 22:11-14) (Matt. 24:45-51) (Matt. 25:29-34).

For further information see, the titles:

- Hell, or the Grave (Final destination of humans without Christ).
- Heaven.

Both titles are in Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

JESUS PROVES TO THE SADDUCEES THAT THERE MUST BE A RESURRECTION

- **Luke 20:27-33:** Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, ²⁸saying: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁹"Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and died without children. ³⁰"And the second took her as wife, and he died childless. ³¹"Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died. ³²"Last of all the woman died also. ³³"Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife."

In these verses the Sadducees are not asking this question because they want to know the answer, but to trap Jesus out since they don't believe in the resurrection, but Jesus is always stunning in his answers when his opposes try to trap him in conversation.

The following verses are the Lord's answer:

- **Luke 20:34-38:** Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, ³⁵but those who are considered *worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead* neither marry nor are given in marriage, ³⁶for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. ³⁷But that the *dead are raised*, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. ³⁸Now he is *not God of the dead, but of the living*, for all live to him."

The Sadducees don't believe in the resurrection, but they did strongly believe God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob so Jesus points out that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have died and are buried in their father's tombs and that God has said that, "His name is, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Exod. 3:13-15) so if there is no resurrection, God has named Himself after dead people and God would never do that since he is the God of the living. The Sadducees who knew the Old Testament Scripture would have instantly understood that what Jesus was saying and that it meant that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will have to be raised to eternal life at the resurrection. Once again Jesus has turned his opponents' question against them in brilliant wisdom and logic. Within Jesus answer is the glory the wonder and beauty of the Christian faith since it shows that all who belong to Christ's family:

- Will be raised to eternal life.
- Are equal to the angels and are sons and daughters of God.

This is the wonder and stunning glory of those who attain to the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5-6).

THIS DAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE

- **Luke 23:43:** Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

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This single verse has been held to provide evidence that Jesus expected an immediate presence in heaven for himself and the thief on the cross. Certainly, upon reading this it seems to imply that the criminal would be with Jesus in paradise that very day, but Jesus did not ascend to heaven for another three days, so the criminal could not possibly have been with Jesus in paradise on that very day, so what did Jesus mean? It is helpful to remember that the original manuscripts of the Bible did not have the verse references or commas in them; it was the translators of the original manuscripts who have added them to make it easier for people to find a particular verse. The comma in this sentence should be after the today instead of before it, then it would read:

- Truly, I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise.

Jesus is saying to the criminal:

- Today I am telling you that you will be with me in Paradise.

Meaning when everyone is resurrected to be with Christ the criminal will be with them this is in total harmony with all the Bibles teaching regarding the resurrection.

The following are some Old Testament examples of the coma being used in this manner:

- You shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong (Deuteronomy 11:8).
- Therefore you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, on Mount Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:4).
- Moses said I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I am no longer able to go out and come in (Deuteronomy 31:2).

These verses show that it would be perfectly natural to punctuate Luke 23:43 as follows:

- Truly I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise.

Paul uses a similar turn of phrase saying:

- Therefore I testify to you *this day* that I am innocent of the blood of all men. (Acts 20:26).

In view of the thief's request, the reply of Jesus makes good sense to be punctuated in this way he had asked that Jesus remember him when he came in the power of his Kingdom, that is, at the resurrection when the Kingdom is to be manifested in glory. The Lord's assertion more than satisfies the thief's request since he assures the criminal that he is remembered on that very day, in advance of the coming of the Kingdom. The thief will indeed be with Jesus in the paradise of the future Kingdom. The following gives us two more evidence that this is how Luke 23:43 should be read:

1. Jesus said, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40) and King David spoke concerning the resurrection of the Lord saying that "Christ's soul was not left in Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption" (Acts 2:31). According to these words of Jesus concerning Jonah and King David's prophecy of Jesus death, cited by Peter, Jesus was in the tomb until the resurrection, therefore, Jesus could not have been in paradise on the day of his crucifixion.
2. Jesus said to Mary, "Do not cling to me, *for I have not yet ascended to my Father*; but go to my brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.'" Even on the Sunday of his resurrection Jesus had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:17).

Ever wondered were paradise is: John in the book of Revelations wrote, "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev 2:7). Paradise refers to when Christ returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice joy and peace on earth (the restored Garden of Eden).

ALL WHO ARE IN THE GRAVES WILL HEAR HIS VOICE

- **John 5:28-29:** Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

These verses clearly show that it is the whole person and not just the body that is being resurrected to life or condemnation. Those who have done good applies to actions it embraces all who show compassion and love and do-good to others, while those who have done evil applies to anyone who has deliberately done harm physically, financially, emotionally or spiritually or oppressed and used others for their own selfish gain. The resurrection will be much like that of Lazarus from the tomb, only far more glorious and spectacular. Though Lazarus was dead (in body, mind and consciousness) Christ raised him to life, but unlike those who will be raised to eternal life when Christ returns Lazarus was only raised to mortal life. The point of this is that Lazarus was a godly man who had died and Christ raised him as a whole person (in body, mind and consciousness) from the grave.

JESUS MARTHA AND THE RESURRECTION

- **John 11:23-27:** Jesus said to Martha, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

Jesus said to Martha:

- Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? (v26).

This verse is sometimes used to prove that those who have died will arise from the dead immediately into the presence of God, but if it is translated this way it is in conflict with the verse before it since Jesus says to Martha:

- I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live (v25).

Jesus is telling Martha that he is the resurrection and the life, anyone who believes in him though they may mortally die they will be raised in the resurrection and live eternally. Jesus is saying that all humans die, but if they believe in him, they will not die permanently, their death is only temporary (that is why it is called sleeping in Christ).

Jesus said:

- This is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:40).

All who belong to Christ have the promise of eternal life in them, they have the life of the coming age dwelling in them, but the reality of it does not precede the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5-6) which is at the return of the Lord. This glorious and majestic event ushers in the beginning of Christ's reign as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth. Through the entire New Testament, the resurrection theme recurs as a kind of chorus for the coming New Age of Christ's glory. The resurrection is the central focus and hope of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. Hope in this context is not called hope because it might or might not happen, but because it is unseen and yet future. The hope itself is guaranteed because it is based on God's promise and he cannot lie.

- The apostle Paul wrote; "In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2).

The Christian hopes to be resurrected from the grave to be raised up to eternal life and everlasting glory to be made perfectly free from sin; to be everlastingly happy, but it is faith that gives these things a mental reality in the mind and it is under this influence of faith that those in Christ allow these unseen and yet future events to control their mind as if they were a reality now. The difference between faith and hope is that by faith alone we are sure of eternal salvation it is certain and guaranteed by faith whereas by hope we look forward with confidence that we will be raised to eternal salvation. All Christian hope stands on faith since it is faith that secures and guarantees the promise of God; which means that faith and hope go together they are partners that complement each other since the same things that are the focus of our hope are the same things that our faith is trusting in.

Faith secures, while hope looks forward
to what is secured by faith.

THE DEAD IN THE GRAVE ARE WAITING A DAY OF RESURRECTION

- **Acts 2:34:** David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand.

This verse is part of Peter's sermon at Pentecost in which Peter shines a spotlight on the truth that, "David the patriarch died and was buried and his tomb is still with them" and proclaims to the multitudes who are listening that, "David has not yet ascended into the heavens." Even though being a prophet David foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ and proclaimed that the Lord would not be abandoned to the grave nor would his body decay, because he would be raised up out of it to the right-hand side of God (Acts 2:29-34). David being a prophet knew his dead body in contrast to Christ's would decay in the grave until the day of resurrection of all the faithful who have died in Christ. Clearly the words, "David did not ascend into the heavens" shows that David's body is still in the grave awaiting with all who have died in Christ to be resurrected together to meet the Lord in the air and be forever with him.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

- **1 Corinthians 15:3-6:** For I (Paul) delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that he was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that he was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

Christ's death: Christ did not die on the cross and immediately his body, mind, consciousness, mind and spirit went to heaven to be with God, while his body stayed in the tomb. Then three days later his consciousness, mind, soul and spirit came back into his dead body that would mean only his body died, but the real-self or persona inside the body did not that is not the biblical teaching of death or of the Bibles teaching of the resurrection of the dead.

Biblical death: is the death of the entire person their body, mind, consciousness and spirit. When Christ said on the cross, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit" it is the same as saying, "Father into your hands I commend my life." Jesus was saying that he trusted his heavenly Father to raise him from the dead. Jesus is the first man to be resurrected to eternal glory. It is because of his death and resurrection that all who belong to Christ have total trust in the Father that they also will be raised from the grave in the same manner. Paul use of the words 'he' in these verses show that Jesus the whole person died and was buried in the tomb for three days. He is every faithful believers' example this is why he is called the firstfruits of the dead and why the Christian hope is focused on the resurrection of the dead. Paul wrote:

- Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).
- But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ (1 Corinthians 15:23).

Jesus himself said:

- No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man (John 3:13).

If others had been raised from the dead to eternal life, Paul's words that Jesus is the firstfruits would not be a true statement neither would the words of Jesus that no one has ascended into heaven. It is important to understand that the power of Christ's cleansing blood flows back to the foundation of the earth and that the faithful of the Old and New Testament are save by the same Saviour and Redeemer. In the book of Revelation, it is written:

- All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8)

And Peter wrote:

- You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot foreordained before the foundation of the world and manifest in these last times for you (1 Peter 1:18-20).

These verses shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth that Jesus was not only the central focus of God's eternal mind and of His eternal plans and purposes for mankind's salvation and for eternity, but also the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The cleansing power of Jesus blood shed on the cross of Calvary doesn't just cover and cleanse only those who have come to the Lord after his death and resurrection, but flows all the way back to the foundations of the earth to Adam and Eve like a spiritual invisible river cleansing all the faithful of the Old Testament from the fall of Adam onward who by faith looked to the appearing of the promised Messiah the Christ. The faithful of the Old Testament were saved by their faith that the blood of their sin sacrifices (shadows of Christ) covered their sin and by their faith in the promised seed of the woman spoken of in (Genesis 3:15), in the prophet Moses said was to come like him, in God's promise to Abraham that from his seed a deliver would come and by their faith in the promised seed of David the Messiah and Saviour.

The faithful of the New Testament are saved by their faith in looking back to the bloodstained cross of Calvary and by looking forward to the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ. This shines a glorious eternal floodlight on the truth that whether a man or woman is of the Old or New Testament we are all saved by the same cleansing power, the same cleansing blood and the same deliver and Saviour. This is because God in his eternal mind planned and purposed before time began that His Son the Lord Jesus Christ would be the Saviour of all mankind for all eternity. This is why all the Old and New Testament faithful will be raised on that awesome and glorious day of the resurrection when Christ returns in glory.

IF THERE IS NO RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, THEN CHRIST IS NOT RISEN

- **1 Corinthians 15:12-19:** Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. ¹⁵Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

Christ's resurrection: Paul in these verse talks of the resurrection of Christ as the whole person being resurrected and not just the Lord's his body. When Paul refers to the resurrection of the dead, he has in mind the resurrection of dead people not just dead bodies. Paul does not imply that a person's spirit in some conscious ghost like form has gone to heaven and remains alive in some mystical type of spirit form waiting for the resurrection of the body to join with their spirit.

Traditional religion teaches: that the spirit leaves the body at the moment of death and rises to heaven to be with God in a conscious spirit state of existence. They say that the spirit without a body dwells in the presence of God in heaven with all the spirits of other believers that have died. They teach that these conscious ghost-like spirits are like the angels in heaven.

Following are three main problems with this theory:

1. Everywhere in the Bible an angel appeared they had a body and the Scriptures teach that we will not be like the angels until we are resurrected when the Lord returns.

2. If the spirit in heaven is conscious and happy, and aware of its existence, is able to move, see, hear, speak, sing songs of worship and communicate with the spirits of other brothers and sisters in Christ who have died and all are in heaven in the majestic and glorious presence of God and His angels why would they need a body?
3. If there are bodiless spirits alive in heaven and conscious, but unable to move see hear and communicate until they leave heaven as a spirit and enter into their resurrected body. They would be in a most miserable state indeed, during the time they are waiting for the resurrection of their body.

The Bible teaches that God in His great mercy and wisdom leaves the dead in a perfect, peaceful and protected state of unconsciousness, until the great day of the resurrection, for those who belong to Christ, this state in the Bible is referred to as being asleep in Christ, because they are in peace and their death is only temporary.

IN CHRIST ALL SHALL BE MADE ALIVE AT CHRIST COMING

- **1 Corinthians 15:20-23:** But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

Paul clearly tells us in these verses that no-one will be made alive from the dead until the Lord returns.

The steps concerning the resurrection are:

- Christ is the first to rise from the dead to eternal life.
- Afterward those who are Christ's will rise at the Lord's coming.

The words, "All die" (v22) does not mean that only our body dies while our spirit, mind and consciousness remain alive. The entire person (body, mind, consciousness and spirit) of those who belong to Christ will be made alive again and not just the body, Jesus was the first man who had died to be made alive to eternal glory, his whole person, persona, mind, consciousness and spirit was raised not just his body. In the same way that Christ died and rose, every brother and sister who has died in faith will be raised to eternal glory as Christ was.

Paul clearly teaches that after Jesus was raised those that belong to him will be raised and made alive again when Christ returns. This shows that they remain dead or sleeping in Christ until the first resurrection (Rev 20:5) when the Lord returns in glory.

WHY ARE BELIEVERS BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD, IF THE DEAD DO NOT RISE?

- **1 Corinthians 15:25-30:** For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For " God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. ²⁹Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? ³⁰And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? ³²What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Verse twenty-nine has caused much confusion amongst religious leaders since the Bible does not teach that another Christian can be baptized for those who have died. The King James Bible translates the verse this way:

- Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptised for the dead?

Notice; the KJV does not add the words:

- On their behalf.

This is a difficult verse since it seems to imply that people can be baptised for those who have already died, but anyone who knows the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life will also know that no-one can be baptised for those who have already died so what is Paul saying? Following are two steps that will help us to discover what the verse means:

1. The first step is to notice that the word, otherwise (in the ESV) and the word, else (in the KJV) link (v29) back to (v25-28) which talk about death being destroyed and God being all in all, so in this context what Paul is talking about is a shared hope in death, in resurrection and in eternity for all those who belong to Christ. Meaning the shared hope of those who are asleep in Christ, of those beginning to believe in Christ and of those being baptised into Christ all have the same shared hope which is the resurrection from the dead, eternal life and God being all in all.
2. The second step in discovering what Paul had in mind is to replace the word otherwise by the words, "If there is no resurrection" which puts the verse in the context of the resurrection which is what Paul in this chapter is talking about.

The following four suggestions may also help explain what Paul is saying:

1. It may mean; otherwise, if people are prepared to put their lives in danger of persecution and give up eating and drinking to support and baptise others why would they do that, if they are not going to be raised at all, supporting this idea is verse thirty in which Paul says:

- Why do we stand in jeopardy every hour (to baptize people) (v30).

And in verse thirty-two in which Paul said:

- What do I gain (by baptising people) if the dead are not raised, we may as will eat and drink, if our end is simply death" Meaning, "Why should he suffer preaching the gospel and baptising people if the dead are not raised, what does he gain everyone might as well eat and drink because tomorrow they may die."

Paul is saying, why would he and others risk persecution by baptizing people into Christ if the dead are not going to be raised to eternal life (even today Christians in extreme Communists and radical Moslems countries risk prison, torture and death if they are seen baptizing people into the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. It may mean; "Otherwise, why do people who are alive get baptised?" When people who are alive get baptised it supports what the dead in Christ have died for. In this context, Paul is saying, "If the dead are not raised at all, why, are people being baptised in the hope of those already dead being raised?"
3. Paul maybe saying, "Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptised in the hope of the dead being raised, if the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptised in this hope?"
4. Or Paul's words could mean, "Otherwise, why bother at all to be baptised and fill up the ranks of those taken from us by death, if the dead are not raised at all, why bother to be baptised to be united with the dead if they are not going to be raised".

The important thing here is not which of these interpretations is the right one since they are all true statements, what is important to see it that verse twenty-nine is not teaching that Christians can be baptised on behalf of people who have died.

NOTICE: the verse states “If the dead do not rise” the language embraces the body, mind, consciousness and the spirit of the person and not just the body that will be raised from the dead, but the whole person.

HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED UP? AND WHAT KIND OF BODY WILL THEY HAVE?

- **1 Corinthians 15:35:** But someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?”

Paul foresees that people would be wondering, what kind of bodies, will those that are raised have? So, he asks the question himself saying:

1. How are the dead raised up?
2. With what kind of body will they have?

NOTICE: the word *and* linking these two questions and the word *they* at the end of this verse “How are the dead raised up? *And* with what body do *they* come?” clearly show that it is the whole person (mind, consciousness and spirit) that is being raised up from the dead and not just the body. This is because *they* link the second question back to the first which means if only the body of bones and flesh is to be raised the first question is meaningless.

Paul proceeds to answer his two questions:

- **1 Corinthians 15:36-44:** Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. ³⁷And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. ³⁸But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. ³⁹All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. ⁴⁰There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. ⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. ⁴²So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

The words, “The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption, it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory” show that when Paul talks about the body, he has in his mind the idea of the whole person (body, mind, consciousness and spirit).

A body without the mind can be neither be, good or bad since it is powerless life lying in a coma, but Paul states, “The body is buried in corruption and dishonour” therefore it has to include the whole person (body, mind, consciousness and spirit) because without a mind a body cannot act corruptly or bring dishonour to itself or to others.

After pointing out that there are many different types of bodies, Paul brings the focus back to the whole person by focusing on Adam.

- **1 Corinthians 15:45-49:** And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was of the earth, made of

dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. ⁴⁹And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

In these verses Paul's entire focus is Adam (first man) and the Lord Jesus Christ (the second man) which shows he has in mind the complete person, (body, mind, consciousness and spirit) and not just the fleshy body of Adam or of Christ.

Paul now focuses on the actual resurrection of, mortal people putting on immortality and eternal life.

- **1 Corinthians 15:50-54:** Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed —⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

Paul is saying that we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. The word embraces the entire person (body, mind, consciousness and spirit) and not just the body of flesh and bones. The dead will be raised incorruptible, and ‘we’ shall be changed. The words, the dead embrace the person’s consciousness, persona and the mind. Mortal human beings who belong to Christ will put on immortality at the resurrection and then death will have lost its power.

Jesus death: Joseph laid Jesus dead body in the tomb, three days later Jesus rose and told Mary not to cling to him because he had not yet ascended to his Father therefore Jesus had not gone to heaven for at least three days. This shows that Christ the whole person rose from the dead, not just his body of flesh and bones. This is why Jesus upon his last breath called out with a loud voice and said: -

- Father, into your hands I commit my spirit! (Luke 23:46)

Meaning, “Father, into your hands I commit my life.” Jesus had to trust that God his heavenly Father would raise him from the dead to eternal life which or course he did.

IF OUR EARTHLY HOUSE IS DESTROYED, WE HAVE A BUILDING FROM GOD

- **2 Corinthians 5:1-8:** For we know that if our earthly house this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. ⁴For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. ⁵Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Paul in these verses is not teaching that brothers and sisters in Christ are in dwelling in heaven as a conscious ghost like spirit without a body waiting until they are clothed with a body.

Our earthly house: refers to our mortal body.

We have a building from God: refers to our eternal body.

Found naked: means being without a body.

Being clothed: carries the idea of our real authentic self, our mind, consciousness and spirit (i.e., who we are on the inside) is clothed with a body.

Groaning: in this context, means that while we are in this mortal human body of flesh we moan, grumble, complain, sigh and cry out because it is weak and feels pain, sorrow, tiredness and is prone to sickness, old age and slow death. The word, "Our eternal body is from heaven" is the same as saying, "Our eternal body is from God." It does not mean our eternal bodies will come down from heaven, but that God by his mighty creative power will resurrect us to immortality and eternal life. The faithful in Christ know that when they die, they will be resurrected to eternal life with an immortal body this is what they groan for, meaning through all the sickness, struggles sorrow, troubles and hardship of this life they earnestly wait with eager anticipation for their immortal bodies.

Paul's words, "Not because we want to be unclothed" (v4) clearly show Paul is not teaching that Christians who die ascend to heaven as a some kind of conscious ghost spirit without a body, pagan religions believed this as do many today who are involved in New Age teaching, but it is certainly not something Paul desired. Paul's teaching is that the mortal body we live in now will be replaced with an immortal body and eternal life at the resurrection of all who are sleeping in Jesus and when every brother and sister in Christ who is alive is gathered together with them at the Lord's return.

When this awesome world changing and breath-taking event occurs then mortality will be swallowed up by eternal life. This is what God through the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is preparing us for.

God has given us the Spirit as a guarantee: The Spirit we have been given as a guarantee refers to the Spirit of righteousness (also called the Holy Spirit). Not one of us are saved by our own righteousness, but by the righteousness God imputes to us as a pure and free gift to all who belong to the family of Christ. We are not saved by our righteousness, but by Christ's righteousness. Jesus didn't die for us so that we could by our own self-effort attain to the perfect standard and demands of the law or to God's majestic Holiness, but because we couldn't. If anyone of us could attain to a perfect state of sinlessness Christ died for no purpose. The Spirit that guarantees our salvation is the Spirit of righteousness that God has imputed to us because of our faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Absent from the body and present with the Lord: Paul's statement, "While we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord" (v6) should not be taken to mean that we are spiritually separated from Christ since through faith his Spirit and his love dwells deep within the heart and mind of those who believe in him. The idea behind Paul's words in this verse is that Jesus is eternal while we are mortal; Christ is in heaven while we are on earth.

We walk by faith, not by sight: since Christ's resurrection those who belong to his Kingdom have not seen him or touched him they are physically and literally absent from the Lord while they remain alive in their mortal body, that is what Paul means when he says, Christians walk by faith and not by sight. Until Christ returns, we can only know him by faith and by love. Since no-one alive today has seen the Lord and therefore we have no tangible evidence of his existence until he returns and we physically see him with our own eyes our lives are governed by faith and not by sight. John also said of this great Day:

- Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that *when He is revealed, we shall be like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

And Paul in writing to the Thessalonians gives us an even clearer picture of this glorious day:

- For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And *the dead* (people not just the body) *in Christ will rise first.* ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (people not just the body) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thess. 16-17).

Nowhere does Paul teach (as some others do and many believe) that when a brother or sister in Christ dies they ascend to heaven as some form of bodiless consciousness ghost like spirit to dwell with God and the angels and then at a later date descend from heaven to possess their bodies being resurrected out of the graves when Christ returns. Contrary to this mistaken idea Paul has no-doubt in his mind that when he dies, he will sleep in Christ with all other believers until that great and glorious day when the Lord himself will descend. This is the day Paul looks forward to, the day when all those asleep in Christ and those brothers and sisters in Christ who are alive on earth will be gathered in the air to be with the Lord forever. For further information concerning sleeping in Christ, see the title:

- Sleeping in Christ, in notes following (Daniel 12:2) (above).

PAUL'S DESIRE TO DEPART AND BE WITH CHRIST

- **Philippians 1:23:** For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

Paul saw death as gain and the life he lives now as loss if he is not serving Christ and honouring his name. His Love for Christ was so great that for him to die and be with the Lord was something he looked forward to and preferred, but was fully aware that his life here on the earth was of great benefit to others in Christ and could be further spent saving the lost and adding others to the Kingdom of God and the family of Christ.

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PAUL'S DESIRE TO ATTAIN TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

- **Philippians 3:11-12:** if, by any means, I (Paul) may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

Paul's hope was to attain to the resurrection of the dead. Clearly Paul believed he would remain asleep in Christ until the resurrection. In his mind Paul sees the term, the dead as embracing the whole person, their consciousness, persona and mind, and not just the body. His hope was to attain to the resurrection of the dead at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE: When salvation to eternal life is spoken of as the hope of the faithful in Christ, it is not called hope because it might or might not happen, but because it is unseen and yet future. The hope itself is guaranteed because it is based on God's promise and he cannot lie (Rom. 8:24).

- The apostle Paul wrote; "In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2).

The Christian hopes to be resurrected from the grave to be raised up to eternal life and everlasting glory to be made perfectly free from sin; to be everlastingly happy, but it is faith that gives these things a mental reality in the mind and it is under this influence of faith that those in Christ allow these unseen and yet future events to control their mind as if they were a reality now.

Faith and hope: the difference between faith and hope is that by faith alone we are sure of eternal salvation it is certain and guaranteed by faith whereas by hope we look forward with confidence that we will be raised to eternal life. All Christian hope stands on faith since it is faith that secures and guarantees the promise of God. In this way faith and hope

go together they are partners that complement each other since the same things that are the focus of our hope are the same things that our faith is trusting in. Faith secures while hope looks forward to what is secured by faith. A person who is full of faith is a person who has examined the evidence and is fully convinced that what they have examined proves itself to be true.

The pillars of faith are conviction, assurance and confidence
without these three there is no faith.

OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN

- **Philippians 3:20-21:** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself.

A believer's citizenship or nationality is in heaven, meaning their primary mental focus is on the things that are important to God and not the things of this world. This is what the Bible means when it says a believer's citizenship is in heaven they do not see themselves as belonging to this world, but rather look forward to the future Kingdom of God and wait with eager excitement for their mortal and corrupted body to be transformed to an immortal eternal body like the Lord Jesus Christ.

THOSE ALIVE AT CHRIST'S RETURN WILL NOT PRECEDE THOSE WHO ARE ASLEEP

- **1 Thess. 4:13-18:** But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Those who are alive when Christ returns will be caught up (in body, mind, consciousness and spirit) to be with the Lord when he returns in glory, likewise in the same manner those who have died in faith and are sleeping in in Jesus will be resurrected in the same manner as those who are alive (body, mind, consciousness and spirit). The expression, "Those who have fallen asleep and we who are alive" embrace the whole person and not just the body of flesh and bones.

The Lord Himself will descend and the dead in Christ will rise first:

Paul is not talking about dead bodies of flesh and bones rising to meet him in the air it is the entire person that will be raised from the dead. This is the majestic and awesome power of God and the Good News of the Gospel. When God raised Jesus, it was only one man He raised, but when He raises those who are sleeping in Jesus, it will be multitudes of brothers and sisters in Christ who are raised in one single climatic moment of breathtaking wonder and glory, then the Sons and daughters of God will be manifested and the entire creation will be released from its groaning.

The scenario of the resurrection: Jesus returns in glory and the dead (those sleeping) (the faithful of the Old and New Testament) are resurrected to be with him in the air, then Jesus with the resurrected faithful changes those who are alive and gathers them together to be with him forever in glory.

Sleeping in Christ: following are the two reasons those who die in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are referred to as sleeping in Christ:

1. Because their death is only temporary.
2. Because they are in a perfect state of peace since they have no consciousness of it which means like in sleep there is no time until they awake at the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God and are resurrected to eternal life and everlasting glory at the Lords return.

For further information see the title: "Sleeping in Christ," in notes following (Daniel 12:2) (above).

OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS DIED NOT HAVING RECEIVED THE PROMISE

- **Hebrews 11:13:** 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.

There is one moment of glory and one only to which all the New Testament writers look forward that moment is the resurrection of all the faithful at the arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. The point or focus around which the Christian hope revolves is not the moment of death and the spirit in some conscious ghost like form) departs to heaven, but the glorious resurrection of everyone (body, mind, consciousness and spirit) who have died in Christ to be gathered together to be with the Lord in eternal glory forever. The central focus of the faithful recorded in the Bible is the appearance and return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory and the resurrection of those who have died in faith. The New Testament speaks only of the resurrection of dead brothers and sisters in Christ who are to be raised to eternal life at the return of Christ.

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SUMMARY

At the beginning of this study we set out to discover whether Christians ascend to heaven at death or remain without consciousness in a state of perfect peace dead in the grave (i.e., sleeping in Christ) until the glorious day of the resurrection and if any verses teach or link death with eternal torment. From this study we have found that brothers and sisters in Christ do not immediately ascend into heaven upon death, but that they remain in an unconscious state of perfect peace (called sleeping in Christ) until the majestic and awesome day of the resurrection when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory. We have also discovered that not one of these Scriptures teach that those who have died outside of Christ go to a place of eternal flaming fire where they are cruelly tortured and suffer extreme pain and overwhelming agony for all eternity, but are instead judged to eternal death (i.e. total extinction).

All believers will be raised together: the following verses show all the faithful who belong to Christ will be raised together in one momentous glorious and awe-inspiring moment:

- God who raised up Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. (2 Corinthians 4:14).
- Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 3:20).
- We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23).
- Joint heirs with Christ, if we suffer with Christ that we may also be glorified together (Romans 8:17).

- When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4).
- We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52).
- Each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at his coming (1 Cor. 15:23).
- For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

All of these verses show that all who belong to Christ will be raised at the same glorious event and in the same moment when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

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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