

06-06-10

Series: The Resurrections

# The Resurrections (10)

## What Happens to Christians Who Die?

([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#))

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

[Matthew 28:1-10](#)

(Continuation from 05-30-10)

### The Doctrine of the Resurrections

([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#))

The Thessalonians' *ignorance about the Rapture* caused them to grieve.

It was to give them hope and to comfort them that Paul discussed that momentous event, giving a **fourfold description of it: 1) its pillars, 2) participants, 3) plan, and 4) profit.**

#### 1. The Pillars of the Rapture

[1 Thessalonians 4:14-15a \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> **For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.**

<sup>15</sup> **For 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 not precede those who have fallen asleep.**

The blessed hope of the **Rapture** is not based on the shifting sands of philosophical speculation. Nor is it religious mythology, a fable concocted by well-meaning people to comfort those who grieve.

The marvelous truth that the Lord Jesus Christ will return to gather believers to Himself is **based on three unshakeable pillars: 1) the death of Christ, 2) the resurrection of Christ, and 3) the revelation of Christ.**

#### 1. The Death of Christ

[1 Thessalonians 4:14a \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> **For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.**

**If** does not suggest uncertainty or doubt, but rather logical sequence.

Paul says “**since,**” or “**based on the fact that**” **we believe that Jesus died** certain things logically follows.

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The apostle's simple statement summarizes all the richness of Christ's atoning work, which provides the necessary foundation for the gathering of the church.

His death satisfied the demands of God's *righteousness, holiness, and justice* by paying in full the penalty for believers' sins.

By virtue of Christ's substitutionary death, when God "**made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him**" ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)),

Christians have been made acceptable to God and thus fit to be gathered into His presence.

[2 Corinthians 5:21 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> **He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

Significantly, Peter did not use the metaphor of sleep to refer to Jesus, but says that He **died**.

Jesus experienced the full fury of death in all its dimensions as He "**bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness**" ([1 Peter 2:24](#)).

[1 Peter 2:24 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>24</sup> **and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.**

His death **transformed** death into sleep for believers.

*T. E. Wilson* notes, "**Death has been changed to sleep by the work of Christ.**" It is an apt metaphor in which the whole concept of death is transformed.

'Christ made it the name for death in the dialect of the church ([Acts 7:60](#))

[Acts 7:60 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>60</sup> **Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.**

(*Findlay*)'" (*What the Bible Teaches: 1 and 2 Thessalonians* [Kilmarnock, Scotland: John Ritchie Ltd., 1983], 45).

When believers die, their spirit goes immediately into conscious fellowship with the Lord, while their bodies **temporarily sleep** in the grave, awaiting the **Rapture**.