

The Resurrections (11)

What Happens to Christians Who Die?

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

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[Matthew 28:1-10](#)

(Continuation from 06-06-10)

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 \(NASB\)](#)

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

¹⁵ 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

2. The Resurrection of Christ

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

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

The resurrection of Christ indicates that the Father accepted His sacrifice, enabling Him to **“be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus”** ([Romans 3:26](#)).

Paul taught that truth to the Romans when he wrote that **“[Christ] was raised because of our justification”** ([Romans 4:25](#)).

Christ's resurrection proves that He conquered sin and death, and became the source of resurrection life for every Christian.

I. Howard Marshall writes, “The death of believers does not take place apart from Jesus, and hence Paul can conclude that God will raise them up and bring them into the presence of Jesus at the *parousia* (in his visitation). “God will treat those who died trusting in Jesus in the same way He treated Jesus Himself, namely by resurrecting them.” (*1 and 2 Thessalonians*, The New Century Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 124).

1 Thessalonians 4:14b (NASB)

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

The phrase even so links believers' resurrections inextricably to the resurrection of Christ.

In **John 14:19** Jesus said, “Because I live, you will live also.”

John 14:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you *will* see Me; because I live, you will live also.

In the most detailed passage on the resurrection in Scripture, Paul wrote that “**Christ [is] the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming**” (**1 Corinthians 15:23**).

Earlier in that same epistle, he stated plainly, “**Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power**” (**1 Corinthians 6:14**).

In his second inspired letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, “**He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus**” (**2 Corinthians 4:14**).

1 Thessalonians 4:14b (NASB)

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

To further assuage their fears, Paul reassured believers that God will bring with Him [Jesus] those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

Their fellow believers who died will not miss out on the **Rapture** but will return with Christ in glory.

Some interpret the phrase God will bring to mean that the spirits of dead believers will come from heaven with Christ to meet their resurrected bodies. Others see in it the truth that at the **Rapture**, God will bring all believers, living and dead, back to heaven with Christ. While the first view is certainly true, the second one seems to be the emphasis of this passage.

What the passage does not teach is that the spirits of dead believers immediately return to earth with Christ for the establishing of the millennial kingdom.

That view places the **Rapture** at the end of the **Tribulation** and essentially equates it with the **Second Coming**.

This view trivializes the **Rapture** into a meaningless sideshow that serves no purpose.