

05-16-10

Series: [The Resurrections](#)

The Resurrections (7)

What Happens to Christians Who Die?

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

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[Matthew 28:1-10](#)

(Continuation from [05-09-10](#))

The Doctrine of the Resurrections

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

The Thessalonians' fears that they were in the **Day of the Lord** and thus had missed the **Rapture** imply that the **Rapture precedes the Tribulation**. If the Thessalonians knew that the **Rapture** came at the end of the **Tribulation**, persecution would not have caused them to fear they had missed it. Instead, that persecution would have been a cause for joy, not concern. If the **Day of the Lord** had arrived, and the **Rapture** was after the **Tribulation**, then that blessed event would have been drawing near.

But of gravest concern to the Thessalonians were those of their number **who had died**. Would they receive their resurrection bodies at the Rapture, or would they have to wait until after the Tribulation? Would they miss the Rapture altogether? Would they therefore be second-class citizens in heaven?

Were their deaths chastisement for their sins (cf. [1 Corinthians 11:30](#))? They loved each other so deeply (cf. [1 Thessalonians 4:9-10](#)) that those thoughts greatly disturbed them.

Their concern for those who had died shows that the Thessalonians believed the return of Christ was imminent and could happen in their lifetime. Otherwise, there would have been no reason for their concern.

The Thessalonians' fear that their fellow believers who had died might miss the **Rapture** also implies that they believed in a **pre-tribulation Rapture**.

If the **Rapture precedes the Tribulation**, they might have wondered when believers who died would receive their resurrection bodies. But there would have been no such confusion if the **Rapture follows the Tribulation**; all believers would then receive their resurrection bodies at the same time.

Further, if they had been taught that they would go through the **Tribulation**, they would not have grieved for those who died, but rather would have been glad to see them spared from that horrible time.

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Paul wrote this section of his epistle to alleviate the Thessalonians' grief and confusion. He was concerned that they **not... be uninformed... about those who are asleep** and thus **grieve as do the rest who have no hope**. Since their grief was based on ignorance, Paul comforted them by giving them knowledge.

The phrase **we do not want you to be uninformed** or its equivalent frequently introduces a new topic in Paul's epistles (cf. [Romans 1:13](#); [1 Corinthians 10:1](#); [1 Corinthians 11:3](#); [1 Corinthians 12:1](#); [2 Corinthians 1:8](#); [Philippians 1:12](#); [Colossians 2:1](#)).

The conjunction **but** and the affectionate term **brethren** (cf. [1 Thessalonians 4:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:14](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:17](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:25](#)) emphasize the change in subject and call attention to the new topic's importance.

In this case, Paul introduced not only a new subject but also new revelation he had received "**by the word of the Lord**" ([1 Thessalonians 4:15](#)).

Since it was their primary concern, Paul first addressed the question of **those who are asleep**. While *koimaō* (asleep) can be used of normal sleep ([Matt. 28:13](#); [Luke 22:45](#); [Acts 12:6](#)).....

.....it more often refers to believers **who have died** ([1 Thessalonians 4:13-15](#); [Matthew 27:52](#); [John 11:11](#); [Acts 7:60](#); [Acts 13:36](#); [1 Corinthians 11:30](#); [1 Corinthians 15:6](#), [1 Corinthians 15:18](#), [1 Corinthians 15:20](#), [1 Corinthians 15:51](#); [2 Peter 3:4](#)).