

05-30-10

Series: The Resurrections

The Resurrections (9)

What Happens to Christians Who Die?

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

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

[Matthew 28:1-10](#)

(Continuation from 05-23-10)

The Doctrine of the Resurrections

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

Moses' and Elijah's souls were **not asleep**, since they appeared with Jesus at the Transfiguration ([Matthew 17:3](#)), nor are those of the Tribulation martyrs in [Revelation 6:9-11](#), who will be awake and able to speak to God.

After death *the redeemed* go consciously into the presence of the Lord, while the *unsaved* go into **conscious punishment** ([Luke 16:19-31](#)).

Paul related this information to the Thessalonians so that they would **not grieve**.

[1 Thessalonians 4:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³ **But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will **not grieve** as do the rest who have no hope.**

There is a normal sorrow that accompanies the death of a loved one, caused by the pain of separation and loneliness. Jesus grieved over the death of Lazarus ([John 11:33, 35](#)), and Paul exhorted the Romans to "**weep with those who weep**" ([Romans 12:15](#)).

However, the apostle did not have that kind of grief in mind here, but grief like **the rest who have no hope**.

In [Ephesians 2:12](#) Paul described unbelievers as "**having no hope and without God in the world.**"

There is an *awful, terrifying, hopeless finality for unbelievers* when a loved one dies, a sorrow unmitigated by any hope of reunion.

Commenting on the hopeless despair of unbelievers in the ancient world, *William Barclay* writes,

"In the face of death the pagan world stood in despair. They met it with grim resignation and bleak hopelessness. *Aeschylus* wrote, "Once a man dies there is no resurrection." *Theocritus* wrote, "There is hope for those who are alive, but those who have died are without hope."

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Catullus wrote, “When once our brief light sets, there is one perpetual night through which we must sleep.” On their tombstones grim epitaphs were carved. “**I was not; I became; I am not; I care not.**” (*The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, rev. ed. [Louisville: Westminster, 1975], 203)

Even those pagans who believed in life after death did not have that hope confirmed by the Holy Spirit; they merely clung to it without affirmation from God. But Christians do not experience the hopeless grief of nonbelievers, for whom death marks the permanent severing of relationships.

Unlike them, Christians never say a final farewell to each other; there will be a “**gathering together [of all believers] to Him**” ([2 Thessalonians 2:1](#)). Partings in this life are only temporary.

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.**