



1 Thessalonians 4:13-14
What Happens to Christians who Die?
From Sermon 2.27.22

Read *1 Thessalonians 4:13-14*

Review from Sunday's sermon: With the vital preliminaries now covered [x-ray of church health, biblical leadership, moral conduct inside and outside of church], the Holy Spirit now has Paul address the Return of Christ. The Thessalonian's first question—motivated by some false teaching—is what happens to Christians who die before Jesus returns. Paul comforts them (and us) with God's truth promise.

1. Who is going to die? Who is going to be physically resurrected? Who is going to live forever? Everyone. Everyone ever conceived. Believers and non-believers. Only a very small percentage of believers alive when Jesus returns will not taste death, but will be taken up (raptured) and transformed physically.

2. Read *John 11:25-26*. Since the correct answer to question 1 is "everyone", how do you reconcile Jesus' teaching in John 11? Eternal life vs. existing forever. Challenging wording, yes. But, still true. In Christ is continual abundant life. Without Christ, continual death with no end. See also *John 5:28-29*

3. What are some common false beliefs, inside and outside the church, concerning the afterlife? Various answers. The "good" people should be okay. God's revealed Himself in multiple ways to numerous cultures = just be sincere. All beliefs are equally valid. Go the light. Scales in heaven. No heaven at all =we just cease to exist. Becoming one with nature/universe. Soul sleep, purgatory, & annihilation.

4. What's the first thing that immediately happens to believers when their earthly body dies? Their spirit goes to heaven. See *Acts 7:59-60, 2 Corinthians 5:8, & Luke 23:42-43*

4a. Do we become angels and live forever playing a harp on a cloud? No. Angels are completely different creatures. We enter heaven as redeemed spirits. We remain spirits until Jesus comes back for His church. Then, there is a physical resurrection of the bodies of the elect, united with their spirit. These bodies are glorified. They cannot be damaged, sickened, or killed. We physically rule and reign with Christ, on earth, for 1000 years, following the Tribulation. We then physically enter the eternal kingdom of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

[Note: The question of Cremation: Is it wrong? Will they not be resurrected? Nothing wrong with it. Everyone breaks down organically anyway. No problem for God to reconstitute. See *Genesis 3:19 & Ecclesiastes 3:19-20*. No different than if someone died in a consuming fire. On 9/11, many were vaporized.]

5. When are the non-elect resurrected? According to Revelation 20, not until the end of the 1000-year reign of Christ and just before the New Heaven and the New Earth. Their spirit, now in Hades, is united with a resurrected body. They will live forever, physically, in the Lake of Fire.