

Briefing Document: "Where Do Dead Christians Go?" - Lesson 3

Date: July 20, 2025

Key Themes

- The concept of "sleep" as it relates to the death of a Christian.
- The pillars of the Rapture: the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and the revelation of Christ.
- The destination of believers' souls and bodies after death and during the Rapture.
- Distinction between the Rapture (Great Gathering) and the Second Coming of Christ.
- Discussion on predestination, free will, and divine sovereignty.
- Comfort and reassurance for believers concerning those who have died before the Rapture.

I. Introduction and Announcements

The lesson begins with community announcements and prayer requests, highlighting the pastoral focus of the gathering.

Memory Verse: Psalm 27:14 (NKJV) — "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!"

Upcoming Events:

- Elders' meeting
- Kids Praise Team performance
- New Sunday School classes begin August 3rd
- Hal and Beth Hansen will also be here on the 3rd
- Four baptisms on the 3rd
- Registration for New Life Kids and Students
- Women's Retreat in Prescott
- Church directory availability

Prayer Requests:

- Continued prayer for Chase Van Wart's recovery
- Valinda's friend Becca (passing out)
- Joyce McCormack
- Renee's father's property sale
- Prayer for school reopening (students, parents, teachers, administration)
- Urgent need for bus drivers

II. The Rapture and the Concept of "Sleep"

The main theological discussion centers on the Rapture, specifically as described in 1 Thessalonians 4.

Transition to Rapture and Tribulation: The lesson will cover the Rapture and then move directly into the Tribulation period.

Definition of "Sleep": Paul uses "sleep" as a metaphor for the physical death of a believer's body, not the soul. The soul goes immediately to be with the Father, while the body is buried.

Transformation of Death: Through Christ's death, physical death becomes a temporary sleep. Death has been transformed: "Christ made sleep the name for death in the dialect of the church."

Unbelievers' Death: Unbelievers' souls go to torment, and their bodies will be raised later and transformed for eternal punishment.

Sin and Death: Christ paid the wage of sin—death. Now, for believers, death is merely sleep. "The sting of death is sin" (1 Corinthians 15:56). Christ bore that sting for us.

Language for Believers' Passing: The preferred phrase is "their spirit is alive with Christ," instead of "they died."

III. The Pillars of the Rapture

1. **The Death of Christ:** Paid for sins and transformed death into temporary sleep.
2. **The Resurrection of Christ:** A divine affirmation of Jesus' sacrifice and a guarantee of believers' future resurrection.

3. **The Revelation of Christ:** This doctrine is based on Christ's direct revelation, particularly through Paul's teachings.

On Cremation or Lost Bodies: God, as Creator, can resurrect any body, regardless of its condition.

Post-Death State of Believers: The spirit goes to be with the Father; the body awaits resurrection.

Scriptures Cited: 1 Corinthians 15:23, Hebrews 13:20, John 14:19, 2 Corinthians 4:14

Believers as Gifts: God will present believers to Christ (2 Corinthians 4:14).

Interpretations of "Bring with Him":

- Christ brings souls to be reunited with their resurrected bodies.
- Alternate view (less biblically supported): All believers are taken to heaven and later return.

Destination Post-Rapture: Believers go to the Father's house in heaven (John 14:1–3), not directly to a millennial kingdom.

IV. Chronology of End Times Events

1. **Rapture (Great Gathering):** Living and resurrected believers meet Christ.
2. **Tribulation:** Seven years, divided into two 3.5-year periods.
3. **Second Coming:** Christ returns to judge.
4. **Millennial Kingdom:** Christ reigns for 1,000 years.
5. **Satan Loosened:** Brief rebellion.
6. **Final Judgment:**
 - **Great White Throne:** For unbelievers.
 - **Bema Seat:** For believers' rewards.
7. **New Heaven and New Earth:** Earth is remade.

V. Theological Discussions: Predestination, Free Will, and Sovereignty

God's Choice: God chose believers before the foundation of the world.

Free Will: Still affirmed; God's election works within the framework of human choice.

Reconciling Tensions: God's desire that all be saved exists alongside His sovereign election.

Purpose of Sin: To glorify God's attributes and allow human free will.

Fallen Nature: Humanity, left alone, would never choose God. Salvation requires divine initiative.

Judgment and Rewards:

- Heaven or hell is the eternal destiny.
- Rewards at the Bema Seat reflect the quality of the believer's life.

Age of Accountability: Children who die before reaching this age are considered "children of God."

View on Calvinism/Arminianism: The speaker sees truth in both and affirms mystery in God's ways.

VI. Pastoral Reassurance

Comfort for the Bereaved: Believers who die before the Rapture are not at a disadvantage. They will be present at the gathering.

"Sleep Through Jesus": Indicates union with Christ and security in the resurrection.

Eternal Security: "Once saved, always saved" is emphasized. Salvation is God's work, not ours to keep or lose.

Church Attenders' Salvation: Not all who profess Christ are genuinely saved; estimate given: 60-70% may not be.

Greek Words Used

None found in this lesson.