

The resurrection is the major premise of Christianity. Jesus Christ was dead for three days and three nights, then God raised him.

I Corinthians 15:3 and 4

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;
And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

The very foundation of our faith is his resurrection. If he did not rise, our faith is vain, we are still dead in our sins, and those who have died will stay dead forever.

Verses 17-19

And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins.

Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

However, Christ has been raised. He is the firstfruits of them that sleep. The dead are referred to as “them that slept.”

Verse 20

But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept.

He is called the firstfruits for two reasons: he was the first one to get up from the dead and stay up, and he is the prototype of all those who will be raised from the dead at the resurrection of the just.

Verse 23

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.

Again, the resurrection is the major premise of Christianity. Yet, the common belief held in the Church is the dead have passed to a fully-conscious existence on another plane called heaven, hell, or purgatory. This doctrine has been embraced by the Church since the second century when Greek philosophy and mythology influenced the Church. However, the Word of God clearly and emphatically communicates that the dead stay dead until Jesus Christ returns and the resurrections take place. Although most believe the dead either ascend into

heaven or descend into hell upon death, that belief is an error in contradiction to the truth of God’s Word.

The consistent message of both the Old and the New Testaments is that the dead are “asleep.” Metaphorically this means that the dead are for the time being unconscious, at rest, unaware of the passage of time. They are awaiting the great moment when the dead are resurrected and changed in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump. The dead are now sleeping.

Psalms 13:3

Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of* death;

The mind of the deceased no longer functions so the ability to remember terminates. The dead cannot give thanks.

Psalms 6:5

For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

The moment a person takes his last breath his thoughts perish.

Psalms 146:4

His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Ecclesiastes 9:5

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

The resurrection is when those asleep will awake again.

Daniel 12:2

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

John 5: 28 and 29

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

The resurrection would have no purpose if the dead immediately were to gain life upon dying. The whole of the Word of God points to the resurrection as being man's hope, and nothing is communicated about immediate life after death. The only one who died, rose, and is still alive is Jesus Christ. An attempt to reconcile the wrong doctrine of the dead living with the resurrection has led to the idea of the resurrection of the body only which implies that the soul is already alive. But such thinking is quite unbiblical. The Scriptures nowhere speak of the resurrection of the body or the flesh. They speak of the resurrection of the dead. Acts 2 specifically states that David himself, the whole person, is not in heaven and that the dead, not their bodies only, are sleeping in the grave waiting the resurrection. It is the resurrection of **dead people** that the New Testament preaches not the resurrection of **dead bodies**.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *sheol* and in the New Testament the Greek equivalent *hades* are rendered as "hell," "the grave," and "the pit." These words should have been consistently translated gravedom, the place of the dead. The dead remain in the grave until Christ's return.

The reason this erroneous doctrine is easily entreated by so many is it provides a comfort, albeit a false comfort, to the surviving family and friends of the deceased. However, every falsehood or lie ultimately causes more destruction and pain than the immediate relief it provides.

All of humanity has suffered from the many ramifications of this false doctrine. Perhaps the worst impact is that it destroys man's true hope. The whole of the Word of God points to Christ's return, the resurrections, his reigning on earth, and the end when we are all with God and our Lord in Paradise. At Christ's return a collective gathering and transformation will occur. If each one were to ascend immediately upon death, it would be individual transfer. The false doctrine promulgates both the wrong time (immediately after death) and wrong place (heaven). The correct time is when Christ returns, and the place is Paradise here on earth.

This wrong doctrine makes death seem appealing in that it then would be the porthole to a spiritual existence. The Bible teaches death is an enemy, the last enemy to be destroyed. Suicide is contemplated and committed by many because death is perceived as being desirable. Suicide among Christians is probably the highest. Cliches such as, "He is in a better place" or "God loved him so He called him home" have slandered God and falsely accused Him of killing. Hebrews 2:14 tells us the devil, not God, has the power of death.

Countless people have become angry, bitter, disillusioned, discouraged, and separated from God because of the inaccurate representation of our loving, merciful God. "If God is love, why did He take my loved one?" is a question asked all too often because of this falsehood.

Spiritualists and mediums (who claim to speak to the dead and have the so-called dead speak to them) thrive because the Church teaches that the dead are alive. Spiritualism is an abomination unto the Lord, that means it is disgusting to Him. All of this and more happens because we do not give heed to that which is clearly written about the dead and when they will be raised again.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.