

What About the Dead?

Intro:

1. The pagan philosophy:
 - a. Catullus: "Suns may set & may return; we, when our brief life wanes, have eternal life to sleep."
 - b. Lucretius: "None ever wake again whom the cold pause of life has overtaken."
2. The Thessalonian situation: These new Gentile Christians didn't know if their dead would participate in the eternal life the Lord would give them when He returned!
3. Modern philosophy:
 - a. In "It's a Wonderful Life", Clarence, the angel, was pictured as the spirit of a dead person trying to earn his wings.
 - b. Martha Williamson, creator of "Touched by an Angel" (TV) - "Angels are not recycled dead people."
 - c. Biblically, I think, ghosts (if they really exist) are not spirits of the dead, but demons.
4. What about the Dead?

I. What About Those Who Are Asleep in Christ?

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

- A. **v13** - Those who die are considered to be asleep.
 1. **I Cor 15:51** describes the dead in Christ as asleep until the 2nd Coming takes place.
 - a. When Stephen was stoned to death, he "fell asleep" - **Act 7:60**.
 - b. This makes sense - if God raised Jesus from the dead, He can also raise you!
 2. There's no reason to be sorrowful about them because they are in a different situation than non Christians who have no hope.
- B. **v14** - Those who die as Christians will be with Jesus.
 1. **II Cor 5:8** - **We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.**
 2. **ILL: Earthly life is like a terrarium - when you die you step out of time & proceed to the rapture.**
- C. **v15-17** - What will those who die as Christians experience on "that day"?
 1. **v16** - The Lord will come in person - no substitutes.
 2. **v16** - The Lord will shout a command.
 3. **v16** - The Archangel Michael (**Jude 9**) will call the angels to gather up Christians.
 4. **v16** - The dead in Christ will rise first. **Rise** (ἀνίστημι) = stand up.
 5. **v17** - The living & the dead in Christ will be caught up together to be with the Lord.
 - a. "With them" suggests a joyous reunion!
 - b. One will be taken & another left - **Matt 24:40-41**.
 - c. **ILL: "A Thief in the Night"**. How would you feel if your family were taken & you were left behind?
 6. **v17** - They will be with the Lord forever!

II. What About Those Who Are Asleep in Darkness?

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

A. **v3** - They live as though they had no concern about the Lord returning.

1. What will the “destruction will come” be like?

a. Like a burglar at night - unexpectedly.

b. Like the flood in Noah’s time. **Lk 17:27** - People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

c. Like the end of the foolish farmer’s life. **Lk 12:19-20** - And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

2. There will be no escape!

B. **v4-9** - What is the Lord’s appeal to those living in the darkness?

1. **v4** - Don’t be unprepared when “that day” comes like a thief.

2. **v6** - Don’t be asleep to spiritual things. **ILL: “Sleeping Christians”**.

3. Don’t let “that day”, like a thief, rob you of your life. **Lk 9:24** - **For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.**

4. **v5** - Be exposed to the light & day. **ILL: Garden lights being exposed to light first.**

5. **v6** - Be alert & self-controlled.

6. **v8** - Be wearing your breastplate - faith & love - & your helmet - your hope of salvation.

7. **v9** - Be confident that the Lord’s desire is to give you salvation, not wrath!

Jn 3:16-17 - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

<http://biblelifemessages.org/>