

## Death – a Doorway or a Terminus

A little five year old excited girl rushed through the door exclaiming, "Mummy, I saw Nana go out the door and up to Jesus in heaven." What in fact my sister had observed was Nana's body being carried out the door of her home. This is my earliest recollection of knowing a person had died and gone to be with Jesus. For me that is a positive memory.

Christians at Thessalonica, Greece, experienced overwhelming grief as they struggled to cope with the death of fellow Christians. Their bereavement is intensified because they are not sure of the fate of the dead. Where do the Christian dead go? Will the dead participate in the resurrection? Have those who have died 'in Jesus' missed out on enjoying the Second Coming of Christ? Besides being heart-broken they are confused.

Because death is a doorway and not a terminus Christians do not grieve like non-Christians because Christians know the destiny of deceased Christians. At death the soul/spirit of a person is separated from the physical body. A person's soul/spirit retains consciousness after death. At physical death the Christian goes immediately to where Jesus is, that is, they go to heaven.

The Bible passage in First Thessalonians 4:13-18 is written so that we can be certain death is not the end, it is a doorway. These verses assert that based on the resurrection of Jesus the living dead who have *died in Christ* will return from heaven with Jesus. They will receive new, transformed resurrected bodies. Then the living Christians will be changed, reunited with those who have *died in Christ* and together meet the Lord in the air. *So we will be with the Lord forever.*

Notice the repetition of the word 'will' in First Thessalonians 4:16-17. *'The Lord himself **will** come down from heaven, . . . the dead in Christ **will** rise . . . we who are still alive . . . **will** be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we **will** be with the Lord forever.'*

Sadly, the fate and future of non-Christians is very different to that of Christians. Read Matthew 22:32; Mark 9:4; Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:23; Revelation 6:9-11.

**Praying the Psalms.** The Psalms recorded in the Bible are experiences of individuals as they wrestle with life's deepest questions. Many people find that using a Psalm as a prayer enables them to give voice to their grief journey while at the same time asking God for his help. Some of these Psalms include: Psalm 13; 38; 116; 120; 121; Psalms of confession 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143 and many others.