

## Restoration of the Kingdom of God – 16

When *“the Lord himself shall descend from heaven... the dead in Christ shall rise first” - 1 Thessalonians 4:16*. It is at that time that believers will *“awake”* = recover consciousness... *“to everlasting life” - Daniel 12:2*. This fact revealed by Daniel shows that *“the dead”* have ceased to exist as persons.

- They *“awake”* only because their names are in *“the books”* of those who are responsible to the judgement by Jesus at his return - *Daniel 7:10*. All others, who have died in spiritual darkness, are permanently dead, *“they will not live; they are deceased, they will not rise. Therefore You have punished and destroyed”* [obliterated] *“them, and made all their memory to perish” - Isaiah 26:14*. Moses, when asking God to forgive Israel, said, *“if not, I pray, blot”* [erase] *“me out of Your book which You have written” - Exodus 32:32*.

So all the dead, even faithful believers, after they have died, have no conscious existence. They cannot have “gone to heaven”. But Jesus encourages those who have been enlightened by his teaching to *“rejoice because your names are written in heaven” - Luke 10:20*.

- The point is that God, while He has erased and obliterated all the other people, who have come and gone, from His plans with his creation, has kept in memory all the necessary information to bring the faithful back to life at the resurrection. There is an analogy in modern life -

Restoral is possible when there has been an unrecoverable failure in the hardware of a personal computer. The lost data has not travelled to exist in another realm - it is gone forever, but the programs and backed-up data, “written” on data storage media, may have been kept by the owner. These can be installed into new, better and more reliable hardware, and so the new PC “boots up” to work like the old one.

- Paul showed believers that *“God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power” - 1 Corinthians 6:14*, when the individual character of each believer is written into the newly raised body. At that time, the responsible, both those who have been raised and those *“alive and remaining”*, begin with a *“natural body” - 1 Corinthians 15:44*, which is *“corruptible”* and *“mortal” - v.53*. The **bodies** of those found worthy will be *“changed 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet”*. *53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”*

There is then, a change in the nature of the body which brings immortality - *54 “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”* Until then the faithful had bodies of *50 “flesh and blood”* which, said Paul, *“cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.”*

- But now, being made immortal, they will be able to say to Jesus, you *“have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth” - Revelation 5:10*. This will be the time when *“the meek shall inherit the earth” - Psalm 37:11; Matthew 5:5*.

Jesus told the disciples, *“I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and”* *“as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you” - John 13:33*. It was only Jesus who was going to heaven to be with the Father for a time, until he returns to take up his reign over all nations on earth.

- This is accord with *Psalm 115:16 - “The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s; But the earth He has given to the children of men”*. God made a specific promise concerning possession of the earth by men - *“The LORD said to Abram ... all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever” - Genesis 13:14*. More next time, God willing.

