

Hope of the Resurrection

A Scriptural Case for Soul Sleep and the Final Salvation of the Whole Person

King James Version Bible Study

Concise Teaching Edition

Central Thesis

The New Testament hope is not an immediate, disembodied translation of the dead into heaven, but the resurrection of the whole person at the coming and appearing of Jesus Christ.

Restoring Oneness Apostolic Truth
In the Last Days

Comprehensive Study Guide Series

By Pete Wierzbicki
Former Pastor, San Francisco, CA

Introduction: The Hope Scripture Actually Emphasizes

Before considering the many passages that support the doctrine commonly called soul sleep, we should first ask a practical and theological question: what purpose would be served by placing a redeemed soul in heaven for centuries without the body, only to reunite that person with the body later at **the resurrection**? Scripture consistently presents God as purposeful and orderly. Yet the traditional immediate-translation view often leaves the resurrection functioning as an afterthought, while the Bible treats it as **the hope of the saints**.

The difficulty is not merely philosophical. The biblical writers do not speak of death as the believer's final hope. They speak of the resurrection, the last day, the appearing of Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Lord. If a believer has already entered the fullness of glory and the direct possession of Christ at death, then the Bible's repeated emphasis on resurrection becomes strangely diminished. The apostolic hope shifts from the return of Christ to the moment of death. This study argues that such a shift is not biblical.

And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. — Luke 14:14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. — 1 Peter 1:3

The resurrection is not a minor appendix to salvation. It is the **living hope**. Therefore, any doctrine of the intermediate state must preserve the force of the resurrection rather than replace it with an earlier hope at death.

Chapter 1 - The Practical Problem with a Disembodied Heaven

The immediate-translation doctrine teaches that the saved dead are already consciously present with the Lord in heaven while their bodies remain in the grave. But this raises a serious question: why would God make man a whole embodied creature, redeem that whole person, then leave the saint in a disembodied state for centuries before finally completing the resurrection?

The body is not a disposable shell. It is the God-designed means by which the person sees, hears, speaks, touches, communicates, and is seen by others. Scripture promises that believers shall be like Christ when they see Him as He is. That promise naturally belongs to resurrection life, not to a partial existence without the body.

And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: — Colossians 2:10

If believers are complete in Christ now, it is difficult to explain why death would place them into a less complete condition in heaven, only to make them complete again later. The traditional view risks turning the resurrection into a recovery of something useful but not essential. Scripture does the opposite: it places the believer's hope at the resurrection.

Key Question

If the saint can enjoy the fullness of heaven for centuries without the body, why does Scripture make the resurrection such a central hope?

Chapter 2 - Jesus Places Resurrection at the Last Day

The words of Jesus in John 6 are direct and repeated. He does not say that He will bring the believer to fullness at death and later raise only the body. He says that He will raise him up at the last day. The pronouns matter. Jesus speaks of the person, not merely the remains.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. — John 6:44

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. — John 6:54

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. — John 6:40

Sound interpretation does not allow the word “him” to mean a whole person in the first part of the sentence and then suddenly mean only a body or corpse in the final clause. If the Father sent Christ, if the believer sees the Son, and if the believer believes on Him, then the “him” raised at the last day is **the same whole believer** under discussion throughout the verse.

Chart 1 - John 6:40: Whole Persons, Not Empty Bodies

Phrase in John 6:40	Pronoun / Subject	Natural Meaning	Conclusion
“the will of him that sent me”	him	The Father who sent Christ	A whole personal subject
“believeth on him”	him	The Son, Jesus Christ	A whole personal subject
“I will raise him up”	him	The believer who sees and believes	The same whole person, not merely a body
“at the last day”	when	The time of resurrection	The hope is fixed at the last day

The burden of proof is on the interpreter who changes the referent in the middle of the passage. When Scripture intends two different kinds of baptism, for example, it says so plainly.

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. — Acts 1:5

But where a passage uses the same term in the same immediate thought, we do not invent a second meaning without textual warrant.

And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. — 1 Corinthians 1:16

In the same way, John 6:40 should be read according to ordinary language. The person who believes is the person Christ raises at the last day.

Chapter 3 - Christ the Firstfruits and the Order of Resurrection

Paul teaches that Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection, and afterward they that are Christ's are made alive at His coming. This matters because Christ was not raised as a disembodied soul first and later reunited with His body. His resurrection was the restoration and glorification of the whole person.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. — 1 Corinthians 15:22-23

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. — Acts 2:31

Christ's resurrection involved both soul and flesh. If Christ is the pattern and firstfruits of those who are His, then the resurrection hope concerns the whole person. Scripture never plainly defines resurrection as the raising of the body only. Instead, it speaks of "him," "man," "they," "them," "we," "you," "the dead," "the saints," and "the elect."

Doctrinal Point

The Bible presents resurrection as the restoration of persons, not the mere reanimation of abandoned bodies.

Chapter 4 - Daniel and Job: The Dead Sleep Until the Appointed Time

Daniel's prophecy of the resurrection does not describe empty bodies awakening while souls have already been enjoying heaven. It speaks of people sleeping in the dust of the earth and awakening to everlasting life or shame. The grammar is personal.

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people... and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 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. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. — Daniel 12:1-

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Daniel speaks of "thy people," "every one," and "them" that sleep in the dust. If the passage suddenly shifts from whole people to empty bodies, Scripture would need to say so. It does not.

Chart 2 - Daniel 12: Whole People, Not Parts of People

Expression	What Daniel Identifies	Why It Matters
“thy people”	The covenant people under discussion	The subject is people, not body parts.
“every one that shall be found written in the book”	Those delivered at the time of trouble	The resurrection is tied to the deliverance of persons.
“many of them that sleep in the dust”	The same people in the state of death	Sleep language describes the dead person’s condition.
“shall awake”	The awakening to everlasting life or shame	The event is resurrection, not a prior heavenly state.

Job speaks the same way. He does not say, “My body will wait in the grave while I live elsewhere.” He says that man dies, lies down, does not rise until the heavens be no more, and waits until his appointed change comes.

Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. — Job 14:1

But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. — Job 14:10-14

Job says “man” lies down. He says “they” shall not awake. He says “me” is hidden in the grave and waits for a set time. The language points to the whole person awaiting resurrection.

Chapter 5 - Paul’s Comfort to the Thessalonians

First Thessalonians 4 is one of the central resurrection passages in the New Testament. Paul writes to believers grieving over their dead loved ones. If the immediate-translation doctrine were true, this would have been the ideal place for Paul to comfort them by saying, “Your loved ones are already with Christ in heaven.” But Paul does not do that. His comfort is the resurrection at the coming of the Lord.

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. — 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

Paul calls the dead “asleep.” He calls them “them,” not “their bodies.” He compares the living saints with the sleeping saints as two groups of people. The dead in Christ rise first, and the living are caught up together with them. This is the comfort Paul gives.

The common objection comes from verse 14: “them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” Some argue that this requires the souls of the dead to be presently with Christ in heaven so that He can bring them back. But Paul specifically says the ones brought are those who sleep in Jesus. If the sleeping ones are souls in heaven, then the passage supports sleeping souls. If the sleeping ones are the dead in Christ, then God brings them with Christ through resurrection and gathering at His coming. Either way, verse 14 does not require immediate conscious translation at death.

Pastoral Observation

Paul comforted grieving Christians with the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead, not with the claim that their loved ones were already consciously in heaven.

Chapter 6 - Peter Places Salvation at the Appearing of Jesus Christ

Peter’s first epistle also places the believer’s hope at the appearing and revelation of Jesus Christ. He does not make death the decisive moment of completed salvation. He points forward to the last time, the appearing of Christ, and the salvation of the soul.

Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. — 1 Peter 1:5-9

Peter says salvation is ready to be revealed in the last time. He connects the testing and proving of faith to the appearing of Jesus Christ. He then speaks of receiving the end of faith, even the salvation of the soul. If the soul of the believer has already entered heaven in completed salvation at death, Peter’s future emphasis becomes difficult to explain.

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; — 1 Peter 1:13

Again, the grace is brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The apostolic focus remains the appearing of Christ and the resurrection hope.

Chapter 7 - The Souls Under the Altar and the Heavenly Temple

Revelation 6 is often raised as an objection because John sees the souls of martyrs under the altar. Yet the passage is apocalyptic and symbolic, and even within the vision these souls are told to rest. They are not pictured as the final state of redeemed glory.

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. — Revelation 6:9-11

The vision does not present the ordinary doctrine of death as immediate heavenly completion. The martyrs are under the altar, crying for vindication, and told to rest until the full number of their brethren is complete. The text points forward to judgment and resurrection vindication rather than replacing resurrection hope.

And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled. — Revelation 15:8

Revelation's heavenly scenes must be handled with care. They are not given so that symbolic visions may overturn the plain resurrection emphasis of Jesus, Daniel, Job, Paul, and Peter.

Chapter 8 - Why the Body Still Matters

The body is not an unnecessary accessory. It is part of man as God made him. It provides the soul with sensory and communicative life: seeing, hearing, speaking, touching, and being seen. If a person can enjoy the fullness of heaven without the body, then the resurrection becomes unnecessary. If a person cannot enjoy the fullness of heaven without the body, then the immediate-translation doctrine leaves the saint incomplete while calling that incompleteness glory.

This is why the Bible places the hope of the saints in resurrection. Paul says there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. — Acts 24:15

If the just receive only a body-resurrection because their souls have already been saved in heaven, while the unjust receive a whole-person resurrection for judgment, then the language of Scripture has been divided without warrant. The biblical hope is not the resurrection of a spare part. It is the resurrection of the dead.

Chapter 9 - Summary of the Biblical Case

Passage	What It Says	Why It Supports Soul Sleep
Luke 14:14	Reward comes at the resurrection of the just.	The focus is recompense at resurrection, not death.
John 6:40, 44, 54	Jesus raises the believer at the last day.	The person, not merely the body, is raised.
1 Cor. 15:22-23	Those in Christ are made alive at His coming.	Life is tied to His coming and resurrection order.
1 Thess. 4:13-17	The dead in Christ sleep and rise first.	Paul comforts with resurrection, not present heaven.
Daniel 12:1-3	Those sleeping in the dust awake.	The sleepers are people awaiting resurrection.
Job 14:10-14	Man waits in the grave until his change comes.	Job identifies himself as waiting for resurrection.
1 Peter 1:5-13	Salvation is revealed at the appearing of Christ.	Peter places the salvation of souls at Christ's revelation.
Acts 2:31	Christ's soul was not left in hell, nor His flesh corrupted.	Christ's resurrection involved the whole person.

Conclusion: The Resurrection Is the Hope

The doctrine of soul sleep preserves the biblical emphasis on the resurrection, the last day, the appearing of Jesus Christ, and the salvation of the whole person. It does not require the reader to redefine “him,” “them,” “man,” “people,” or “dead” as merely bodies unless the text specifically says so. It does not turn the resurrection into an afterthought. It allows the Bible to speak in its own terms.

The apostles did not comfort the saints by shifting their hope to death. They comforted them with **the return of Christ**. They taught that the dead sleep, that **the dead in Christ shall rise first**, that those who are Christ's are made alive at His coming, and that **the salvation of the soul** is revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the Christian hope is not a disembodied interim existence. The Christian hope is the resurrection of the dead at the coming of the Lord, when the whole person is raised, glorified, and forever with Christ.