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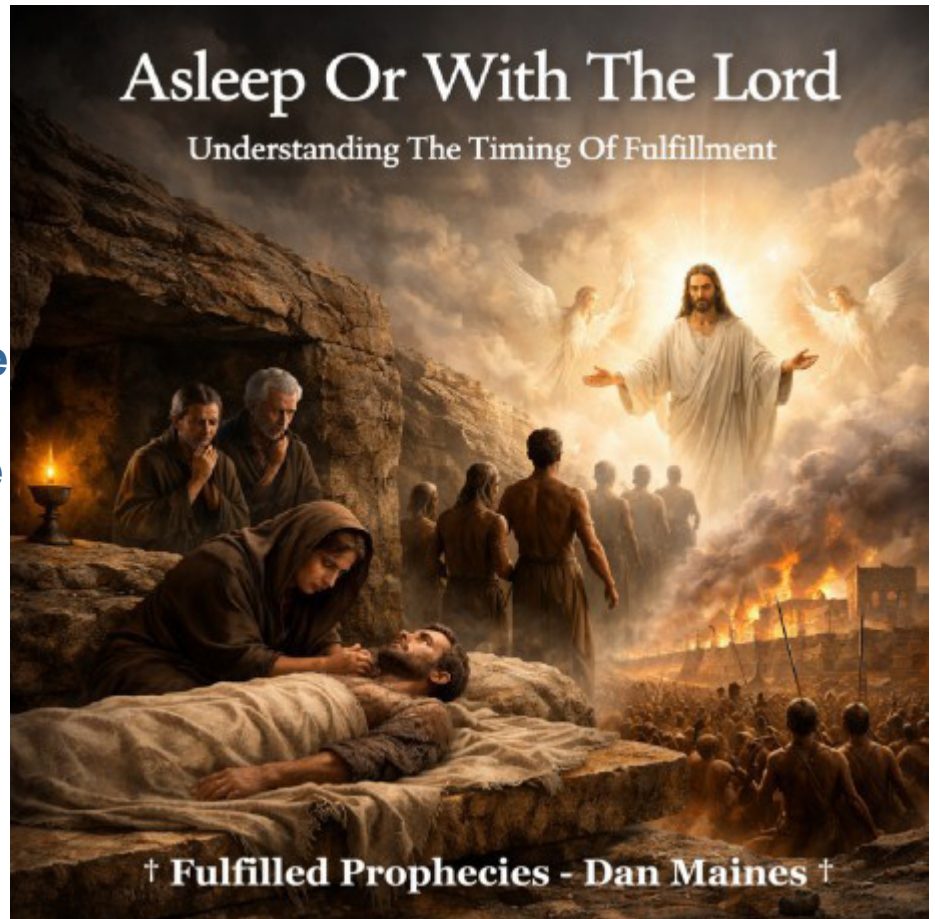
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**Asleep Or With The Lord
Understanding The
Timing Of
Fulfillment**



By Dan Maines

Asleep Or With The Lord Understanding The Timing Of Fulfillment

Introduction

† This can sound like a contradiction, but it makes sense once you keep the timing straight. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Luke 23:43)

† This is exactly where most confusion comes in, not because the text is unclear, but because the timing of fulfillment is

ignored. (Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:54)

† When we read these passages in their first century context, everything lines up without forcing anything. (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34)

† Paul was speaking during a period when fulfillment was right on the edge, so he uses both kinds of language. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 Corinthians 10:11)

† This is critical, because we are not reading Paul after everything was completed, we are reading him before it was finished. (Hebrews 9:8-10; Hebrews 12:26-28)

† That means his language reflects expectation, not completion. (Romans 13:11-12; Hebrews 10:25, 37)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as indeed the rest of mankind do, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead, so also God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus.

† When he says believers were asleep, he is talking about those who had died before everything was fully completed. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14)

† That language comes from the idea of waiting, not unconsciousness. They were at rest, but still awaiting the resurrection that was about to happen in their generation. (Daniel 12:2; John 11:11-14; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54)

† Notice the expectation, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep, that is future from Paul's standpoint. (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17)

† This shows they had not yet experienced the final, completed state. (Hebrews 11:39-40)

† If everything was already finished, there would be no need for this expectation language. (1 Corinthians 15:22-26; Hebrews 10:36-37)

† The term asleep is covenantal, tied to promise not yet fulfilled. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 6:9-11)

2 Corinthians 5:8

we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

† At the same time, Paul also says this, and it shows his confidence that being with Christ was real and immediate upon death. (2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:21-23)

† There is no denial of presence with Christ here at all. (2 Corinthians 5:8)

† So Paul holds both truths at the same time, presence with Christ and awaiting completion. (2 Corinthians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17)

† That is not a contradiction, that is timing. (Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:54)

† He knew fulfillment was near, not yet fully realized. (Romans 13:11-12; James 5:8-9; 1 Peter 4:7)

Luke 23:43

And He said to him, Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.

† Jesus said this to the thief, and it proves that believers did go to be with the Lord when they died. (Luke 23:43)

† Paradise was a real place of presence with Christ. (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:2-4)

† So they were with the Lord, but still waiting for something that had not yet been completed. That is the part people miss. (Hebrews 11:39-40; Revelation 6:9-11)

† Presence does not equal completion. (Hebrews 11:39-40)

† Being with Christ does not mean the final resurrection had already occurred. (1 Corinthians 15:22-26; 2 Timothy 2:18)

Luke 16:19-31

Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, enjoying himself in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed from the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now it happened that the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's arms; and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades he raised his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his arms. And he cried out and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame. But Abraham said, Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to come over from here to you will not be able, nor will any cross over from there to us. And he said, Then I request of you, father, that you send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment. But Abraham said, They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. But he said, No, father

Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent. But he said to him, If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.

† This shows Abraham, Lazarus, and the rich man all conscious after death, before the resurrection. (Luke 16:19-31)

† This proves that asleep never meant unconscious. (John 11:11-14; Luke 16:19-31)

† They were aware, speaking, and experiencing comfort or torment. (Luke 16:23-25)

Hebrews 11:39-40

And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

† Hebrews explains it clearly, they were in His presence, but the full completion of redemption, the resurrection, and the defeat of death had not yet been publicly fulfilled. (Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

† That is why Paul could still refer to them as asleep. It was not about location, it was about fulfillment. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14; Hebrews 11:39-40)

† They had not yet been made perfect. (Hebrews 11:40; Hebrews 12:23)

† That perfection is tied to the completed kingdom reality. (Hebrews 12:22-28; Revelation 21:1-4)

† That had to happen together, not individually before fulfillment. (Hebrews 11:40; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

Revelation 6:9-11

When He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been killed because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who live on the earth? And a white robe was given to each of them; and they were told that they were to rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers and sisters who were to be killed even as they had been, was completed also.

† These souls are under the altar, speaking, aware, and asking how long. (Revelation 6:9-11)

† They are clearly with the Lord, yet still told to rest a little longer. (Revelation 6:10-11)

† This is the exact picture of being with Christ while still awaiting fulfillment. (Revelation 6:9-11; Hebrews 11:39-40)

1 Corinthians 15:54

But when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: Death has been swallowed up in victory.

† Paul points to the moment when that waiting would end. (1 Corinthians 15:54)

† That is the turning point. Once that was fulfilled, the waiting was over. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Revelation 21:4)

† Death as the last enemy was dealt with, and there was no longer any reason to speak of believers as asleep in that same covenant sense. (1 Corinthians 15:26, 54-57)

† This is not describing something thousands of years later. (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Matthew 24:34)

† This was about to happen in their generation. (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34; Revelation 1:1, 3; Revelation 22:6-7, 10, 12)

† Once it happened, everything changed. (Hebrews 12:26-28; Revelation 21:1-5)

Hebrews 10:37

For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay.

† This ties the resurrection expectation directly to their timeframe. (Hebrews 10:37)

† The coming and fulfillment were not distant, they were near. (Hebrews 10:37; James 5:8-9)

Hebrews 12:28

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let's show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

† This shows we are not waiting anymore, the kingdom is already received. (Hebrews 12:28)

† There is no ongoing expectation of fulfillment, it has already been established. (Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 21:1-4)

Historical References

† Justin Martyr spoke of the faithful as awaiting the resurrection, showing that early Christians understood a distinction between being with the Lord and the final consummation. (Justin Martyr, Dialogue With Trypho)

† Irenaeus wrote of the righteous being in a place appointed by God until the resurrection, showing awareness of an awaiting period before completion. (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book 5)

† Eusebius recorded the destruction of Jerusalem as the fulfillment of Christ's prophetic words against that generation, marking the covenantal turning point. (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3)

How It Applies To Us Today

† We are not waiting for what they were waiting for, we are living in what they were expecting. (Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 21:2-4)

† There is no fear in death, because there is no unfinished promise left. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57; 2 Corinthians 5:8)

† Our confidence is complete, because Christ has already finished everything. (John 19:30; Hebrews 9:26-28; Hebrews 10:12-14)

† We do not live looking for a future defeat of death, we live in the victory Christ already brought. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

† That gives believers peace, confidence, and assurance right now. (Romans 8:38-39; Philippians 1:21-23)

Q & A Appendix

Q: If they were with the Lord, why call them asleep?

A: Because the term refers to waiting for the completed resurrection, not their location. They were with Christ, but the corporate fulfillment had not yet arrived. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14; Hebrews 11:39-40)

Q: Did believers go to heaven before AD 70?

A: They were with Christ in Paradise, but not yet in the fully completed kingdom state that arrived when all things were fulfilled. (Luke 23:43; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:54)

Q: When was death defeated?

A: Death was defeated when immortality was put on and death was swallowed up in victory, which Paul placed as near in his own generation. (1 Corinthians 15:54; Matthew 24:34; Revelation 21:4)

Q: Was Paul contradicting himself?

A: No, he was describing two aspects of the same transitional reality before fulfillment was complete, presence with Christ, and waiting for the final covenantal victory. (2 Corinthians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Hebrews 11:39-40)

Q: What is different for believers now?

A: Now there is no waiting tied to unfulfilled prophecy, because the kingdom has been fully established and believers enter directly into the fullness of life with Christ. (Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 21:1-4)

Q: Does sleep mean unconsciousness?

A: No, because people are shown conscious after death, speaking, aware, and with the Lord. (Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 6:9-11; Luke 23:43)

Q: If they were already with Christ, what exactly were they waiting for?

A: They were waiting for the corporate, covenantal completion of the resurrection and the full defeat of death, not personal presence with Christ. (Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:54)

Q: What does Paul mean by God bringing them with Him?

A: It refers to the public vindication and resurrection at the time of fulfillment, when those already with Christ would be revealed as part of the completed kingdom. (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17)

Q: How do we know this was about their generation?

A: Because the New Testament repeatedly says these things were near and about to happen. (Matthew 16:27-28; Matthew 24:34; Revelation 1:1, 3; Hebrews 10:37)

Q: Were Old Testament saints also waiting?

A: Yes, they were included in the same promise and were not made perfect apart from the first century believers. (Hebrews 11:39-40)

Q: What changed after AD 70 regarding death?

A: Death as the last enemy was defeated, and the transition into the full presence of Christ was no longer tied to an unfulfilled promise. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

Q: Why does Revelation show souls asking how long?

A: Because judgment and fulfillment had not yet been completed, showing they were aware and still awaiting the final resolution. (Revelation 6:9-11)

Q: Does this mean there is no future resurrection left?

A: Yes, the resurrection Paul spoke of was fulfilled when death was swallowed up in victory in their generation. (1 Corinthians 15:54; Matthew 24:34)

Q: Why do people still die physically today?

A: Because the resurrection Paul spoke of was not about biological immortality, but about the defeat of death in its covenantal power and separation from God. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Hebrews 2:14-15)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Luke 23:43; Luke 16:19-31; Hebrews 11:39-40; Revelation 6:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:54; Hebrews 10:37; Hebrews 12:28

† Justin Martyr, Dialogue With Trypho

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book 5

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3

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