

## Restoration of the Kingdom of God – 15

The Scriptures provide a preview of end time events, including the return of Jesus. These include events which are to be experienced by those believers *“who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord” - 1 Thessalonians 4:15.*

- But to have a correct perception of what these events will entail, the reader of these Scriptures needs first to have an accurate comprehension of *“the first principles”* Greek, *stoicheion*, Strong 4747 = primary and fundamental principles *“of the oracles of God” - Hebrews 5:12.* Even while the apostles were still alive, it was possible for members of the church to be misled by *“the basic principles of the world”*, which Paul defines as *“the tradition of men” - Colossians 2:8.*

This was the tradition which existed among the Gentiles of the time, including those in the city of Colosse in Asia Minor, to whom Paul wrote. The general concept of those times had been shaped through the speculations of Plato, who posited that man’s mind, consciousness and life of the body resided in an immaterial soul. Even after death, he said, the soul exists and is able to think.

- Belief in the immortality of the soul raises the question of what happens to it after the person dies? And so we find another aspect of *“the tradition of men”* recorded in the ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, which speaks of departed souls journeying to heaven. This sort of belief has pervaded human societies around the world, from Valhalla to the Happy Hunting Grounds - none of which are based on the Scriptures.

From his studies, Mircea Eliade, professor of the history of religions at the University of Chicago, observed as fact that “Old Testament references to the soul are related to the concept of breath and establish **no distinction** between the ethereal soul and the corporeal body. Christian concepts of a body-soul dichotomy **originated with the ancient Greeks** and were introduced into Christian theology at an early date [2 or 3 centuries after the apostles] by St. Gregory of Nyssa and by St. Augustine” - *Enc.Britt.*

- This fact indicates that immortal-soulism and heaven-going have no part in the original Christian theology which was taught by Jesus and his apostles. It can be tested by a careful reading of the New Testament - of whom was it ever said that he “went to heaven” when he died? We are told about Jesus’ ascension in **Acts 1:11**, but no others.

And when Lazarus died, Jesus said to the disciples, **John 11:11** *“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep”*, which they took literally. **14** *“Then Jesus told them plainly, ‘Lazarus has died.’”* After meeting the grieving family Jesus chose the most comforting words he had for them, saying nothing about going to heaven. Instead he said, **23** *“your brother will rise again. 24 Martha said to Him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day’.”*

- This was the belief that Martha had clearly learned from Jesus. She looked forward to seeing her brother again, not in heaven, but after he had been raised back to life at Jesus’ return to the earth.

When Herod had James killed - **Acts 12:2**, nothing is said about that apostle going to heaven. **Acts 7:60**, referring to the unconsciousness of death says that the martyred Stephen *“fell asleep”*, and *“devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him”* which also hardly fits with the idea that Stephen was then enjoying life in heaven.

- Since *“the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing”* = are unconscious - **Ecclesiastes 9:5**, then Lazarus, James and Stephen will remain in that condition until the return of Jesus, when *“the Lord himself shall descend from heaven... and the dead in Christ shall rise*

*first*” - **1 Thessalonians 4:16**. It is at that time that they will “*awake*” = recover consciousness  
“...to everlasting life” - **Daniel 12:2**. More next time, God willing.