

(Bible used = NIV 1984 translation)

Way in: How would you describe the colour blue to a blind from birth person?

The following few verses have had a huge influence in some Christian circles, and their interpretation remains controversial. We should expect and accept that each home group will not be in unanimous agreement with all responses. I myself (Roger) am influenced on this subject by the views of N. T. (Tom) Wright, and that is likely to have permeated the following questions.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4: 13 - 18

Let us first put ourselves in Paul's shoes as he writes this passage. Most likely, one or more Christians have died in Thessalonica since Paul left, and fellow church members have probably misunderstood Paul's teaching on resurrection and apparently thought that all believers would live until Christ returns. They are concerned for their own future and what has/what will happen to their now dead members. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul attempts to allay their fears.

Question 1 We understand that the term 'fall asleep' used here means 'have died'.

- a. Do you agree? Could it mean anything else?
- b. Why do you think Paul writes (verse 14) that Jesus 'died' and did not describe this as 'fall asleep'?

Question 2. Following the death of a loved one, in what ways is a Christian's grief different from that of a non-believers?

- a. What role does faith play in the grieving process?

Question 3. Verse 15 begins 'According to the Lord's own word' – yet the doctrine that follows is not recorded anywhere in the gospels.

- a. How might we explain this?
- b. Does this alter your view of this doctrine?

Question 4 Do you think verses 16 and 17 are supposed to be guiding us as to the location of heaven?

- a. How would you explain where heaven is currently located?
- b. Do you expect this location to change when Jesus comes again?

Question 5. What kinds of reactions have you experienced when the subject of Christ's return has come up?

- a. Would it be good news for you if Christ's return happened today?
- b. What has Christ promised to all true believers when he returns and makes all things new?