

1 Corinthians 15:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

Analysis

Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished (ἄρα καὶ οἱ κοιμηθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ ἀπώλοντο)—The perfect participle koimēthentes (κοιμηθέντες, "having fallen asleep") is the Christian euphemism for death, implying temporary sleep before resurrection awakening. But if no resurrection, this language is cruel deception. The verb apōlonto (ἀπώλοντο, "perished, were destroyed") indicates total loss, eternal ruin.

This verse devastates Christian hope if resurrection fails. Believers who died trusting Christ's promises—martyrs burned alive, apostles crucified, persecuted saints—would be utterly deceived. Their deaths would be apōleia (destruction), not koimēsis (sleep). Death would be final defeat, not temporary rest. Paul argues this conclusion is intolerable—thus resurrection must be true.

Historical Context

By AD 55, thousands of Christians had died, many as martyrs (Acts 7:54-60, 12:1-2). Bereaved believers comforted themselves that death was temporary sleep, that resurrection awaited. Paul argues this comfort is either glorious truth or cruel lie—there's no middle ground.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Christian comfort for bereaved believers depend entirely on resurrection?
2. What hope would remain if death were final—how would this change funeral practices and grief?
3. Why does Paul connect the resurrection of past believers with the truth of Christ's resurrection?

Interlinear Text

ἄρα	καὶ	οἱ	κοιμηθέντες	ἐν	Χριστῷ	ἀπώλοντο
Then	they also	G3588	which are fallen asleep	in	Christ	are perished
G686	G2532		G2837	G1722	G5547	G622

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 14:13 (Parallel theme): And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

1 Corinthians 15:6 (Parallel theme): After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (References Christ): 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: