Sleep of Death

Death marks the cessation of consciousness. The dead are in a state of dreamless sleep. This is why there must be a resurrection of the dead. Jesus will come back to wake up those who are in the tombs with his voice. From the perspective of the deceased no time has passed, however there may have been hundreds of years between the time that they died and the resurrection. Below are verses that support this belief.

Man is composed of dust & breath (spirit)

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [lit. "a living soul"]. [Gen 2.7]

By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return. [Gen 3.19]

"Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish…All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. [Gen 6.17, 7.21-22]

And Abraham replied, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am *but* dust and ashes. [Gen 18.27]

For as long as life is in me, and the breath of God is in my nostrils, my lips certainly will not speak unjustly, nor will my tongue mutter deceit. [Job 27.3-4]

"The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life." [Job 33.4]

"If He should determine to do so, if He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust." [Job 34.14-15]

For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust. [Ps 103.14]

Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit [or "breath"] will return to God who gave it. [Ecc 12.5-7]

Stop regarding man, whose breath *of life* is in his nostrils; For why should he be esteemed? [Is 2.22]

"Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. 'I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.'" So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life."'" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. [Eze 7.5-10]

The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. [1 Cor 15.47-48]

A person is a soul

"Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live [lit. "that my soul may live"] on account of you." [Gen 12.13 also see Josh 2.13; Eze 13.18-20]

'Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person [lit. "soul"] shall be cut off from Israel. Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* an alien or a native of the land.' [Ex 12.15, 19]

But there were some men who were unclean because of the dead person [lit. "soul"], so that they could not observe Passover on that day; so they came before Moses and Aaron on that day. Those men said to him, "Though we are unclean because of the dead person [lit. "soul"], why are we restrained from presenting the offering of the LORD at its appointed time among the sons of Israel?" "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If any one of you or of your generations becomes unclean because of a dead person [lit. "soul"], or is on a distant journey, he may, however, observe the Passover to the LORD.' " [Num 9.6-7, 10 also see Num 5.2; 6.6, 11; 19.11, 13, 20; Lev 21.1]

"If there is any person [lit. "soul"] who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people." [Lev 23.29]

So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. [1 Cor 15.45]

Man returns to dust

"Why then do You not pardon my transgression And take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust; And You will seek me, but I will not be." [Job 7.21]

“Where now is my hope? And who regards my hope? Will it go down with me to Sheol? Shall we together go down into the dust?” [Job 17.15-16]

If I have rewarded evil to my friend, or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary, let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it; and let him trample my life down to the ground And lay my glory in the dust. Selah. [Ps 7.4-5]

My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death. [Ps 22.15]

“You turn man back into dust And say, "Return, O children of men." [Ps 90.3]

You hide Your face, they are dismayed; You take away their spirit, they expire and return to their dust. [Ps 104.29]

All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. [Ecc 3.20]

Lie down (sleep) with your ancestors

The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. [Deut 31.16]

When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. [2 Sam 7.12]

"Otherwise it will come about, as soon as my lord the king sleeps with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be considered offenders." [1 Ki 1.21]

Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. [1 Ki 2.10]

But when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Send me away, that I may go to my own country." [1 Ki 11.21]

And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David, and his son Rehoboam reigned in his place. [1 Ki 11.43]

The time that Jeroboam reigned *was* twenty-two years; and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his place. [1 Ki 14.20]

And Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. And Abijam his son became king in his place. [1 Ki 14.31]

And Abijam slept with his fathers and they buried him in the city of David; and Asa his son became king in his place. [1 Ki 15.8]

And Asa slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place. [1 Ki 15.24]

And Baasha slept with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah, and Elah his son became king in his place. [1 Ki 16.6]

So Omri slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son became king in his place. [1 Ki 16.28]

Also see 1 Ki 22.40, 50; 2 Ki 8.24; 10.35; 13.9, 13; 14.16, 22, 29; 15.7, 22, 38; 16.20; 20.21; 21.18; 24.6; 2 Chr 9.31; 12.16; 14.1; 16.13; 21.1; 26.2, 23; 27.9; 28.27; 32.33; 33.20

Death involves no activity, no praising God, no thinking

"Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes will not see all the evil which I will bring on this place."" So they brought back word to the king. [2 Ki 22.20; 2 Chr 34.28]

Return, O LORD, rescue my soul; Save me because of Your lovingkindness. For there is no mention of You in death; In Sheol who will give You thanks? [Ps 6.4-5]

"What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your faithfulness? [Ps 30.9]

Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I call upon You; Let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in Sheol. [Ps 31.17]

Will You perform wonders for the dead? Will the departed spirits rise and praise You? Selah. Will Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave, Your faithfulness in Abaddon? Will Your wonders be made known in the darkness? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? But I, O LORD, have cried out to You for help, And in the morning my prayer comes before You. [Ps 88.10-13]

The dead do not praise the LORD, Nor do any who go down into silence; [Ps 115.17]

His spirit [or “breath”] departs, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. [Ps 146.4]

For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten. Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun… Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going. [Ecc 9.5-6, 10]

"Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; It is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back. For Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness. It is the living who give thanks to You, as I do today; A father tells his sons about Your faithfulness." [Is 38.17-19]

Death is sleep

"Why did I not die at birth, Come forth from the womb and expire? Why did the knees receive me, And why the breasts, that I should suck? For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest," [Job 3.11-13]

So man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, He will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep. Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, That You would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You, That You would set a limit for me and remember me! If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait Until my change comes. You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands. [Job 14.12-15]

Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, [Psalm 13.3]

The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; [Mat 27.52]

This He said, and after that He *said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep." The disciples then said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him." [John 11.11-14]

Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep. [Acts 7.60]

"For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay;" [Acts 13.36]

For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. [1 Cor 11.29-30]

After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; [1 Cor 15.6]

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. [1 Cor 15.17-20]

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. [1 Thes 5.9-10]

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." [2 Pet 3.3-4]

Death is nonexistence (like not ever having been born)

"Why did I not die at birth, Come forth from the womb and expire?...Or like a miscarriage which is discarded, I would not be, As infants that never saw light. [Job 3.11, 16]

"Why then do You not pardon my transgression And take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust; And You will seek me, but I will not be." [Job 7.21]

'Why then have You brought me out of the womb? Would that I had died and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been, Carried from womb to tomb.' [Job 10.18-19]

All go to the same place (rich, poor, righteous, wicked, etc.)

"For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest, with kings and with counselors of the earth, who rebuilt ruins for themselves; or with princes who had gold, who were filling their houses with silver...There the wicked cease from raging, And there the weary are at rest. The prisoners are at ease together; they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master." [Job 3.13-15, 17-19]

One dies in his full strength, Being wholly at ease and satisfied; his sides are filled out with fat, And the marrow of his bones is moist, while another dies with a bitter soul, Never even tasting anything good. Together they lie down in the dust, And worms cover them. [Job 21.23-26]

Souls can die (be destroyed)

But Reuben heard *this* and rescued him out of their hands and said, "Let us not take his life [lit. "soul"]." [Gen 37.21 also see Lev 24.17]

'As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person [lit. "soul"] and will cut him off from among his people.' [Lev 20.6]

He captured it and its king and all its cities, and they struck them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed every person [lit. "soul"] who was in it. He left no survivor. Just as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king, as he had also done to Libnah and its king. Thus Joshua struck all the land, the hill country and the Negev and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings. He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded. [Josh 10.39-40 also see Josh 10.28, 35; 11.11; Eze 22.27]

So that my soul would choose suffocation, Death rather than my pains. [Job 7.15]

All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship, all those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, even he who cannot keep his soul alive. [Ps 22.29]

Let those be ashamed and humiliated together who seek my life [lit. "soul"] to destroy it; let those be turned back and dishonored who delight in my hurt. [Ps 40.14]

They attack, they lurk, They watch my steps, As they have waited *to take* my life [lit. "soul"]…For You have delivered my soul from death, Indeed my feet from stumbling, So that I may walk before God In the light of the living. [Ps 56.6, 13]

But those who seek my life [lit. "soul"] to destroy it, Will go into the depths of the earth. [Ps 63.9]

He sent upon them His burning anger, Fury and indignation and trouble, A band of destroying angels. He leveled a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul from death, But gave over their life to the plague, [Ps 78.49-50]

Let my soul live that it may praise You, And let Your ordinances help me. [Ps 119.175]

And He will destroy the glory of his forest and of his fruitful garden, both soul and body, And it will be as when a sick man wastes away. [Is 10.18]

But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself [lit. "his soul"] as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand…Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself [lit. "his soul"] to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors. [Is 53.10, 12]

"Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die…The person [lit. "soul"] who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself. [Eze 18.4, 20]

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." [Mat 10.28]

'And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' [Acts 3.23]

let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. [James 5.20]

The second *angel* poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like *that* of a dead man; and every living thing [lit. "soul"] in the sea died. [Rev 16.3]

The person dies "he" not just their body

for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. [Mat 12.40]

When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They *said to Him, "Lord, come and see." [John 11.33]

So she *ran and *came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and *said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." 13 And they *said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She *said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." When she had said this, she turned around and *saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus *said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she *said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." [John 20.2, 14-15]

"When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead;" [Acts 13.29-30]

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised [1 Cor 15.4]

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. [Rev 1.17-18]

Man and animals (beasts) perish

But man in his pomp will not endure; He is like the beasts that perish. [Ps 49.12]

For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. [Ecc 3.19-20]

Dead people [not just their bodies] go to and stay in the grave (sheol) until resurrection

"When a cloud vanishes, it is gone, So he who goes down to Sheol does not come up. He will not return again to his house, Nor will his place know him anymore." [Job 7.9-10]

"Will it go down with me to Sheol? Shall we together go down into the dust?" [Job 17.16]

What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah. [Ps 89.48]

As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; And the upright shall rule over them in the morning, And their form shall be for Sheol to consume So that they have no habitation. [Ps 49.14]

Her feet go down to death; Her steps take hold of Sheol. [Prov 5.5]

Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. You shall strike him with the rod And rescue his soul from Sheol. [Prov 23.13-14]

Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight. [Hos 13.14]

Should good be repaid with evil? For they have dug a pit for me [lit. "for my soul"]. Remember how I stood before You To speak good on their behalf, So as to turn away Your wrath from them. [Jer 18.20]

"No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man." [John 3.13]

"'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY…Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day…he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY…For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND," '" [Acts 2.26-27, 29, 31, 34]

The reward of the righteous is to be brought out of the grave—resurrected

From men with Your hand, O LORD, From men of the world, whose portion is in this life, And whose belly You fill with Your treasure; They are satisfied with children, And leave their abundance to their babes. As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake. [Ps 17.14-15]

But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me. Selah. [Ps 49.15]

You who have shown me many troubles and distresses will revive me again, and will bring me up again from the depths of the earth. [Ps 71.20]

Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew *is as* the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. [Is 26.19]

"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt." [Dan 12.2]

"But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." [Luke 10.13-14]

Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. [Luke 20.34-36]

"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." [John 5.28-29]

For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you." [Eph 5.14]

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. [Rev 20.4-6]

Waking from the sleep of death (resurrection) occurs when Christ returns on the last day

John 6.39-40, 44, 54

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, [1 Cor 15.20-23]

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. [1 Thes 4.13-17]

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" [1 Cor 15.51-55]

Note: this list is not complete (does not contain all of the references above)
Genesis 2.7; 3.19
2 Samuel 7.12
Job 3.11-19; 7.9-10, 12, 21; 14.21; 17.16; 21.26; 34.15
Psalm 6.5; 31.17; 49.10-20; 71.20; 88.10-12; 90.3; 115.17; 104.29
Proverbs 5.5; 23.14
Ecclesiastes 3.19-20; 9.5, 10
Isaiah 38.18; 53.12
Ezekiel 18.4, 20
Daniel 12.2
Matthew 10.28
John 5.28-29; 11.11-14
Acts 3.23
1 Corinthians 11.30; 15.6, 20, 22-23
Ephesians 5.14
1 Thessalonians 4.13
James 5.20
2 Peter 3.4
Revelation 20.4