

3/29/20, 2/16/12

### The Coming of Jesus For His Church

#### 1Thess. 4:15-18

The Thessalonians were being troubled about their uncertainty about the state of believers that had already died in view of the Lord's return for His church. 1Thess. 4:13-18

\* As we stated this passage is often used to teach the Rapture of the church and it is not wrong in itself for it clearly mentions it indirectly. vs. 17

But the direct central theme of this section is the relationship of departed believers at the return of the Lord for His church, revealing the resurrection of both live and departed believers.

1. They were not asking whether they would be resurrected for they knew they would. Acts 17:1-4
2. They were not doubting the Lord's return or their meeting Him in the air. 1Thess. 1:10
3. They were anticipating the imminent return of Christ at any time. 1Thess. 5:1-2

Paul detailed instruction about what happens to dead believers at the return of Christ for His church, in view of the resurrection is two-fold: 1Thess. 4:13-18

- I. The proclamation over their anxious hope. vs. 13-14
- II. The explanation of their living hope. vs. 15-18

Last time we looked at the proclamation over their anxious hope about dead believers, in view of Jesus coming for His church, learning three truths. vs. 13-14

- I. The Thessalonians were not to be ignorant concerning the state of departed believers. vs. 13a-c
- II. The Thessalonians were not to grieve for departed believers as unbelievers. vs. 13d
- III. The Thessalonians were to know Jesus would return with the departed believers. vs. 14

Now we want to look at the explanation of their living hope at the return of Christ for His church consisting of three important truths: vs. 15-18

- I. The lack of benefit to the departed believer over the live believer's hope. vs. 15
  - II. The equal benefit of the live and departed believer's hope. vs. 16-17
  - III. The valuable benefit of the live believer is sure hope. vs. 18
- I. **The lack of benefit to the departed believer over the live believer's hope. vs. 15**
    - A. The apostle Paul identified the authority of what he was about to declare. vs. 15a

\* "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord."

1. Paul indicated the corporate witness about the Divine revelation he was about to state.
  - a. The corporate witness is marked by the plural pronoun “we”, Silas and Timothy.
    - \* The tense is the indicative present, “we are saying to you”.
  - b. The recipients were the Thessalonians by the pronoun “you”, emphatic.
    - \* Born again able by the Spirit to understand the things of God.
2. Paul indicated the words he was about to impart to them as Divine revelation.
  - a. The phrase “the word of the Lord”, identified the words of Jesus, not Paul.
    - \* This confirms the doctrine of Inspiration, the prophets and the apostles spoke not of their own impulse or origin, but as carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2Pet. 1:20-21
  - b. The writings of Paul are full of evidence received by direct revelation from Jesus.
    - 1) “I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that *there is* nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.” Rom. 14:14
    - 2) “Now to the married I command, *yet* not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from *her* husband.” 1Cor. 7:10
    - 3) “Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel

- should live from the gospel.” 1Cor. 9:14
- 4) “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread.” 1Cor. 11:23
- B.** The apostle Paul indicated the relation of the living believer to the departed believer at the coming of Jesus for His church. vs. 15b
- \* “That we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.”
1. Paul is actually elaborating on verse 14 explaining the order of the believer’s presence before Jesus by the words of Jesus.
    - a. The words are not found in the gospels.
      - 1) The closest is to gathering the elect Jews from the four winds. Matt. 24:31
      - 2) Remember there are many things not written John tells us and Paul writes under Inspiration that none today can claim, the Canon is closed. Jn. 21:25
    - b. Paul quoted the words of the Lord to the Ephesian elders also, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35
      - 1) These words are not found in the gospels.
      - 2) Paul saw Jesus and was taught by Jesus for three years in Arabia, who

- imparted the gospel to Paul directly, he did not receive it from man, but by revelation of Jesus. Acts 9:17; Gal. 1:11-12, 17-18
- 3) Jesus appeared to Paul in the temple as he returned for the first time to Jerusalem from Damascus, after his conversion and told him to get out of Jerusalem quickly. Acts 21:17-18
2. Paul identified Christians who are still in their physical body.
    - a. Those living on the earth by the phrase “we who are alive”, this includes.
      - \* Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond or free, Scythian or barbarian.
    - b. The physical body is the mere vehicle to be able to express ourselves on the earth.
      - 1) Our soul “psuche”, involves our intellect, emotions and the will.
      - 2) Our spirit is the real us, being created in the image and likeness of God.
  3. Paul indicated the duration of the period of time, until the coming of the Lord.
    - a. The revelation is that those who are alive until the Lord’s coming have no advantage over the departed believers.
      - 1) The event described as the coming of the Lord “parousia” for His church. 1Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23
      - 2) The coming “parousia”, means presence, a technical term for a royal

visit by a ruler of Rome as a manifested deity, bringing in a new era. Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1Cor 15:23; 2Thess. 2:1, 8, 9; Ja. 5:7-8; 2Pet. 1:16; 3:4, 12; 1Jn 2:28

- b. There is no disadvantage to the departed believer, by no means.
  - 1) The word proceed “phthano”, means to get the start of, go ahead, with an advantage, a double negative.
    - a) The reason being the departed are with Jesus, after their last breath.
    - b) And as the next verse declares, their bodies will be raised also.
  - 2) Those who are asleep “koimethentas”, the aorist tense, a single past action, literally, having fallen asleep, like verse 14.
    - \* The word sleep “koimao”, means to lie down, stated 3 times. vs. 13, 14, 15

### **Illustration**

It would be like placing two different people in two safe locations, one would not have a disadvantage from the other!

### **Application**

1. The saint who dies has a physical benefit.
  - a. They do not age, get ill, have pain or anxiety.
  - b. They do not have to care for the body needs, food, drink or sexual reproduction.

\* “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.” 2Cor. 4:16-18

2. The saint who dies has spiritual benefits.
  - a. They no longer have to go through trials and temptation by the strategies of Satan.
  - b. They no longer are tempted by sin nature or make bad decisions by their emotions having to resist the world or the devil in spiritual warfare.
 

\* “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am **known**.” 1Cor. 13:12

***The lack of benefit to the departed believer over the live believer’s hope is nothing, the living one is just waiting for Jesus!***

## II. The equal benefit of the live and departed believer’s hope. vs. 16-17

- A. The apostle Paul described the Lord descending for His church on earth. vs. 16

1. Paul declared the certainty of the coming of Jesus, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven.” vs. 16a
  - a. The person is identified clearly, “The Lord Himself”.
    - 1) The title Lord “kurios”, indicates One who is the master and owner of another person or thing.
    - 2) Jesus has bought us with a price, we are not our own by His precious blood. 1Cor. 6:19-20; 1Pet. 1:19
  - b. The place of His descent is from heaven.
    - 1) The Lord after His resurrection ascended far above all the heavens to sit at the right hand of God waiting to return for His church. Acts 1:11; Eph. 4:10; Acts 2:33-25

\* Therefore Jesus will be bringing with Him the departed saints that have been with Him in heaven. vs. 14b
    - 2) The first time Jesus descended He emptied Himself of His glory, took on the form of a servant and humbled Himself to provide the righteous atonement for salvation. Phil. 2:7-8
    - 3) Then during the three days in the tomb, the Lord Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth, Sheol or Hades, to preach to the spirits in prison the victory over death for salvation. Eph 4:9; 1Pet 3:19

- a) Paul and every New Testament writer believed in the imminent presence of Christ. Rom. 13:11-12; 1Cor. 16:22; Phil. 4:5; Heb. 10:25; Ja. 5:8; 1Pet. 4:7; 1Jn. 2:18
  - b) Those who say Paul later changed his mind in later epistle are wrong and are reading into them their own bias!
  - c) The very parables of Jesus taught imminence, ready to give an account.
2. Paul declared the manner of the coming of Jesus describing it in three ways. vs. 16a-c
- \* “with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God.”
  - a. Jesus will descend with a shout “keleusma”, depicts authority. vs. 16a
    - \* The word is used of a ship master’s command to the oarsman, a military officer to his men and a hunter to his dogs.
  - b. Jesus will descend with the voice of an archangel. vs. 16b
    - 1) Some take this to mean an archangel will proceed the Lord, but there is no need for that, it merely refers to a proclamation of Divine authority.
    - 2) Michael is the only one stated as an archangel. Dan. 10:13; 12:1; Jude 9
  - c. Jesus will descend with the trumpet of God. vs. 16c

- 1) Trumpets throughout Scripture are used to summon military, alarm, warning or festive occasions. Num. 10:9; Joel 2:1; Zech. 9:14
  - 2) This trumpet should not be confused nor identified with the 7th trumpet of Revelation that takes place at the end of the seven years of Tribulation and Great-tribulation on earth. Rev. 11:15
  - 3) John heard Jesus talking to him in a loud voice as of a trumpet. Rev 1:10
  - 4) Then after the messages to the seven churches, the church age, John says, “After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a **trumpet** speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.” Rev. 4:1
    - \* This is the same trumpet of our text identifying the rapture of the church!
3. Paul declared the result of His coming descending from heaven. vs. 16d
- \* “The dead in Christ will rise first.”
  - a. The departed saint as Paul said will be descending with Jesus at His coming to be joined to their bodies. vs. 14b
    - 1) The minute you die you are instantly present with Jesus in heaven, but not I your glorified body. 2Cor 5:1-8

- 2) The text before us is speaking about the relationship of the physical resurrection of the old body that was planted in the ground at death, but though it is related to the old body, it has no resemblance, it will be glorified. 1Cor. 15:35-38, 42-49
- a) The next verse will clearly indicate that the dead bodies in the graves will be caught up to the cloud with us who are alive at the rapture! vs. 17a
- b) Jesus said, “For the hour is coming in which all who are in the grave will hear my voice.” Jn. 5:28
- 3) Jesus was the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep, so after Jesus rose from the grave many of the bodies of saints rose and appeared to many in the city. Matt. 27:51-53; 1Cor. 15:20
- B.** The apostle Paul described the Lord removing His church from the earth. vs. 17
1. Paul pointed out the privilege of those who are alive when the Lord descends from heaven, “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up.” vs. 17a
- a. Those alive will escape physical death and the wrath on the world. 1Thess. 1:10
- 1) “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a

mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” 1Cor. 15:50-54; Phil. 3:20-21

- 2) “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” Phil. 3:20-21
- b.** The manner of their escape is depicted vividly.
- 1) The phrase caught up “harpazo”, means to seize violently, carry off by force, claim for one’s self eagerly.
- 2) Of the 13 times it appears in the New Testament it means a sudden, violent and jolting removal every time.
- a) Satan “harpazo” the word of God from men’s hearts. Matt. 13:19
- b) Philip was “harpazo” by the Holy Spirit as he baptized the Ethiopian eunuch and was transported to Azotus. Acts 8:39

- c) Paul was “harpazo” to the third heaven. 2Cor 12:2
- d) The woman’s child is “harpazo” to God. Rev. 12:5
- b. The Latin counterpart is “rapare”.
  - 1) We get our word rapture from it.
  - 2) The Greek word “harpazo” means the same.
- 2. Paul provided a picture of a long awaited family reunion, “together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” vs. 17a
  - a. The live believers will be “harpazo” together with “them”.
    - 1) Who are the “them”? They are the bodies of departed saints ascending with us to be joined with them in the clouds.
    - 3) The departed believers descending in the clouds will be receive their resurrected body, as stated in the previously. vs. 16d
  - b. The sphere is “in the clouds”.
    - 1) The clouds are most likely literal, as Jesus ascended back up to heaven in a cloud before the apostles. Acts 1:11
    - 2) The ascension is up in the air, clouds also refer to theophanies of Divine glory. Ex. 16:10; 19:16; 1Kings 8; Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; Acts 1:9
    - 3) God makes the clouds His chariots. Ps. 104:3b

- c. The purpose, to meet the Lord in the air.
  - 1) The word meet “apanteesis”, means to encounter and used of a formal reception for royal magistrates by going out to meet them to accompany them back on the final part of the journey, appearing 4 times in N. T.
    - a) The word is used of believers meeting Paul at his port of entry at Rome and accompanying him the rest of the way. Acts 28:15
    - b) Two times the word is used of those who went out to meet the bridegroom to attend the wedding in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins which teaches the imminent return of Christ with, not for His bride the church. Matt. 25:1-13
  - 2) The meeting with the Lord in the air will include the meeting with our believing families and friends.
- 3. Paul pointed out the awaited promise to the saints and church of Jesus Christ, “And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” vs. 17b
  - a. The believer will be glorified to be just like Jesus.
  - b. The believer will not experience sorrow, hunger, thirst or death any more, but will return to heaven with Jesus for 7 years.
  - c. The believer will go before the Bema-Seat of Christ to receive reward for the

motive of his works. 1Cor. 3:14-16;  
2Cor. 4:5; Rom. 14:10

- d. The believer returns with Jesus at the end of the seven years to set up the Kingdom.

### **Illustration**

If one person received a million dollars, three months before the other, but both had to wait to spend the money together, they would share in an equal benefit!

### **Application**

1. The person putting their trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sin and repents has eternal life.
  - a. Jesus said, "If you believe in Me, you'll never die." Jn. 11:26
  - b. "And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, "Lord Jesus, **receive** my spirit." Acts 7:59
2. The believer is constantly looking for the Lord to come for him.
  - a. "We ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." Rom 8:23
  - b. "For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." Col. 3:3-4
  - c. "Beloved, now are we children of God; out of it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And

everyone who has this hope in them purifies himself, just as He is pure." 1Jn. 3:2-3

3. The believer knows there will be a seven-year period of God's wrath on the earth and Jesus will rapture His church prior to it.
  - a. Jesus told His disciples, as He was ready to go to the cross and return to heaven, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also." Jn. 14:1-3
  - b. Jesus said, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted **worthy** to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." Lk. 21:36
4. The usual arguments against the teaching of the Rapture of the church are two.
  - a. That the Rapture was invented by James Darby, a Plymouth Brethren Pastor 1800-1882, which is false, he did make it popular again.
  - b. Second that the teaching of the Rapture is a recent doctrine, also false historically and Scripturally inaccurate, Jesus, Paul and John taught the rapture. Jn. 14:13; 1Thess. 4:16-17; Rev. 3:10; 4:1
5. The credentials of the early first century church fathers was they were the disciples of the apostles.

- a. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus studied under Polycarp and Polycarp worked with the apostle John for over twenty years in ministry.
- c. Irenaeus also testifies he occasionally saw the apostle John himself.
- d. From Papias in 70 A.D. to Lactantius about 285 A. D. , including Tertullian and Origen, the doctrine of the church fathers was Pre-Millennialism, till the fourth century, when they began to teach Amillennialism, named “Schism of Nepos”. (Dr. Johnson:24-25)
- c. Irenaeus 130-202 A. D. on the subject of the Rapture, wrote: “Those nations however, who did not of themselves raise up their eyes unto heaven, nor returned thanks to their Maker, nor wished to behold the light of truth, but who were like blind mice concealed in the depths of ignorance, the word justly reckons “as waste water from a sink, and as the turning-weight of a balance — in fact, as nothing;”....**And therefore, when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this**, it is said, “There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.”(2) For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.” Against Heresies 5.29
- d. Victorinus A. D. 240 in his commentary on Revelation shows he believed the Rapture, “And I saw another great and wonderful sign, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for

- in them is completed the Wrath of God. Rev. 15:1 and these shall be in the last time, when the *Church shall have gone out of the midst.*” 2Thess. 2:7
- e. Cyprian A. D. 220-258 wrote in The Treaties of Cyprian describing the end times of Great Tribulation: “We who see that terrible things have begun, and know that still more terrible things are imminent, may regard it as the greatest advantage to depart from it as quickly as possible. Do you not give God thanks, do you not congratulate yourself, **that by an early departure you are taken away, and delivered from the shipwrecks and disasters that are imminent?** Let us greet the day which assigns each of us to his own home, **which snatches us hence**, and sets us free from the snares of the world and restores us to paradise and the kingdom.”
    - 1) We see use of language commonly found in reference to the Rapture as Cyprian describes the judgments of the end times as “imminent.” And he makes his belief on the timing of the Rapture when he wrote that Christians will have an “early departure” and be “delivered” from the devastating global judgments that come during the Day of The Lord.
    - 2) Cyprian is in line with the Apostle Paul who wrote that “*God has not appointed us to wrath, but salvation.*” Cyprian expressed

joy and encourages the believing reader to rejoice that the Church will be “taken away” before the disastrous Great Tribulation. Just as the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:40, 41 used the same language of one “**taken**” and the other “**left.**”

\* The context is the Second Coming, taken refers to enter the Kingdom, the other is left for judgment!

- 3) Also Cyprian references the mansions which the Lord Jesus Christ promises to come back and take His believers to himself, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Jn. 14:1-3 (Treaty of Cyprian)

*The equal benefit of the live and departed believer’s hope is that both will be together with Jesus!*

### III. The valuable benefit of live believers in sure hope. vs. 18

\* “Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

- A. The apostle Paul concluded they were to comfort one another with these words, for personal comfort.

1. The word comfort “parakaleo”, means to call one along side.
  - a. To admonish and exhort.
  - b. To console and comfort.
  - c. To encourage and strengthen.
2. The believer has an incredible benefit of knowing this detailed revelation about the departed believers and the live believer at the return of Jesus for His church.
  - a. Having great comfort that the departed saints are presently with the Lord.
  - b. Having great comfort that the departed saints will be at no disadvantage, for they will receive their glorified bodies in the air with us who are raptured.
  - c. Having great comfort that we will see all of our love ones who have gone before us and we will be with the Lord forever in fellowship.
  - d. Having great comfort that what we possess is Divine revelation, inerrant and infallible, the Inspired word of God.

- B. The apostle Paul concluded they were to comfort one another with these words through teaching.
1. To remove ignorance from those who would find themselves in their own position, uncertain about departed believers and the Lord’s coming.
    - a. Imparting to them God’s word.

- b. Reminding them of the reliability of God's word.
  - c. Exhorting them to teach others.
2. To exhort one another when situations and circumstances would lead us to think differently.
    - a. Due to our emotions.
    - b. Due to depending on our natural minds.
    - c. Due to believing false doctrine.

### Illustration

It is much like having all your arrangements made for a trip and knowing every step of your journey, you can be comforted and rest in accurate information.

### Application

1. The Bible teaches that there are two resurrection.
  - a. The First resurrection includes all the saved prior to the Millennium. Rev. 20:4-6
    - \* "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. **This is the first resurrection.** Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the

first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

- b. The Second resurrection includes all the ungodly who rejected Jesus as Savior and Lord to be judged at the White-Throne Judgment and cast into the Lake of Fire. Rev. 20:11-15
    - \* "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of **fire.**"
2. The believer has such assurance and comfort through the Scriptures.
    - a. "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much **assurance**, as you know what kind

of men we were among you for your sake.”

1Thess. 1:5

- b. “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full **assurance** of hope until the end.” Heb. 6:11
- c. “let us draw near with a true heart in full **assurance** of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Heb. 10:22
- d. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were **assured** of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Heb. 11:13

*The valuable benefit of the live believer in sure hope, resting in the words of Jesus!*

### Conclusion

This is the explanation of their living hope at the return of Christ for His church consisting of three important truths:

- I.** The lack of benefit to the departed believer over the live believer’s hope is nothing, the living one is just waiting for Jesus!
- II.** The equal benefit of the live and departed believer’s hope is that both will be together with Jesus!
- III.** The valuable benefit of the live believer in sure hope, resting in the words of Jesus!