

## 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

### The Rapture – Part 1

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## Introduction

This passage begins a new subject, a subject that intrigues people and offers hope to man and his world. The subject is the return of Jesus Christ to earth and the resurrection of the dead. It is a subject that men should study. The return of the Lord will not only bring blessings to believers, it will launch a terrifying judgment upon unbelievers.

1. The concern: Will believers be resurrected when Christ returns? (v. 13).
2. The comfort: departed believers will return with Christ (vv. 14–15).
3. The events of the Lord's return (vv. 16–18).

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## 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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 by no means precede those who are asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words.

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## The Concern

1 Thessalonians 4:13

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

The Thessalonian believers were concerned about believers who died before the Lord's return. Would their loved ones share in the resurrection when Christ returned to earth? Remember: the church at Thessalonica had just been founded. It was also being bitterly persecuted and attacked. Some of the believers were dying; perhaps some were even being martyred and Christ had not yet returned. They were eagerly looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ. However, would believers be resurrected when Christ returned?

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## The Concern

1 Thessalonians 4:13

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

All kinds of concerns about the resurrection arose in the minds of the Thessalonian believers just as they do in the minds of believers in every generation. Paul says two striking things to those who are concerned over the resurrection of dead believers when Christ returns.

**First, do not be ignorant about the resurrection.** Paul did not want them to be ignorant in this matter. We also should study and grasp what God teaches and be comforted and challenged in the hope He gives.

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## The Concern

1 Thessalonians 4:13

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

**Second, do not grieve excessively over loved ones who are believers who die before Christ returns.** We are bound to experience some sorrow and grief, but we are not to suffer grief like unbelievers who have no hope. Unbelievers have reason to suffer the most terrible sorrow and grief, but not us. We have hope. For the believer, death is not the end. We look forward to the resurrection when we will be reunited in the “grand reunion” never to be separated again!

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## The Comfort

1 Thessalonians 4:14-15

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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 by no means precede those who are asleep.

The reality of the resurrection is forcefully declared. Departed believers will return with Christ. There are three proofs of this great fact given.

1. Proof one: **departed believers are with Christ**; they are living with Him face to face.

a. Note the words **with Him** – God will bring departed believers **with Him** when He returns. They are **with Him** now. This is exactly what Scripture teaches. Jesus told the thief on the cross, “today you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43).

Departed believers are with the Lord, living face to face with Him. We do not have to wonder where they are. When they died, they went immediately to be with the Lord in heaven, and they shall never be separated from the Lord. Therefore, when He returns to earth, He will bring all departed believers with Him.

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## The Comfort

1 Thessalonians 4:14-15

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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 by no means precede those who are asleep.

b. It is those who **sleep in Jesus** that God will bring with Him when He returns to earth. The word “**sleep**” is a soft word used by believers to describe their departure from this world. It is a picture of resting from the trials and sufferings of this world.

The person who believes in Jesus Christ while on this earth simply “sleeps [rests] with Jesus” throughout eternity. God will bring these believers with Him when He returns to earth (John 8:51; 11:26).

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## The Comfort

1 Thessalonians 4:14-15

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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 by no means precede those who are asleep.

c. **Jesus Christ is identified as God.** It is God in the person of Jesus Christ who will return to earth and bring departed believers with Him. Christ has the power of God because He is God. As God, Jesus Christ has the power to die and rise again from the dead and ascend back into heaven. He also has the power to bring those who have placed their faith in Him into heaven and bring them back to earth with Him.

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## The Comfort

1 Thessalonians 4:14-15

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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 by no means precede those who are asleep.

2. **Proof two: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that departed believers will return to earth with God.** Jesus Christ came to earth to die and bear the punishment of sin for man and to arise from the dead. Therefore, if we believe in Jesus Christ we never have to die because He has already died for us. We also shall rise from the dead even as He arose

How? By believing that Jesus Christ did die and arise from the dead for us. If we believe in Jesus Christ, then when we depart this world, we go to be with him; and when He returns, we shall return with Him.

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## The Comfort

1 Thessalonians 4:14-15

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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 by no means precede those who are asleep.

The fact that Jesus Christ died and arose is the proof that departed believers are living with Him and will return with Him when He comes back to earth. **The glorious hope of the believer is based upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.** There is no greater basis in all the world, for Jesus Christ really did die and rise from the dead. There is no question about it, not for the genuine believer, for God has given us the witness of His Spirit. Therefore, after we have departed from this earth, we will return with Christ when He comes back to earth (John 6:40; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Corinthians 4:14).

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## The Comfort

1 Thessalonians 4:14-15

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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 by no means precede those who are asleep.

**3. Proof three: the Word of the Lord proves that departed believers will return to earth with God.** Their bodies will actually be raised from the dead before we are caught up. This is a strong point. Paul emphatically states that this revelation has come from the Lord. Therefore, believers should need no greater assurance. What is the revelation? We who are alive when the Lord returns shall not be caught up first. The bodies of all departed believers will be resurrected first. Again, how do we know this? How do we know that this is a fact, a real event that will actually take place? By the Word of the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ, God Himself, declared it.

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## **So What ...**

For the unsaved, death is a great unknown. People look for evidence for life after death. TV is filled with programs on the paranormal. I believe that the unsaved are looking for reasons to reject what the Bible teaches about judgment and excuses to reject the Grace of Jesus.

For the believer, we have a hope based in God Himself of what transpires after we depart from these earthly frames. Death is not the end for any of us, but there is an eternal destiny waiting for us. It is one of either eternal love, peace, and joy or it is one of eternal punishment.

In Christ, we have the hope of spending eternity with Him. Let us not be ashamed of the Gospel but share the Good News with others!

Jesus is coming back!