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**God’s Will and Jesus’s Return**

**I Thessalonians 4:13-15:11 (Lesson #5) (Part #II)**

***13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.” 5:1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 ¶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so th*at whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”**

**Chapter 4:13 – 5:11 – Main Idea:** The Lord Jesus is coming again, when he comes, he is bringing the deceased saints with Him, and we (living saints) will meet them in the air, and we will all receive our glorified bodies. These truths should motivate us day-to-day to fight the good fight of faith and should bring us great comfort, peace, and joy.

**Vs 13 -Uninformed** – The Greek word is **ignorant,** to **lack knowledge** about something, thus the ESV translators settled on **“uninformed.”**

This word does not mean a person lacks cognitive ability, but rather they lack knowledge about a particular topic.

**Now first an overarching comment, Paul brings up the return of the Lord, not to instruct them in theological or eschatological truths, but rather, because confusion had crept in that has caused “grief” over what happens with those who were saved and die before the Lord returns.**

**Do you see their love for one another? Do you see Paul’s love?**

**I do not what you to be ignorant about:**

**Those who are asleep** – The word is being used metaphorically to describe believers who have died prior the Lord’s return, they are asleep.

**That you do not grieve as if you have no hope** **–** The idea seems to be that there were some who believed that since their loved ones had died, prior to the coming of Jesus. They had missed out.

**Vs 14 -Because we believe in the thing that brings hope:**

Namely that **Jesus died and rose again.** Because we believe in the literal death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, a fundamental of the faith, we can be sure that God will bring with Jesus, our saved loved ones who have **“fallen asleep.”**

*“****51*** *¶ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,* ***52*** *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 shall be changed.” (1Co 15:51-52 ESV)*

In fact, Paul said this about the death and resurrection of Jesus:

*“****12*** *¶ Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?* ***13*** *But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.* ***14*** *And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.* ***15*** *We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.* ***16*** *For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised.* ***17*** *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.* ***18*** *Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” (1Co 15:12-18 ESV)*

**Vs 15 -**So, this we declare ***“by a word from the Lord”***

Those who are left (alive) when he comes will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

The Greek word translated precede is **φθάνω** (*fthan’-o).* It means to go **before**, **reach first**, or **attain first**.

**Vs 16a -**Here is the glorious, triumphant return of the Lord Jesus Christ!

1. **He descends from heaven.** We should expect this, do you remember when he left?
   1. **This descent is accompanied with a cry of a command.**

One wonders, who is going to provide this shout of a command. We cannot be sure, but here is what Jesus says in John 5:

*“25 "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. 27 And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” (Joh 5:25-29 ESV)*

* 1. **With the voice of an archangel**
  2. **With the Trumpet of God**

**We saw the three things that accompany the Lord’s return, now let’s see what happens when He returns:**

**Vs 16b - *And the dead in Christ will rise first.***

1. So, those who have passed away (those who are asleep in Jesus, those who are the dead in Christ) are coming back with Jesus. Here we are told that they will “rise first.”

This is exactly what we just read in I Corinthians:

*“51 ¶ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 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 shall be changed.*

This is exactly what Jesus said:

*“29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Mt 24:29-31)*

So, we saw what accompanies his return, now looking at the things that happens when he returns, **#1** **we see that all the believers who have died and gone on to be with the Lord receive their glorified bodies.**

**Vs 17a - *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,***

1. **Those of us who are alive, when Jesus returns, are caught up together with them, to meet Jesus and them, and to receive our glorified bodies.**

The Greek word “caught up” is the word **ἁρπάζω** (har-pad’-zo) – it means to **seize** or **snatch up** suddenly.

Notice, in the clouds, this is the way the Lord came to Moses, in a cloud.

*“And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever." When Moses told the words of the people to the LORD,” (Ex 19:9 ESV)*

*“Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Mt 24:30 ESV)*

**Notice how Paul expressed it again in I Cor:**

“**51** ¶ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, **52** 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 shall be changed. ***Do you see the catching up?***

1. **To meet,** the word Greek word ***“to meet”*** - is often used of an important dignitary’s reception as he would approach the city. The inhabitants would exit the city and come to meet the dignitary with joy and celebration and accompany that dignitary into the city.
2. **Vs 17b – *and so we will always be with the Lord.***

Eternity that has begun in our heart, is brought to its grand conclusion in our bodies.

We are forever with, forever connected to, forever beside and alongside our Savior!

We saw three things that accompany His return, we then moved and four things that will happen at his return.

Now because all of these things are true, Paul wants them to be encouraged.

I am reading the book *“The Blessed Hope”* byGeorge Eldon Ladd. In the introduction he writes:

*“The Biblical Doctrine of the resurrection is a redemptive truth: it means the salvation of the body. This salvation will be realized only by the personal second coming of Christ.”*

**Vs 18 - *Therefore encourage one another with these words.***

**This truth should serve as a source of great encouragement to them** (believers in Thessalonica) **and us,** all believers as we consider what awaits us and who is coming to get us.

Imagine if, you were suffering persecution, and here Paul is reminding you, Jesus is coming back, with your loved ones, to receive you to Himself!

Regardless of what is happening in your life, the blessed hope is that Jesus is coming back one day. Jesus fully intends to make all things right!

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***5:1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. 6 ¶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.*** ***11 Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”***

**Vs 1-2 -Paul had already taught them that Jesus’s return, his coming, his παρουσία. Here Paul calls it the “day of the Lord.”**

This is used in a number of places in the New Testament, here are a few:

*“****1*** *¶ Now, brethren, concerning the coming* ***(παρουσία)*** *of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,* ***2*** *not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.* ***3*** *¶ Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,* ***4*** *who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” (2Th 2:1-4 NKJV)*

*“****4*** *I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,* ***5*** *that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge —* ***6*** *even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you —* ***7*** *so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,* ***8*** *who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1Co 1:4-8 ESV)*

*“****13*** *For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand —* ***14*** *just as you did partially understand us —  that on the day of our Lord Jesus you will boast of us as we will boast of you.” (2Co 1:13-14 ESV)*

**Vs 3 -**It seems, generally speaking. Those who do not know Christ will be saying: everything is good. There is peace and safety, nothing to fear, all is well!

I believe this is a time when many people will throw of the idea of a God, who holds them accountable for their actions. Finally, they will say peace and safety, God is a delusion, he is not real, the passage of so much time has proven his threats are false. The peace and safety is the throwing off of the Christian claims about a God who will judge sin.

Let’s look at this in II Pet:

*“****3*** *¶ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.* ***4*** *They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."” (2Pe 3:3-4 ESV)*

**The sudden destruction comes upon them.**

Like a pregnant woman who is overtaken with birth pains. What a graphic picture. I have never experienced birth pains, but I have seen them and there is no stopping or tuning back!

Notice… They shall not escape.

1. So the first thing that Paul wants you to know. Is the day of the Lord, the coming of the Lord, will come upon unbelievers and they will be greatly surprised, things seemed to be going well.

The suddenly, sudden destruction.

Vs 4–7 - **The day comes like a thief for the unbeliever, and it is a day of sudden destruction.**

1. **For the believer the day does not comes as a thief, for they are prepared, they are ready, they are walking with Jesus.**

**Notice the metaphors**

- The Lost - The Saved

Night Day

Children of the darkness Children of the light

Children of the night Children of the day

Asleep in the night Awake

Drunk in the night Sober

Unprepared Ready

**Now, the darkness in the unbelievers is much deeper than what they do. These are people who are dark, as we were dark before we were saved.**

**They not only operate in the dark, but they are darkness.**

*“for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Eph 5:8 ESV)*

**Vs 6 -**So then, because of who you are, so then:

Even though we are children of the light, let us not sleep, let us stay awake, let us be sober! We must be awake and alert, while the unbelieving world is asleep.

Notice Paul says: let us not sleep, let us keep awake, and let us be sober.

**Paul’s second point further supports his first point. Namely that when Jesus comes, believers will be ready.**

**Vs 8 -**For God’s people, Paul provides another metaphor, this one from the world of combat.

Since we are of the day, since we are children of the light, since we are awake and sober. All metaphors of engaged and alert.

Because these are true, put-on breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

**What a picture a warrior clothed with the breastplate and the helmet (both defensive weapons).**

**Vs 9a -**God has not destined us (the believers in Thessalonica along with Paul and his companions, and by way of extension, all believers to wrath, the Greek word is **ὀργή** (or-gay’) – This is the burning hot anger of God.

In context, this seems to be used here as the final disposition, the final determination, the final judgement day.

As believers, we are not destined for wrath. Now at this point, we should all say Hallelujah!

Now as you consider this statement, although not clearly stated, it seems that the obvious reason Paul is even stating this is because the opposite is true.

Those who are not saved, are indeed, destined for wrath.

But, the great reassurance for the believer is that we are not destined to wrath, then Paul describes what we are destined for.

**Vs 9b – *To o*btain –** This is a lovely word. It means a purchased possession. It is the idea of receiving something that has been legally obtained, something that has been purchased.

For the believer, it is not wrath that waits us, but rather our **reception of the purchased possession**.

What Christ purchased at Calvary; we receive in its fullness.

**Salvation – The Greek word is σωτηρία** (*so-tay-ree’-ah)*it is where we get the study of soteriology. The word means **deliverance, preservation, salvation.**

**Through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

*“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."” (Ac 4:12 ESV)*

*“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."” (Mt 1:21 ESV)*

**Vs 10** Jesus died for us.

This is not just the means of our salvation but reminds us that what God has started in us, he will work to completion!

If you are a believer, Jesus died for you, and He will not lose you!

*“****38*** *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,* ***39*** *nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ro 8:38-39 ESV)*

**That regardless if we are awake or asleep, we will LIVE WITH HIM!**

**Vs 11 - *Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.***

Again, Pau

l acknowledges they are doing this already and encourages them to do it more and more.

The return of the Lord, and a study of the return of the Lord is not principally so that we can develop tables, charts, and graphs. It is to remind us about our loved ones who have gone on before us and it is to encourage us unto good works.

Imagine, how this must have encouraged the believers in Thessalonica, my hope is that it will do the same for us!

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