

Sunday, November 16, 2008
Living Hope EFC

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Jesus is Coming Back. Christians will meet Him in the Air!
1 Thessalonians

ILLUS: A pastor sent the following story to a magazine:

He had a man in his church who often dozed off or went to sleep in the middle of his sermon. One Sunday – as the man fell into a deep sleep, the electricity went off and they were suddenly in complete darkness.

Pastor: "I suggested that we have a time of silent prayer hoping that the lights would go back on in a few minutes."

All was quiet for a few minutes, then the sleeping man woke up and muttered out loud, "Well, I'll be _____. Everyone went home and left me!"

That's a great illustration of how a lot of people are going to respond when Jesus comes back & the church is **raptured**, and those who have rejected Christ – will be left behind (in the dark).

The rapture is an actual future event in history when all Christians will be "snatched away, taken up" to be with the Lord – **Jn14:1-3**

- Non-Christians will wake up one day & say, "I'll be darned! Everyone went home and left me here!"
- 1 Thessalonians Theme is: Jesus is coming back for His church!

1 Thessalonians: Overview

Founding of the Church

In Spring, 50AD, Paul & Silas set out on 2nd missionary journey.

- Acts 16 – Philippi. He is flogged & thrown in prison – 6:23.
- Acts 17 – Thessalonica is 100 mi west; **Acts17:2-10**.
- **Thes.** = Was ranked with Corinth & Ephesus as key seaports.
- A town of maybe 200,000 in Paul's day; Jan. 51AD.
- **W.W. 1** the **Allies based soldiers** in Thess. During **WW 2** the **Nazis took 60,000 Jews** from the city & executed them.
- Today – population is about 300,000 – called Salonica or Thes.

Paul's Purpose in writing:

(1) To encourage these new Christians in their new walk with Christ (only 6 mos old), in spite of suffering persecution (1-2).

(2) To confirm Timothy's encouraging report about them (3).

(3) To give correction on certain topics: immorality (4:3), love (4:9), laziness (4:11), respect for spiritual leadership (5:12).

(4) To give instruction about what happens to Christians who die.

Paul's main theme: Jesus is coming back soon!

Interesting: each chapter ends with a reference to Christ's return

- 1 Thess 4 contains the classic passage in the N.T. about the return of Christ for His church, & about those already dead.

Chapter 1:10

- 1- Jesus Christ is coming back! Literally "from the heavens!"
- 2- They were (we are to be) waiting for him. (Pres. Act.)
 - The implication is that Paul (the church) expected J.C. to return any time! (**Acts 1:11**) His return was "*immanent*."
- 3- There is also coming wrath!
- 4- Christians would be delivered/ rescued from this coming wrath

Q: What is the coming wrath?

A: It is God's time of judgment upon non-Christians/ believers.

- **John 3:16-18,36; Rom.1:18.** To **not** trust Christ = under wrath.
- Ultimately it will take place on two major occasions:
 - 1- The Great White Throne Judgment: Rev.20:11-15.
 - 2- The Great Tribulation: Rev.6-19. 6:12-17. Jer.30:4-7; I Th.5:2
- NOTE: Paul teaches that the Thessalonian believers, all believers, will escape this wrath, because Jesus would return 1st.

APPLY: It was this "active" waiting for Christ's return that produced labor and endurance by the church in Thessalonica.

Chapter 2:19

- 1- Jesus is coming back!
- 2- We will know great joy when he does.
- 3- Our joy will greatly increase to the measure of our investment in spreading the Gospel to others. **PEOPLE in heaven = our JOY!**

APPLY: Present sufferings for our faith (v.2, 14-16) will be far surpassed by every person we help enter into heaven!

Chapter 3:13

- 1- Jesus is coming back!
- 2- "Holy ones" (saints) – **4:14**. All those "in Christ" will be with Him.
- 3- Christians will not only be with Christ, but in the presence of *God the Father!* -**John 14:2** "In my Father's house!" "Our Father..."

APPLY: We should live lives pleasing to Him (v.13) all the time!

Chapter 4:13-18

- 1- Jesus is coming back, v.16!
- 2- Christians who have died will come with Him, v.14.
 - *As surely as Christ will return, so Christians are with Him!*
 - Those who have "fallen asleep." "Sleep" was a common word for Christians in the NT who had died: Acts 7:60; Jn.11:11
 - This is **not** "soul sleep." - 5:10; 2 Cor.5:8; Phil.1:23; Luke 23:43.
 - It is sleep of the body in the earth until it is resurrected:
 - 1 Cor.15:35, 42-44, 49-50; 2 Cor.5:1-9.
- 3- Those returning with Christ will receive a resurrection body, 16.
 - **Q:** What about those who have been burned, dismembered, lost at sea, etc? - **A:** *God originally created "out of nothing!"*
- 4- "**WE**" (Paul included himself) still alive – **will meet Him in the air!**
 - "Caught up:" – snatched up, seized, carried off by force.
 - Latin: "**rapturo**," English – "**raptured**." -**Tit.2:13 "Blessed Hope"**
 - This was **a mystery** – unknown in the OT: **1 Cor.15:50-53.**
- 5- We will live FOREVER with Christ & with all the believers! V.17.

APPLY: Because we know what the future holds, we should not be overwhelmed by grief when Christians dies (**v.13**), rather we should find great encouragement that this life is **not** the end **v.18**

Chapter 5:1-3

- 1- The "**Day of the Lord**" comes like a thief?
- 2- It brings destruction upon those living in darkness.
- 3- **vs.9**: *Christians* will not suffer any of the wrath or destruction associated with the Day of the Lord. Rather – **Salvation!**
- 4- Jesus is coming back! – **Vs.23.**

Q: What is the "Day of the Lord?" *Is it the same as the rapture?*

- It is associated with the "coming wrath" – **1:10.**
- It comes after the "rapture."
- Paul describes it in more detail in 2 Thes.2:2-12. (Dan.11:31-45)
- It was a common theme of the OT Prophets: **Is.13:9-11; Zeph. 1:14-18; 3:14-15;** Joel 2:28-32. A day of judgment & blessing.

WHY THE CHURCH WILL BE RAPTURED BEFORE THE TRIBULATION

Pretrib-rapture: The rapture of the church can take place at any time, without warning, after which the Great Tribulation begins.

1- The Tribulation is dealing with Israel & the Nations, not Church.

- Judgment of Israel: Deut.4:25f; 29-30. = Yet future.
- Jer.30-31 (esp.30:7,11,15); Ezek.20:33-42; Zech.12-14.
- Judgment of the nations: Is.13:6-13; 24:1-6,17,21. Rev.6:17.

The tribulation is a time when God pours out his wrath against sin.

God poured out His wrath against our sin on Christ- **Isaiah 53:5-6.**

2-The church is specifically said to be kept from the time of wrath

- 1 Thes.1:10; 5:9; 2 Thes.2:1-2; Rev.3:10.
- **Rev.3:10** cannot mean "kept through" the time of wrath, because many Christians die in the Tribulation.
- Church is not mentioned in Rev.6-19 It is mentioned 19 times in Chap.1-3, and again in Rev.22:16, not during the Tribulation

3- Key texts indicate rapture is a different event than 2nd Coming (The Day of the Lord).

- John 14:1-3: We are taken to the Father's house.
- 1 Thes.4:13-18: We are caught up, carried away into heaven.
- 1 Cor.15:51-52: ALL are changed & made imperishable.
- The Second Coming has to do with earthly K'dom: Mt.24-25