**JESUS MAY COME TODAY… ARE YOU READY? Text: I Thessalonians 4:13-18 Date: 9-18-22 Sunday AM**

**Job** once asked this question, if a man die shall he live again? Here’s another question, if you don’t die and Jesus comes, what happens?

**The fact is this, Jesus is coming again!** What a statement… what a wonderful truth! I can’t think of a more penetrating statement for us to ponder today. Some people are absolutely ***terrified*** to think that Jesus may come today! Others are ***mystified*** when they hear anyone talk about such a unique event. **The fact is this!** The Bible is filled with references to the return of Jesus Christ **FOR** His church. There is more written in God’s Word about Jesus’ second coming than there is about His first coming. **David Jeremiah writes,** *“For every prophecy in the Bible about the birth of Christ [Jesus’ first coming], there are eight about His second coming. The 260 chapters of the NT contain 318 references to the second coming of Christ.”* The second coming of our Lord Jesus is a unique subject for sure!

Here in I and II Thessalonians the Apostle Paul deals with a number of prophetic subjects. He addresses the judgment of unbelievers and the future hope of believers! Jesus taught this in His **Olivet Discourse** found in **Matthew 25:46 (KJV)** And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

The nation of Israel and the church of Jesus Christ play key roles in prophetic events. Today we will focus our attention on the **rapture** coming of Jesus Christ ***for***His church. Jesus is coming again, we can be sure of that! Let’s discuss **THREE THOUGHTS**:

**I. First, Notice The Concerned Church – 4:13 [Had questions]**

* **1 Thessalonians 4:13 (KJV)** But I would not have you to be ignorant/uninformed, brethren, *concerning them which are asleep/died*, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope/unbelievers. AS FOR THE CONTEXT…
* Paul turns to a new subject… “Concerning them which are asleep.” The “dead in Christ” “Those that sleep in Jesus.”
* This passage deals with the **COMFORT** of God’s children as they waited for the return of Jesus.
* **1 Thessalonians 1:10 (KJV)** And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.
* This was a very young congregation [probably just a few months old] of mostly ***gentile*** converts.
* They possessed a unique evangelistic fervor! They had a good reputation for spreading the Gospel, and white hot expectations for their future!
* **THIS MUCH WE KNOW!** They had a healthy perspective when it came to living and dying. [**Every Christian doesn’t!**] This may have contributed to the fact that they were very evangelistic in their outreach. When you have a healthy outlook on living and dying you tend to be more evangelistic because you see the *urgency* of reaching those around you with the Gospel before they die!

**People are dying!**

**Without Jesus!**

**Do you care?**

**Do I care?**

**Do we care?**

* They were *sharing/trumpeting* the Gospel with the imminent return of Jesus on their hearts and on their minds!
* **TWO LESSONS we learn from the Thessalonians:**
* **First**, we need to be concerned about our own souls! Are you saved? Are you ready to meet God? If you died today, would you go to heaven? [Rapture Ready?]
* **Secondly**, We need the same passion for the lost that they had. “Jesus may come today” was their motivation. Their passion for the lost should be our passion for the lost! ON FIRE!
* **They had at least FOUR QUESTIONS: If we look closely…**
* 1) While waiting for Jesus to return some of their loved ones [family and friends] had died. What would happen to them?
* 2) Would their loved ones cease to exist? Were they lost forever? Would they ever see them again?
* 3) Would their loved ones miss out on “being with Jesus”?
* 4) What happens to those who die *before* Jesus returns?
* So, yes they were concerned, and maybe even sorrowing as those without hope, but God’s Word changed all of that!
* **POINT:** REUNION DAY MAY BE TODAY!
* **First, Notice The Concerned Church – 4:13**

**II. Secondly, Notice The Convinced Church – 4:14-17**

* **1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 (KJV)** For if/since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself shall *descend* from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.
* **QUESTION:** What were they convinced of? What did they believe about death? Life? Eternity?
* **4:14** ~ **FIRST**, The Truth of the Gospel [DOCTRINE]
* **1 Thessalonians 4:14 (KJV)** For **if/since** **we believe** that Jesus died and rose again [The Gospel], even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. [Since the first part is true, the second part is true as well.]
* They believed the Gospel. They based their eternal destiny rested upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
* **HERE’S A QUESTION**: What’s the most important message humanity has ever received on this earth? **THE GOSPEL**!
* **1 Corinthians 15:20 (KJV)** But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the first fruits of them that slept.
* **4:15** ~ **SECONDLY**, The Truth of the Word of the Lord
* **1 Thessalonians 4:15 (KJV)** For this we say unto you by *the word of the Lord*, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep.
* They knew that God had spoken on the crucial issues of life, death and eternity. They knew that their own prophets had aimed their arrows at coming of Christ and the consummation of all human history!
* Jesus did not tell Paul this; the Holy Spirit did!!! [Revelation]
* Jesus Christ is at the center of every prophetic thought in the Scriptures! Jesus Himself is the diamond/glittering jewel at the center of every prophetic word!
* Not Israel, not the church, not the prophets, priests or kings, and not the apostles! **BUT JESUS!**
* **You can rest assured of this.** The past, the present, and the future, ALL spin upon a single axis point – that axis point is JESUS CHRIST!
* **4:16 ~ THIRDLY**, The Truth of Jesus’ Return
* **1 Thessalonians 4:16 (KJV)** For the **Lord Himself** shall descend *from heaven* *with* a shout, *with* the voice of the archangel [Michael], and *with* the trump of God: and the dead **in Christ** shall rise first [in order]:

**EVERYTHING that occurs here points to Jesus Christ!**

* **Luke writes in Acts 1:9-11 regarding our Lord’s ascension back to heaven! (KJV)** And when **He/Jesus** had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven. [Spectacular!]
* **Dr. Ray Pritchard** describes 4:16 in these terms, “There is the **shout** of authority, the **voice** of majesty, and the **trumpet** call of victory.”
* **4:17** ~ **FOURTHLY**, The Truth of Jesus’ Presence
* **1 Thessalonians 4:17 (KJV)** Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be ***caught up*** *together* with *them* [*Alive* in Christ now!] in the***clouds***, to *meet* the Lord in the *air*: and so shall **we** ever be with the Lord. THIS IS CONFIDENCE RIGHT HERE!
* **1 Thessalonians 4:13 (KJV)** But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, **that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope**.
* They knew what it was like for family members/friends to die. **How does Paul comfort them?**
* **John 6:15 (KJV)** When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and ***take him by force***, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone.
* **Acts 8:39 (KJV)** And when they [Philip & the Eunuch] were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord ***caught away*** Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.
* **2 Corinthians 12:2-4 (KJV)** I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one ***caught up*** to the third heaven. 3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4 How that he was ***caught up*** into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
* **Philippians 3:21 (KJV)** Who shall ***change*** our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.
* **1 Corinthians 15:52 (KJV)** In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be ***changed***.
* **John 11:43 (KJV)** And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, *Lazarus, come forth*.
* Recently I read these words, “Among Christians, there are *no permanent* partings.”
* First, Notice The Concerned Church – 4:13
* Secondly, Notice The Convinced Church – 4:14-17

**III. Thirdly, we see The Comforted Church – 4:18**

* **1 Thessalonians 4:18 (KJV)** Wherefore ***comfort/encourage*** one another with these words. [Pointing back to the words of Jesus!]
* **KEY**: Death/the grave will not have the final word over your life, or the lives of our loved ones!!!
* **MORE LITERALLY IT READS…** Therefore comfort *and* encourage one another with these words. Help one another to be strong and not sad!
* **2 Corinthians 1:3 (KJV)** Blessed *be* God, even **the Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father** of mercies, and **the God** of all **comfort**;
* **CAUTION:** When we take our eyes off of the Lord [Faith in Jesus’ bodily resurrection and return] we tend to focus on *this* world which is passing away before our very eyes.
* We convince ourselves that it’s going to last forever… when in reality it’s passing away daily!
* **Jesus said in John 14:3 (KJV)** 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.
* **This is the truth if it has ever been spoken:** That which is a “comfort” for Christians is a “nightmare” for those who do not know JESUS!
* At the Rapture Jesus comes **for** His saints. At His 2nd Coming Jesus comes **with** His saints.
* At the Rapture we **meet** Christ in the air. At His 2nd Coming we return **with** Christ. John 14…
* At the Rapture saints are changed. [This mortal puts on immortality!] **How so? Paul tells us! This is exciting!**
* **Consider Paul’s teaching here! 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (KJV)** Behold, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead [in Christ] shall be raised incorruptible, and **we** shall be changed.
* The Rapture can happen at any moment! JESUS COULD COME RIGHT NOW! DURING THIS WORSHIP SERVICE… IT’S IMPORTANT THAT YOU KNOW FOR SURE THAT YOU ARE GOING TO HEAVEN… THAT YOU ARE READY TO MEET THE LORD!
* The Rapture deals with the believing church… I didn’t say it was for religious people… or even for good people!
* At the Rapture not everyone sees Jesus… only believers “caught up” into His presence will see Him and be like Him!
* [Roadside Memorials!] Surely you’ve noticed them along our highways? Crosses, flowers, candles, pictures, little bears, etc.!
* At Memorial Services we never really say, “Good bye!” As Christians we say, “See you later!”
* Someone has said, “No Christian has ever regretted dying.” They’ve seen **JESUS**! They are with **JESUS** forever!
* Are you concerned about what will happen to you when you die?
* Jesus is coming again! It may be today… are you ready to meet Jesus?
* First, Notice The Concerned Church – 4:13
* Secondly, Notice The Convinced Church – 4:14-17
* Thirdly, Notice The Comforted Church – 4:18