

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:3

Chapter 4

Verses 13-14:

--(13) **But** . . . or *Now* introduces a new topic.

--***I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren*** . . . Tells us that Paul wants to inform these believers about something they are familiar with but still requires clarity. They were familiar with the Lord's coming (1:10; 2:12, 19; 3:13; 5:1-2) but there was some confusion about what would happen to those who died in Christ.

--We might not know the specifics of their confusion, but we know it was causing sorrow and hopelessness.

--I also think it is important to note that Paul did not think ignorance regarding the Lord's coming was healthy for Christians. It produced unnecessary confusion, sorrow, and discouragement. *Many Christians today think ignorance about the Lord's return is totally fine!*

--***concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope***. Sadly, those without Christ have no hope in the face of death. Every religion pales in comparison to the living hope we have in Christ Jesus.

--(14) What is our hope?

--***For if*** (is really *Since*) ***we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus***.

--The Christian hope is in the historical Person, historical life, historical death, and historical resurrection of Jesus Christ.

--***even so*** . . . emphasizes the complete and unbreakable connection between Jesus Christ and His Body, His Bride, the Church—us! Jesus' death and resurrection secure our hope. His life and death and resurrection are more important than my own! *How? Penalty paid; Immortality brought to light; Our connection to others; etc.*

--Paul is reassuring these downcast believers that death does not separate us from Jesus Christ—His care or His purposes.

--Paul is seeing both groups here. First, those he is writing to. Second, ***those who sleep in Jesus***. . . or as it could be translated: *those laid to sleep by Jesus*.

--Their bodies are sleeping, but they are very alive and with Jesus Christ! *No soul sleep here: **Mt. 22:31-32; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23***

--This group, even though dead in body, ***God will bring with Him***. . . Proving they are still very much alive persons.

Verse 15:

--***For this we say to you by the word of the Lord***. . . Paul is claiming a direct message from Jesus Christ. Either by special revelation or by the direct and known teaching of Jesus Christ as in:

John 14:1-3: I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. + John 21:22: If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?

--I make that point because some true brothers and sisters in Christ, of various theological persuasions, do not believe the actual words here. They think this is all metaphorical language describing our going to Him Vs. His coming for us.

--Unfortunately for them, they are opening quite a can of interpretive and theological worms if they can ignore Paul's clear declaration that these are Jesus' literal words. This is not Jesus' highly apocalyptic, metaphorical imagery. I dare say that to make it so is to take away from and add to the word of God.

--Paul is saying, Jesus' message is that there will be a rapture of the Church.

--Here are the delivered words of the Lord: ***we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord.*** . . . In saying ***we***, Paul clearly thought it was a real possibility he would be alive at this particular event.

--Doctrine of Imminence—Christ's return as expected at any moment. See: **Lk. 12:40; Rom. 8:19-25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20; 4:5; 1 Thess. 5:6; Titus 2:13; Jude 21.**

1 Thessalonians 1:10: and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

James 5:8: You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

--***will by no means precede those who are asleep.*** . . . Those who are living ***will by no means*** (strong double negative—*no, not at all*) ***precede*** (*come before or have an advantage over*) those who were *laid asleep by Jesus*.

--Paul's comforting point was that in Christ, those who are still alive and those who are dead, share the same destiny.

--What will that look like?

Verse 16:

--***For.*** . . . could also be translated *because.* . . . Paul is giving more clarity. Here, we have the clearest passage in the Bible regarding the rapture of the Church. The other two important NT passages referencing this event are **Jn. 14:1-3 + 1 Cor. 15:50-58.**

--Here are the details Paul gives by the word of the Lord.

1) ***the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout.*** . . . the Greek word for ***shout*** is used only here in the NT (*keleusma*) and was used for a general ordering his troops; a driver urging his horses; a hunter calling to his hounds; a captain with his rowers; etc.

--It is a shout that combines power of voice with a word of command.

--What is Christ saying? We don't know! But we do know it is a unique command found nowhere else in Biblical revelation. (**Isa. 29:1-6; Jer. 25:30-31; Jn. 5:28**)

2) **with the voice of an archangel.** . . the archangel is Michael and is named again in **Jude 9** and mentioned in **Dan. 10:13+21 (one of the chief princes); 12:1 (The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people); Rev. 12:7 (Michael and his angels).**

--What is he saying? We don't know. His presence may be signaling a change in dispensation back to God's covenant with Israel and as described in **Dan. 12:1: a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.**

3) **and with the trumpet of God.** . . Some tie this together with Michael, which is possible, but the language just says *the trumpet belonging to God.*

--People try to tie this trumpet to various other trumpets mentioned in the Bible, but the only one that is likely is **1 Cor. 15:52** which says we will be changed in a moment. . . **at the last trumpet.**

--How is it the last trumpet? It is the last trumpet for God's purposes in a particular era—that of the Church age. Not the last trumpet ever to blow in the history of the world or God's kingdom. *My wife and I fight over "the last" pork fried dumpling. It's the last of our appetizer at dinner—not the last dumpling in the history of the world.*

--Why does Paul give these details? Because the Thessalonians were confused about this event, and he wants to distinguish it in their eyes—particularly from the day of the Lord which follows in **Chapter 5** and brings judgment, not comfort and deliverance.

--**And the dead in Christ will rise first.** . . They don't have to worry about their lost loved ones, in fact, they will be resurrected first!

Verses 17-18:

--**(17) Then.** . . *After that.* . . Paul again says **we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them.** . .

--The actual word "Rapture" is not in the Bible. The Greek word for **caught up** is *harpazo*, the Latin translation being *rapturo*, where we get our word "Rapture".

--*Harpazo* means to *snatch up, take away by force, sweep away, etc.* and is used in passages like: **Mt. 11:12; 13:19; Jn. 6:15; Jn. 10:28-29; Acts 8:39; 23:10; 2 Cor. 12:2+4.**

--I think the most important usage references Jesus' ascension.

Revelation 12:5: She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

--Anyone who believes the word of the Lord has to believe in a rapture. There are various views of timing—and we should all have our position—but we must at least believe it is going to happen!

1) Pre-trib: Makes the most sense with literal interpretation, imminence, and deliverance from wrath. ***Revelation 3:10***

2) Post-trib: We are raptured at the second coming of Christ and come right back down with Him. The problems with this view are saints endure wrath from God, and we will know the timing of His return.

3) Mid-trib/Pre-wrath: These see the wrath of God coming somewhere in the back half of the tribulation and believers getting raptured just before that. The problems with these views are imminence, the whole day of the Lord is the time of God's wrath, and confusion in terms of where the middle trumpet of the tribulation actually is.

4) Partial rapture: Devoted, obedient believers get picked up all along the way like a train stopping along its route. Others go through the tribulation. This is how they work through warning passages of the Bible or tough parables. The main problem with this view is the language of the Bible is inclusive for believers—not partial. ***We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed.***

--We have our view, but discussing timing is fine so long as we believe the literal words of Scripture. If you want to do serious study, I recommend the website pre-trib.org. *Do not listen to crazy Youtube preachers!*

--What will it be like to be caught up with Him? Will we all disappear and leave behind our clothes and crash cars? Honestly, disappearance is possible, but the Bible never says we are going to disappear. In fact, if anything, the emphasis is the very opposite.

--In **16** we learn the rapture is not a silent event—it is a very loud and public event even if the world doesn't totally understand as in: **Jn. 12:28-30; Acts 9:7; 22:9.**

--The emphasis of NT teaching is on the change in believers—transformation, revelation, glorification, immortality—not their disappearance.

1 Corinthians 15:50-52: 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.

--See also: **Rom. 8:11+19; 2 Cor. 5:4; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:3; 1 Jn. 3:2.**

--*It is the change from mortality to immortality that happens in the twinkling of an eye—not our being caught away.* We will each have our own moment of transfiguration. I think that is an even better witness than clothes, pools of blood, and crashed cars!

--***caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*** Those asleep in Jesus and those alive at His coming will literally meet Him among the clouds and then never leave Him or one another again. All the Church, all together, all immortal, for all time.

--**(18) Therefore comfort one another with these words.**

--This incredible moment was secured for us the moment we were saved. It is a wonderful part of God's design in salvation.

--There is great comfort in the future reunion and immortality of Jesus Christ and His Bride. Paul repeats this hope in **5:10: *who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.***

--We sorrow at the loss of loved ones, but not like those who have no hope. The grief saves the place of our loved ones until Jesus returns them to us and us to them. *Nothing else is supposed to take their place.*

Chapter 5

Verse 1:

--***But*** . . . could be translated *Now* and introduces a new aspect of the Lord's coming.

--***concerning the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. . .***

Paul is acknowledging their familiarity with the issue of the chronology before and after this event. He is referencing the words of Jesus Christ.

****Acts 1:6-7: Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."****

--Never trust anyone who dates the return of the Lord. (Mt. 24:43-44; Lk. 12:39-40)

****Matthew 24:36: But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.****

--If we don't believe His word about our lack of knowledge, why should we believe His word about His return?

Verses 2-3:

--***(2) For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.***

--***the day of the Lord.*** . . . is rightly *the day belonging to the Lord*. Specifically, the day of His judgment. This day is mentioned in the OT and NT and includes numerous different events. It is not a literal 24-hour day, but like a true 24-hour day where a bunch of things happen during the progress of morning to night.

--We see from the various Scriptures mentioned that it involves a period of time—particularly in judgment.

--OT: **Isa. 2:12; 13:9-11; Ez. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 28-30; 3:14-18; Amos 5:18-20;**

Obadiah 5; Zeph. 1:7-18; 3:14-15; Zech. 14:1; Malachi 4:5.

--NT: **Acts 2:20; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10**

--If we put together all these various pieces involved in ***the day of the Lord*** we come to see it as a description of the seven-year tribulation described in the book of Revelation.

--That time of judgment is coming on the world like a thief—at a time they are not expecting. Notice Paul’s use of **we** in the previous section who escape this day Vs. **they** in this section who do not escape this day.

--**(3) For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman.**

--The normal unsaved world will be going along like it always does, assuming peace and safety, then be taken by surprise—like labor. ***Isa. 13:8-9; Jer. 4:31; Hos. 13:13; Micah 4:9; Mt. 24:8+37-39; Mk. 13:8; Lk. 17:26-30***

--What is the end of all this? **And they shall not escape.** . . . the sense of the language is: *there will be no escape—none!* *Flood; Sodom; Red Sea; Belshazzar; etc.*

--**They** (the Christ-rejecting world) will not escape. **We** (who are in Christ) will already be with Christ.

--Where are we on the prophetic timeline? Waiting for His Son from heaven and expecting to be delivered from the day of the Lord.

--*No* biblical prophecies *need* to happen before the rapture.

--*Some* biblical prophecies *could* happen before the rapture, such as the battle of **Ez. 38-39**; the appearance of Elijah—**Malachi 4:5-6**; or the construction of a third Jewish temple in Jerusalem—**Mt. 24:15; Rev. 11:1-2.**

--*Plenty* of biblical prophecies *will* happen after the rapture, during the day of the Lord, and into the kingdom age after Christ’s second coming.

--Till then? We ought to be about our Fathers’ business (**Lk. 19:13**). We ought to be waiting for our Savior (**1:10**). We ought to edify and comfort one another with these truths (**5:11**).