

Good News about Dead Christians!

Study 6. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

by James T. Bartsch, WordExplain.com

A. Don't Be Uninformed in Your Grief. 4:13

1. What did Paul not want for his Thessalonian brothers in Christ? 4:13a. To be _____ about those who are _____.
2. What did Paul mean by "those who are asleep?" _____

3. By providing them with appropriate knowledge, what was Paul trying to prevent? 4:13b _____

4. Who are those who have no hope? _____
5. Does this mean Christians should never grieve at the loss of a loved one who was a believer? _____

B. Be Assured Concerning the Future. 4:14-17

1. What do we Christians correctly believe about the past? 4:14a That Jesus _____ and _____.
2. That being the case, what can we believe about people who have "fallen asleep in Jesus?"
 - a. It is this: When Jesus returns, what will God do with those who have fallen asleep in Jesus? He will _____ them with Jesus!
 - b. What does this mean? _____

¹ 4:14b - bring with Him: The expected word might be "resurrect," not "bring." But Paul does not use that word. The Thessalonian believers had been taught about resurrection, and they fully expected their deceased loved ones to be resurrected. What they were evidently afraid of is that their deceased loved ones would miss the "Rapture" event. Paul assures them that is not true. When Jesus returns to retrieve the living Christians from the earth, God will bring the departed Christians along with Him to participate in this stupendous event! (So D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, p. 208.)

3. Paul now proceeded to give some details about what would happen both to deceased and to living believers at Christ's return.
 - a. Who was the authority behind the information Paul was now about to give them? 4:15a _____
 - b. Who will be first in line at the coming ² of Christ? Living Christians or deceased Christians? 4:15b _____
 - c. Who will descend from heaven? 4:16a _____
 - d. What will accompany His descent? 4:16b
 - 1) _____ (whose? _____)
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - e. In response, what would happen first? 4:16c _____
 - f. What will happen to those believers who remain alive until the time of Christ's return? 4:17a They will be _____ together with them (i.e. the deceased believers who have just been raised from the dead).
 - g. Into what will both the resurrected dead Christians and the living Christians be caught up? 4:17b _____
 - h. What will be the culmination of the event? To _____ the Lord in _____! 4:17c

² 4:15 - coming: The Greek word is *parousia*, 3952. When used of Christ's Second Coming, it is best to understand His *parousia* as being in two stages. There is precedent for this understanding. Devout Jewish people (including Jesus' twelve disciples) assumed that the coming of the Messiah would be in one stage. They were wrong! His coming, as it turned out, would be in two distinct stages. He would come the first time as a suffering Savior. He would return the second time as a conquering Sovereign.

The best understanding of Christ's Second Coming is that He will return in two stages. Without any warning or prophecies that must first be fulfilled (none are given here in 1 Thess. 4:13-18), Jesus will return to retrieve His Bride the Church from earth, receive her to Himself, then convey her to heaven (see John 14:1-3). Having evaluated and purified her (Eph. 5:25-27) at the Judgment Seat (*bema*) of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10), He will present her to Himself as a perfect Bride (Rev. 19:7-9). For more information on "Parousia," see <http://www.wordexplain.com/glossaryp.html#Parousia>. For more information on the Judgment Seat of Christ, see <http://www.wordexplain.com/lastbema.html>. For more information on the Rapture, see http://www.wordexplain.com/The_Rapture_of_the_Church_Prior_to_the_Day_of_the_Lord.html.

- i. What will be our perpetual relationship to Jesus then? 4:17d We will always _____!

C. Be Comforted in the Present! 4:18

1. What were the Thessalonian believers (and we today) to do with these words? _____
2. Does Paul try to temper their enthusiasm by cautioning them about a terrible time of tribulation that they can expect to go through before Jesus returns? _____
3. Did Paul give a list of signs that must be fulfilled prior to Christ's return for deceased and living Church-Age believers? _____³
4. Paul, in fact, will reassure these Christians (in 1 Thessalonians 5), that they will not have to participate in the terrible events of "The Day of the Lord" (referring to the Tribulation period) because they are "sons of light and sons of day" (1 Thess. 5:5), and because God has not destined them for "wrath" but for "salvation" (1 Thess. 5:9).

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³ Signs: By way of contrast, look at all the signs that must be fulfilled before Christ returns to reign upon this earth (Matt. 24:3-30; Revelation chapters 6-19).