

OUR HOPE

--1st THESSALONIANS 4:13-18--

INTRODUCTION:

In just a few days 2025 will pass away and 2026 will begin. I could not leave 2025 and enter into 2026 without speaking to you about my favorite subject, the event that I anticipate more than anything else in the world, the event Paul calls the blessed hope in his letter to Titus.

I am talking about the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His bride, the church, which will include a resurrection and a rapture. There are several passages which talk about this event, but by far my favorite is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Paul in this letter is writing to the church in Thessalonica where some are concerned because some of the members of the church have died and those living are afraid that because they have died they are going to miss out on some of the blessings that will be ours at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes this passage to correct this thinking and to encourage them. May you also be encouraged and comforted by these words.

I. REVELATION (1 Thessalonians 4:13-15)

- a. Paul begins this passage by stating that he does not want us to be _____. (John 11; 2nd Corinthians 5:8)
- b. Paul goes on to give them the reason that he does not want them to be ignorant about those who have fallen _____ in Jesus, it is so that they will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.
- c. Paul goes on in verse 14 to give us the reason for the _____ that we have.
- d. Paul gives us a promise, and he says that this _____ is based on the word of the Lord.

II. RETURN (1 Thessalonians 4:16a)

- a. Paul then describes for us in the beginning of verse 16 what the _____ of the Lord Jesus Christ for the church will be like.
- b. First, Paul writes that the Lord Himself shall _____ from heaven. (Hebrews 9:28; John 14:3)

- a. Not only will the Lord Himself descend from heaven, but that descent will be accompanied by a _____, by the voice of the archangel, and the _____ of God. (John 11:43b)
- b. Next, we are told that we will hear the _____ of the archangel. (Matthew 25:1-13)
- c. Third we are told that there will be the _____ of God. (1st Corinthians 15:52)

II. RESURRECTION (1 Thessalonians 4:16b)

- a. The result of the Lord Himself descending with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God will be that the dead in Christ will _____ first.
- b. This resurrection body will be different than our _____ body, it will be like Adam was in the beginning before he sinned. (1st Corinthians 15:35-49)

III. RAPTURE (1 Thessalonians 4:17a)

- a. Verse 17 tells us what will happen to those who are still _____ when Jesus Christ returns for the church. (1st Corinthians 15:52-53)
- b. The _____ of man has reigned over the history of man since Adam, but God's Word promises that some of us will not have to face death.
- c. The phrase "caught up" is a single word in Greek that has several meanings that all pertain to the _____ of living believers. (John 14:2-3; 1st Thessalonians 1:9-10)

IV. REUNION (1 Thessalonians 4:17b)

- a. "*so we shall _____ be with the Lord.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:17b, NASB95)
- b. We shall behold the God-Man in all His _____, and so shall we ever be with our Lord and Savior. (1st John 3:2-3)

CONCLUSION: (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

Paul clearly and succinctly describes for us the resurrection and rapture of the church, the bride of Christ. Paul ends chapter 4 of 1st

Thessalonians with these words in verse 18, “*Therefore comfort one another with these words.*” (1 Thessalonians 4:18, NASB95) These verses are to be words of encouragement and comfort for us. They are the assurance that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again and we (the church) shall forever be with the Lord. The pain of separation will be ended.

John says in the end of those verses I read to you from 1 John 3:2-3 that everyone who has this hope fixed on Him, the hope of His return for us, purifies himself. If we have our hope fixed on Jesus Christ returning to take us to be with Him, then we are called to live pure lives so that we are always ready for His return. We are to seek to obey God’s Word and to live in honesty, integrity, and righteousness before God and man, and this can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit who indwells us. Paul in the end of 1 Corinthians 15 tells us to be always abounding in the work of the Lord. We are to be ready for the Lord’s return, but we are to be doing the work of the Lord at the same time. We are to be making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus Christ commanded you. We have our orders until the Lord returns.

Maybe you are here this morning, and you do not know Jesus Christ, you have never experienced His forgiveness. Then this message should be a warning to you that the time is running out, and the return of the Lord could be at any time. If you are not sure that you will be ready when the Lord returns, then now is the time to make sure. You can make sure in the quietness of your own heart by agreeing with God that you are a sinner with no remedy for your sin and you need His mercy and forgiveness. Believe that Jesus Christ purchased your forgiveness on the cross when He died for your sins, believe that He was buried and that He rose from the dead three days later. When you believe this then you are ready for the surest thing in this world, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His bride, the church to which you now belong.