

CHRISTIAN HOPE

1 Thessalonians 4.13 - 18

What happens to those who have died? Where did they go?
Will we see them again? What happens to us when we die?

LETTER real people, real city (there today), REAL QUESTIONS

Ch. 4 - deals with very practical issues - holiness, harmony, honesty, hope
holiness - male/female relationships harmony - brotherly love
honesty - mind own business, work hope - not to grieve as pagans

EACH CHAPTER ENDS WITH REFERENCE TO COMING OF JESUS
applies truth to practical lives of believers- incentive - service, holiness,
faith

PROBLEM - some believers died before Jesus returned > where are they??

Pagan world in Paul's day had little hope of life after death
Inscription found on grave from that era:

I WAS NOT, I BECAME, I AM NOT, I CARE NOT

SOME BELIEVERS expected immediate RETURN of Jesus
"What about those who died BEFORE He returns?"

TODAY - Scientists are trying to investigate the afterlife

Testimonies of those who have died and come back to life again

Spiritists try and contact the dead and communicate with them

CHRISTIAN NEED NOT SPECULATE WITH SCIENCE OR SPIRITS
WE HAVE THE SURE AND SOLID RECORD OF SCRIPTURE

DEATH MEANS SEPARATION - 3 Kinds

SPIRITUAL - we are separated from God by our sin

PHYSICAL - our body is separated from our soul

ETERNAL - both body & soul separated from God forever in hell

1. Negative Words

v. 13 Do not be ignorant / Do not be hopeless

Paul - "I want you to know" // Jesus "I tell you the truth"

believers are not to be ignorant - root of many problems in our faith

"Do not grieve like pagans" NOT do not grieve

Grief at loss is very natural - it is not natural not to grieve - Jesus wept

Story - Husband died - friend "Sorry you lost your husband"

SOMETHING IS LOST WHEN YOU DO NOT KNOW WHERE IT IS!

CONNECTION BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE OF GOD & WORD & HOPE

2. Paul's Statement of Faith

vs. 14,15 - We believe, we believe, we tell you

1) We believe Jesus died and rose again

THE GREAT NEWS OF THE GOSPEL - what Jesus did for us

5.10 - "he died for us" // 5.9 "to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus"

JESUS DID NOT REMAIN DEAD - BUT HE TRIUMPHED OVER IT

2) We believe God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him

GOD DEAD NOT LEAVE JESUS DEAD/ BELIEVERS ALSO ARE ALIVE

we will be raised, as Jesus was raised / when He comes, they will come too

4.13, 5.10 "those who fall asleep" **PEACEFUL**

SEPARATION OF BODY AND SOUL

Not the End of Life / BEGINNING OF ETERNITY

SOUL OF THE BELIEVER GOES IMMEDIATELY TO BE WITH GOD

PAUL DOES NOT SAY THAT THE SOUL WENT TO SLEEP

it is **THE BODY** which Paul describes as sleeping - **SOUL WITH GOD**

NOTICE PAUL DID NOT SAY JESUS "SLEPT" - 4.14 "Jesus died"
nothing peaceful about His agonizing death, bearing wrath of God Almighty
Jesus "He who believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live"

Paul "to live is Christ, to die is gain"

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me
has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death
to life." ALREADY!! John 5.24

3) We tell you those who are alive will not go ahead of the dead in Christ

COMING OF THE LORD - word in Greek "Parousia" - Coming of King

Emph. - Solidarity of the dead and the living in Christ - NO DISTINCTION

DEATH IS SEPARATION - JESUS GIVES ETERNAL
RECONCILIATION

4.17 "caught up with them...we will be with the Lord forever"

Four Great Events - Return / Resurrection / Rapture / Reunion

RETURN

2nd Coming FUNDAMENTAL PART OF PAUL'S PREACHING -

1.10 "to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead"

NT - 260 chaps / 318 references Return of Jesus / 1 verse in 25

Mentioned in 23 of the 27 books of the NT

"they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory"
Mark 13.26

"I will come again and take you to myself" John 14.3

ANGELS AT ASCENSION "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you
into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go." A

1.11

RESURRECTION

PROPHET Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones:

"the Sovereign Lord says: O my people I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them. I will pour my Spirit in you and you will live..."

Ezekiel 37.12-14

DOES NOT MEAN HE WILL PUT PARTS TOGETHER AGAIN

RESURRECTION IS NOT RECONSTRUCTION

Need not spend big money on coffin to keep worms out - God does not need your old bones to make a new body

"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne...the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them..." Revelation 20.12,13

GENERAL RESURRECTION OF ALL MANKIND THRU ALL HISTORY

ALL PEOPLE - SINNERS & SAINTS - WILL BE RAISED FROM DEATH

RAPTURE

RAPTURE - 4.17 "those who are alive will be caught up to meet Him"

WORD RAPTURE NOT USED = Latin word "rapto" - CARRY AWAY

NOT SILENT RAPTURE - 4.16 Loud commands and trumpets

NOT PAINLESS "RAPTURE" - Christians will suffer tribulation

1.6 "severe suffering" / DIFFICULT EXPERIENCE OF BELIEVERS

2 Tim 3.12 "everyone who wants to live godly life will be persecuted"

More Christians martyred in 20th cent than all centuries together

REUNION

OT phrase - "gathered to his people"

"Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age..and was gathered to his people" Genesis 25.8

"Isaac breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people" Gen 25.17

"Jacob...drew up his feet into the bed, and breathed his last,
and was gathered to his people" Genesis 49.33

NOT GRAVEYARD OF ANCESTORS / presence of God & His people

Jesus talks about many coming from east and west and sitting at table in
God's Kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Jesus, Peter, James, & John - met Moses and Elijah on the Mountain
Great Reunion with believing loved ones in Heaven

CHUCK SWINDOL - there will be 3 Surprises in Heaven
1) Who is NOT there 2) Who IS there 3) that YOU are there

GLORIOUS MEETING - we will be in glorified bodies EVERLASTING

PAUL IS READY FOR JESUS RETURN DURING HIS LIFE
4.15 "we who still alive, who are left to the coming of the Lord"

AND HE IS PREPARED TO DIE AND GO TO JESUS
PAUL'S LAST LETTER - 2 Timothy - prepared for his death
4.18 "the Lord will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom"

"By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us
also." 1 Cor 6.14

RIGHT ATTITUDE FOR ALL BELIEVERS - 5.10

To Live is Christ, to Die is Even Better

Paul writes of Christ's coming to encourage the believers:
4.13 "we do not want you to be ignorant"
4.18 "encourage each other with these words
5.11 "encourage one another, and build each other up"

HOW WE NEED TO DO THIS TODAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

SOMETIMES BETTER TO BE LIKE JOB'S FRIENDS DURING THE
FIRST SEVEN DAYS - SAT IN SILENCE

ENCOURAGE WITH THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL
false flattery and praise is no real encouragement

MANY LIES SPOKEN at FUNERALS -

EVERYTHING WILL BE all right - IT MAY BE TERRIBLE

MANY PREACHERS TRY AND PREACH THE DEAD INTO HEAVEN

Person drunkard, wife-beater, foul language, no time for God
But he accepted Jesus when he was 8 years old at a Church camp!

Doesn't he look peaceful!?!?!

Death is an ENEMY, FEAR of Death is the tool of SATAN

Jesus is Risen / Death is Conquered

Not heartless, bubbly joy, talk too much / SOLID HOPE

MIDDLE AGES GREAT INTEREST IN INDIA & CHINA BY SEA
land expeditions - SilkRoad - proved much attraction in the East
SAILING AROUND AFRICA WAS PROBLEM - many tried & failed

So many failed - It was called the Cape of Storms
Until Vasco de Gama - 1st to sail around Cape and reach India
EVENTUALLY CAPE WAS RENAMED - Cape of Good Hope

Lord Jesus Christ - entered into death itself - and returned alive
IN HIM WE PASS THROUGH THE STORMS AND REACH
THE OTHER SIDE - INTO HEAVEN ITSELF

"When the Son of Man comes will He find faith on the earth?"
WILL HE FIND US FAITHFUL?

Englishman named Lord Shaftesbury - worked for Reformation in Church
"I do not think that in the last 40 years I have lived one conscious hour that was not influenced by the Lord's return"

b. The Dead Will be Raised

4.14 "God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep"

**THOSE WHO ARE ALIVE WILL HAVE NO ADVANTAGE OVER
THOSE SAINTS WHO HAVE DIED BEFORE THEM**

16b "the dead in Christ will rise first" CONGREGATIONAL to heaven 1st

c. All Mankind will Be Judged 5.2 DAY OF THE LORD / Judgment

5.9 SOME WILL "suffer wrath" / OTHERS "receive salvation"

"The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded
in the books" Revelation 20.12

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one
may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether
good or bad." 1 Corinthians 5.10

Paul in Athens: "God has set a day when he will judge the world with
justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by
raising him from the dead." Acts 17.31

BELIEVERS HAVE NO FEAR - Jesus will either come WITH us or FOR us

2. Words about the Dead

a. Asleep in Jesus 4.13, 5.10 "those who fall asleep" PEACEFUL

SEPARATION OF BODY AND SOUL
Not the End of Life / BEGINNING OF ETERNITY

WORDS INSCRIBED ON TOMBSTONE - grave outside of London
"Pause, my friend, as you walk by; As you are now, so once was I; As I am now, so you will be. Prepare my friend, to follow me"

SOMEONE ADDED THESE WORDS

"To follow you is not my intent, until I know which way you went!"

SOUL OF THE BELIEVER GOES IMMEDIATELY TO BE WITH GOD

Someone went to comfort a widow at death of his husband,
"Sorry that you lost your husband!" / "He is not lost - someone only lost when you do not know where they are" / I KNOW HE IS WITH THE LORD

"A dislike of death is no proof of lack of faith. Our natural instincts shrink from death, no creature desires its own destruction - THOUGH DEATH IS NOT DESIRED its END RESULT MAY BE."

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it is THE BODY which Paul describes as sleeping - SOUL WITH GOD

NOTICE PAUL DID NOT SAY JESUS "SLEPT" - 4.14 "Jesus died"
nothing peaceful about His agonizing death, bearing wrath of God Almighty

Jesus "He who believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live"

Paul "to live is Christ, to die is gain"

"Is death the last sleep? No, it is the last and final awakening"

John 5.24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." ALREADY!!

b. Recognizable Reunion / we will see and know our loved ones

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4.17 "caught up with them...we will be with the Lord forever"

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NOT GRAVEYARD OF ANCESTORS / presence of God & His people

David plead for the dying child of Bathsheba, once he died: I SHALL GO TO HIM, BUT HE WILL NOT RETURN TO ME 1 Sam 12.23

Jesus talks about many coming from east and west and sitting at table in God's Kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Jesus, Peter, James, & John - met Moses and Elijah on the Mountain

Rich man died and saw "Abraham far off and Lacers in his bosom"

Great Reunion with believing loved ones in Heaven

CHUCK SWINDOL - there will be 3 Surprises in Heaven

1) Who is NOT there 2) Who IS there 3) that YOU are there

GLORIOUS MEETING - we will be in glorified bodies EVERLASTING

c. Present with the Lord

NO PURGATORY / WAITING PLACE/soul sleep

Jesus to repentant thief: "TODAY you will be with me in Paradise"

"We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be AWAY FROM THE BODY and AT HOME WITH THE LORD" 2 Corinthians 5.8

Dwight Moody

Illus. Young girl's mother became very sick / stayed w/ neighbor

"When can I go home and be with mommy?" she'll be better soon

Grew worse / DIED / After Funeral took girl home

Went in every room calling "Mommy"

Told she was gone / Girl returned to neighbor's house forever

Moody "No it is not the jasper walls and the pearly gates that are going to make heaven attractive. It is the being with God"

HOME HAD LOST ITS ATTRACTION IF MOTHER NOT THERE
GLORY OF HEAVEN - BEING WITH JESUS

"Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise" Revelation 5.11,12

3. Words for the Living

a. Minor on the Minors: The Details DIVISIVE SPECULATION

5.1 "about times and dates we do not need to write you"

TIMES AND DATES - realm of the Sovereign Lord of History - mystery as Risen Lord - He has all authority in Heaven and on Earth

Deut 29.29 - Secret things belong to God, revealed to us, children, do them

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More Christians martyred in 20th cent than all centuries together

b. Major on the Majors: His Return 5.2 "day of the Lord will come

"we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" Titus 2.13

GREAT EVENT OF OUR RDC - 80 students, KZ, UZ, Tadjik

32 churches / denom. / Kaz, Rus, Koreans - ONLY ONE BODY OF X

1 church / 1 nationality / 1 theol. trad. ALONE cannot reach KZ & world

c. Believe with Conviction / DOUBT DESTROYS FAITH

"Do not be ignorant" 4.13

"we believe Jesus died and rose again" 4.14

"according to the Lord's own word" 4.15

"God appointed us to receive salvation" 5.9

"be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure" 2 Pt 1.10

"He who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does" James 1.6,7

Bring your doubts to God and His Word / SEARCH, STUDY, PRAY

Illus. General Sherman / Civil War / Full of Hope FRONT LINES

Guns firing / troops advancing

REAR - wounded brought, stragglers, deserters - FEAR, DEPRESSION

d. Be Ready to Go 4.16,17, 5.2,3

Persecuted early Christians - Faced Lions or Executioners HOPE
"Perhaps this is the moment Jesus will return; even now before the beasts can spring or the ax will fall, I shall be caught up to meet Him in the air"

Middle Ages - Jester in King's Court - FOOLISH REMARK
"Take this staff until you find a bigger fool than yourself"

Years Later - King on DEATHBED - CALLS FOR COURT

Jester "Your majesty, when you go on trips you prepare...
sending heralds, servants, nobles, diplomats BEFORE YOU

What preparations for this LAST, LONG JOURNEY??

None - Take Staff - "YOU are bigger fool than I"

e. Flee the Darkness 5.4-7 "BE ALERT & SELF CONTROLLED"

"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul" 1 Peter 2.11

"Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear his deeds will be exposed."

WOMAN STUDENT SMOKING - never saw her doing it, smelled it
PRAYED FOR OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO HER - she came to see me
"I know you are smoking" - NO - FRIENDS ARE SMOKING - SMELL IT

SHE CAME AND CONFESSED TO BOTH SMOKING AND LYING
lying is a bigger sin than smoking - God gave her victory over lying

f. Belong to the Day READ 5.8

But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God" John 3.20,21

EAST AFRICAN REVIVAL - believers walked in the Light
"If we walk in the light, as he is in light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His son, purifies us from all sin" 1 Jn 1.7

LIVE IN A HOUSE WITH NO ROOF AND NO WALLS - God & man

"The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because

salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of your sinful nature." R 13.11-14

g. Encourage one another READ 4.18, 5.11

"It is when God appears to have abandoned us that we must abandon ourselves most wholly to God"

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