

Remember the issue at the Thessalonica Church. Because of persecution, a large number of believers had died, including **f**amily members. False teaching was circulating that those who had died had missed the Rapture since they would **n**ot be living when Christ returned.

\*Paul uses this situation both to correct their theology and to **com**fort their hearts.

I Thessalonians 4:13 - 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.

1. Paul wanted them to truly understand what happens when a believer dies. The word "sleep" does not refer to the death of their soul, but rather to the **body**.

a. James 2:26 - For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Luke 16:23, 25 - And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Luke 16:25 - But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

II Corinthians 5:1, 8 - For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. II Cor. 5:8 - We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Revelation 6:9-11 - And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: Rev. 6:10 - And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? Rev. 6:11 - And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

b. Keep in mind that God's revelation was **gradual** and **progressive**. When Christ came, He gave information about life-after-death regarding the Israelites. Then Paul's new mystery revelation gives further life-after-death knowledge to the Body Church, which is **ad**vanced and different from Israel's.

(1) \*Paul was now giving this advanced knowledge because of the accomplishment of Christ's **D.B.R.**

Hebrews 2:14-15 - Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb. 2:15 - And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

II Timothy 1:10 - But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

(2) We received the complete revelation about death upon the N.T. being finished.

2. [that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.] Unbelievers have **no** hope of ever seeing their loved ones again. That is cause for sorrow. For the believer, if their loved ones are saved, their sorrow is mixed with joy at the prospect of seeing them again in Heaven.

I Thessalonians 4:14 - For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

If they have believed in the D.B.R. of Christ, Paul says it should **not** be too difficult to believe that all those asleep (dead believers) Christ **will** bring with Him when He returns for His Body.

I Corinthians 6:14 - And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

II Corinthians 4:14 - Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you.

\*God keeps His Word. This knowledge should comfort the believer's heart.

I Thessalonians 4:15 - 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 prevent them which are asleep.

1. The truth of the Rapture, our gathering unto Christ, was given to Paul by **special** revelation (Word) from Christ.

a. Many have used wrongly (not rightly dividing):

Matthew 24:40-42 - Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Matthew 24:41 - Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Matthew 24:42 - Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

John 14:3 - 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.

Acts 1:11 - 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.

\*\*By doing this, they have unwittingly helped to bring in the Post-Tribulation theory. That teaches that Christ will not come for His own until **after** the Tribulation. That is saying that we, the Body of Christ, will have to endure the horrors of the Tribulation such as the world has never known!

b. This terrible error, Post-Tribulation, could have been averted if one had **separated** Israel's Program from the Mystery Body's as the Bible teaches. The Rapture (Body's departure) is part of the **Mystery** Program.

I Corinthians 4:1 - Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

I Corinthians 15:51-53 - Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, I Cor. 15:52 - 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. I Cor. 15:53 - For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

II Thessalonians 2:1 - Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him,

2. [that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.] Paul says that not only will their loved ones **not** miss the Rapture, but all those believers who have already died will be **first** to be raised. The dead in Christ shall have precedence, the priority!

I Thessalonians 4:16a - For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God:

\*Paul is saying Christ will personally come to receive us both (living and asleep believers) **up** into glory. When Christ comes for us, the Body, there will be three unique sounds.

1. [with a shout] It is a command, a **sum**mons. The bodies that are asleep are awakened to rise, just as Jesus did outside the tomb of Lazarus.

John 11:43-44 - And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. John 11:44 - And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

**\*\*All Body believers, living and dead, will hear and obey His command.**

2. [with the voice of the archangel,] I believe the archangel of the heavenly host is Michael.

\*Michael may be the only archangel since he is the **only** one mentioned as an archangel (Jude 9). We know Michael has a ministry to Israel, so this archangel may not be Michael.

Daniel 10:13, 21 - But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Daniel 10:21 - But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and *there is* none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

Revelation 12:7 - And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

3. [and with the trump of God:] This trump of God is the **last** trump spoken of in:

I Corinthians 15:52 - 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.

\*It is not to be confused with the 7th trumpet in Revelation. Here, this last trump blasts to call home **all** the Body saints of the Dispensation of Grace. \*\* The 7th trumpet in Revelation is a trumpet of judgment at the **end** of the Tribulation period. The Body will already be in Heaven when the 7th trumpet sounds.

I Thessalonians 4:16b - and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Paul continues giving comfort and **hope** to those believers who have already died. Christ will raise their bodies **first**, then reunite their body, soul, and spirit once again in glory.

I Thessalonians 4:17 - 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.

1. There is one generation of believers who will **not** have to taste death. [\*caught up] This means to seize or to carry off. From this meaning, we use the word Rapture. It has the idea to catch away **speedily** (Acts 8:39, I Corinthians 15:52); to be taken by **force** (John 6:15); to claim for one's self - Christ, we are His; to move **to** a new place (II Corinthians 12:2,4); and to rescue **from** danger (Acts 23:10).

I Thessalonians 1:10 - And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

I Thessalonians 5:9 - For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

2. [together with them] Paul teaches there is going to be a grand **re**union with believing loved ones who have died. The saints will know each other in Heaven. What comfort would it be if we wouldn't?

\*I believe we will even meet our **an**cestors who knew the Lord. \*\*This also will be the very first time when all the members of the Body of Christ will be together and finally **un**ited!

3. [in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air:]

a. This shows the **difference** between the Rapture and the Revelation.

↑ 7 years ↓ Why meet in the air? (Ephesians 2:6-7)

b. Being caught up also shows the believer's change that will **need** to take place. Why?

Romans 8:23 - And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

I Corinthians 15:49-50, 53-54 - And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. I Cor. 15:50 - Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. I Cor. 15:53 - For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. I Cor. 15:54 - So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Philippians 3:20-21 - For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Phil. 3:21 - 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.

4. [and so shall we ever be with the Lord.] Christ comes for His Body because He **loves** us and wants us for His **own**.

Ephesians 5:25, 27 - Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; Eph 5:27 - That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 2:6-7 - And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: Eph. 2:7 - That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

I Thessalonians 4:18 - Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

How does this Rapture - departure truth help **com**fort you as a believer? **Worry** you?