

Comfort from the Second Coming of the Lord

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Paul makes frequent mention of the second coming of Christ in his epistles to the Thessalonians. In nearly every chapter there is a reference to this event
 - 1. 1Thes. 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:13-18, 5:1-10; 2Thes, 1:5-10, 2:1-3

I. THE PROBLEM OF SORROW (Vs. 4:13)

- A. The loss of a loved one generates grief that becomes a great burden that has the potential to become a temptation that can lead one away from the Lord
 - 1. It is one of the most stressful trials one can endure
- B. Christians are not immune to sorrow, including the sorrow of separation in this life - Acts 20:37-38; 2Cor. 2:7
 - 1. But we need not experience the sorrow of desperation, the despair of having no hope and of never seeing a loved one again
 - 2. Faith in the second coming of the Lord gives relief from the sorrow of separation in this life

II. THE PROMISE FOR THOSE WHO SLEEP IN JESUS (Vss. 4:14-15)

- A. Just as He raised Jesus from the dead, likewise God will bring those who sleep in Jesus, limited to the righteous dead
 - 1. There will also a resurrection of the wicked - John 5:28-29
- B. What do the scriptures mean by "fallen asleep" and "asleep in Jesus"?
 - 1. Understanding this will help to reduce our fear of death and ameliorate our sorrow when a Dear One passes away
 - a. The scriptures often speak of death as a "sleep"
 - 1) Matt. 27:52 - Bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised at the death of Christ
 - 2) John 11:11-14 - Jesus says of dead Lazarus, "our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."
 - 3) Acts 7:60 - As Stephen is stoned to death, it is said "he fell asleep"
 - 4) Deity views death as a sleep because God knows it is not a permanent condition and the souls remain conscious.
 - b. Nowhere do the Scriptures say that their souls fall asleep
 - 1) It was the body of the person that fell asleep
 - a) As the mind remains active during sleep, the soul remains aware while the body awaits resurrection
 - 2) The term "sleep" is a figurative reference, and a very appropriate one:
 - a) Sleep implies rest. When one physically sleeps, he rests from his work that day
 - b) So it is that the dead also "rest from their labors" in life - Rev. 14:13
 - 3) Sleep implies a break from involvement in life

- a) In literal sleep, one ceases activities in which he was busy during the hours of wakefulness
 - b) So it is that the dead are no longer active in the world they left
 - c. Sleep is also a prelude to an awakening
 - 1) Literal sleep is followed by an awakening
 - 2) So it is with death: though the souls may be conscious during the waiting period in Paradise, at the resurrection there will be an awakening of the gloriously transformed bodies that will house our souls
 - 3) Sleep is a figurative term for death because of the sleep-like appearance of the body
- 2. While our souls now dwell in limited physical bodies, so in the resurrection, God will awaken us with a glorified immortal form for our souls to occupy
 - a. The righteous dead are with Jesus - 1Thes. 5:10
 - b. 2Cor. 5:8; Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:21-23
- B. The righteous dead will precede those who are alive
 - 1. Some in Thessalonica feared those who had died would miss out on the blessings of Christ's coming
 - 2. Paul reassures them that this is not the case
 - a. God will bring them with Jesus. This assurance we have "by the word of the Lord"
 - b. The same word that tells of Christ's coming - 2Peter 3:7-13
 - c. The same word lives and abides forever - 1Peter 1:23-25

III. THE PROCEDURE FOR CHRIST'S COMING (Vss. 4:16-17)

- A. The Lord will descend from heaven
 - 1. It will be noticed by everyone, including those who presently do not believe it will happen
 - a. It will be with a shout, the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet of God. It is not describing some silent, premillennial rapture.
 - b. It will be very visible - Rev. 1:7
 - 2. The coming of Jesus is the prelude to all end time events - 2Thes. 2:1-2
 - 1) Jesus comes for His saints - 1Thes. 4:13-18
 - 2) He brings judgment on the wicked - 1Thes. 5:1-2
- B. The dead in Christ will rise first
 - 1. Their souls will be coming with Jesus - 1Thes. 4:14
 - 2. Their bodies will be raised from the grave - 1Thes. 4:16
 - 3. This will happen before those who are alive meet the Lord
- C. Those living will be caught up with them
 - 1. Those alive will be transformed - 1Cor. 15:51-53
 - 2. The righteous living will then join the righteous dead - 1Thes. 4:17
 - 3. We will meet the Lord together in the clouds - Acts 1:9-11
 - 4. In this way, we shall come to be with the Lord forever.
 - a. 1Thes. 4:17; John 14:3

IV. THE PURPOSE OF THESE WORDS (Vs. 4:18)

A. To be comforted

1. While we may sorrow when a fellow-Christian dies, it is not the sorrow of those who have no hope.
2. To protect us from sorrow that can harm our faith in the love and promises of God

B. To comfort one another

1. Comforting others in their loss of a loved one is a common human behavior - John 11:19
2. Christians are to weep with those who weep - Rom. 12:15
3. But for those who are fellow Christians, we can do more; we can provide comfort
 - a. Comfort them with the comfort we have in God - 2Cor. 1:3-4
 - b. Especially the comfort provided by the hope we have in Christ - 1Thes. 5:10-11

C. We are reminded that death need not be good bye, but only good night

1. Story of the father who on his death bed told all his children good night except the one unfaithful son to whom he said good bye
2. When the time comes for our loved ones pass on, will we be able to find comfort in this passage?
3. Will those who survive us be comforted by its promise when they grieve over our death?

V. THE UNPUBLISHED DATE OF HIS RETURN (Vss. 5:2-4)

A. For some, but not for others

1. The Lord's coming will be a surprise for many - 1Thes. 5:2; 2Peter 3:10
2. But for those who heed the warnings of Scripture, the Day will not overtake them as a thief - 1Thes. 5:1-2, 4
 - a. No one knows on what day the Lord will come, including the righteous. But because the righteous are prepared, they will not suffer the shock and despair of those who are not prepared.
 - b. The unrighteous, because they are unprepared, will feel great loss, as one who did not guard against thieves and awoke to find himself robbed - Matt. 24:43-44

B. For some, an inescapable destruction - 2Thes. 1:7-8

1. He will come when people are saying peace and safety - 1Thes. 5:3
 - a. Not in troublesome times, but in peaceful times
 - b. Yet many Christians seem to think He is coming whenever there is tribulation
2. When He comes, it will be with sudden destruction - 1Thes. 5:3
 - a. Just as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman
 - b. There will be no time and no means to escape this destruction
2Thes. 1:7-10
3. This day will be glorious for those who are ready - 2Thes. 1:10
 - a. For those who now "sleep in Jesus" - 1Thes. 4:13-16
 - b. For those prepared for His coming - 1Thes. 4:17-18

4. What will this day mean for us: a day of destruction, or a day of delight?
It depends upon whether we are prepared for His coming]

VI. THE PLAN FOR HIS PEOPLE UNTIL HIS REAPPEARANCE (Vss. 5:5-11)

A. Be watchful and sober

1. We are children of light and of the day - 1Thes. 5:5
 - a. Because we follow Him, Light of the world - John 12:35-36
 - b. Because we are now in Jesus, and walk in the light -
1John 1:5-7
 - c. Because we cast off works of darkness and walk properly -
Rom. 13:11-12
2. We are watchful for His coming - 1Thes. 5:6
 - a. No one knows the day nor hour - 1Thes. 5:2; Matt. 24:36, 42
 - b. Watchfulness includes prayer - 1Peter 4:7
 - c. Watchfulness includes repentance and strengthening what we
have - Rev. 3:2-3
 - d. Sleep in our text refers to spiritual laxity - 1Thes. 5:6-7
3. We are to be sober - 1Thes. 5:6-8
 - a. Jesus relates this to watching for His coming - Luke 21:34-36

B. Be armed and waiting

1. In all seriousness, putting on the armor of God - 1Thes. 5:8-9
 - a. The breastplate of faith and love - Rom. 10:17; 1John 3:16
 - b. The hope of salvation as a helmet - Rom. 15:4
 - c. More detailed description of the armor of God - Eph. 6:11-18
2. Dual purposes of Paul's discourse on the second coming of the Lord:
 - a. 1Thes. 4:13-18 is designed to comfort Christians with promises
of blessings that will attend the second coming of the Lord
 - b. 1Thes. 5:1-11 is designed to teach Christians to be prepared
with warnings of the unknown date of second coming of the Lord
3. Encouraged to wait because God has appointed us to salvation -
1Thes. 5:9-10

C. Be comforted and edified

1. We are to comfort one another - 1Thes. 5:11
 - a. With the comfort we each receive from God - 2Cor. 1:3-4
 - b. With the comfort of our hope we have in Christ - 1Thes. 4:18
2. We are to edify one another - Rom. 14:19; 15:2

Conclusion:

- A. Be at peace in your minds and hearts; we will see all of the faithful Christians
who have passed away when we ascend to meet the Lord at His second
coming.
- B. Be vigilant in your thoughts, words, and actions; the Lord can come at any
time; therefore, it is essential that we be prepared for His return.