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Grace Bible Church, NY
January 10, 2021

COMFORT & HOPE IN CHRIST'S RETURN
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Introduction

I want to begin this morning's message by thanking you for praying for me and those that had gathered in Washington, D.C. this past Wednesday. I appreciate very much the many calls that were made to find out if we were safe. What I experienced there was not what has been the focus of the news propaganda. For the benefit of those who did not get my email on Thursday, let me quickly give you a very brief summary of what I experienced.

I had planned to meet my son at the first rally that was held at the Ellipse, but when I arrived, I found that I did not have any cell phone service and the same was true for those around us or they had very limited service, so I was not able to contact Jonathan. We positioned ourselves just below the Washington Monument looking toward the stage at the Ellipse. As seen in these pictures, there was a sea of people present, and these pictures do not show the great amount of people to the West of our location. This was despite the mayor's efforts to limit attendance. It was eerie exiting the metro station to find the streets blocked off, the businesses closed and some even boarded up. The public buildings and monuments in that area were also closed or blocked off. Even the long row of portable toilets were fenced off. Because we had heard about that possibility the night before, we brought our own food and purposely did not have anything to drink after dinner on Tuesday so that we would be dehydrated on Wednesday.

We were too far away to hear the speeches very well, but there was a lot of flags, signs, cheers and political chants. There were a few among the masses of people that were openly crass and crude in expressing themselves, which I was told was not present at previous rallies. There were people there from all over the nation and all ages were present including some elderly I saw using scooters. People were friendly and even shared food and water with each other. There were street preachers, pamphleteers, and vendors of flags and political souvenirs. There were large organized groups such as the Chinese for Trump, but mostly it was individuals and small groups. They came at their own cost of time and money like the man I met from Utah that drove 2,100 miles in two days by himself.

After President Trump spoke, the people walked to the capital and filled the area from the Capital to the reflecting pond and then beyond into the Mall. People were orderly, and amazingly, remained so when tear gas was fired among them - into the very area Jonathan was at. I could see no cause for it and he could only surmise it was because some people were trying to find a way to go around the police and barriers, but there was no violence on the part of the people there. Not long after, they were allowed up on the stairs, scaffolding and platforms where they waved their flags. We were not aware of what was happening on the East side or inside the Capital, but rumors of a woman being killed by police began to circulate. Everyone's cell phones suddenly came to life when the mayor ordered a curfew to begin at 6 pm. That made it clear that cell service had been purposely turned off or restricted until that time.

We learned more about the reported "storming" of the Capital by "seditious" people the next day which is also when I found out the Mayor had ordered the police to stand down and rejected offers of help in advance, that the police had let citizens into the Capital, and that antifa operatives were among the Trump supporters in the Capital. The woman killed was unarmed - but she was not black, so the media will not be concerned about her. The Trump supporters should not have entered the Capital even if invited because it played into the hands of their enemies in government and the media who now try to blame it all on Trump, and any one still saying there was voter fraud is labeled as seditious. Frankly, if

the President wanted the mass of people present to “storm” the Capital, he could have easily incited it, but he did not. The real sedition that occurred in the Capital took place in the morning hours of Thursday when Congress failed its responsibility to investigate thousands (plural) of affidavits alleging voter fraud. What term would you use to describe districts that had substantially more votes counted than voters in the district? The socialists and swamp creatures have achieved their goal of getting Biden certified as President-Elect, but the cost is the nation itself. Without basic voting integrity, we no longer have a Constitutional Republic. As of January 20, we will live in post-Constitutional nation - we already do.

I fully realize that there will be those that think what I have said is too political and should not be in the pulpit. How to God I wish I could avoid politics all together! However, I believe our Lord has charged me as your pastor to prepare you for what is to come, and politics has entered into the life of the church because it has placed the lid on the coffin holding the remains of our freedoms including that of practicing our religion. While I believe it will take some time for all the nails to be driven in, we must prepare ourselves for what is to come. We have begged God for mercy upon our nation, but His answer at this point is that the U.S.A. is under His judgment, and rightly so considering how our society has turned its back on even basic morality, and even worse, how the vast majority of churches have rejected Biblical orthodoxy. To paraphrase parts of the prayer in Daniel 9, *“We have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinance . . . Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame . . . because we have sinned against You.”*

Romans 1:18-32 describes God’s wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, and tragically, it fits America well including the last section describing the fruits of depraved minds. To that list can be added the apostasy described 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 2 Timothy 4:3-4 of those that reject the truth in favor of the doctrine of demons and those who will tickle their ears according to their own desires.

In the time to come it will be my endeavor to help you understand both what God has said about the future and prepare for living a full life even in persecution. We will finish 1 Thessalonians, then examine Habakkuk, then 2 Thessalonians, 1 Peter and finally, Revelation. While the idea of Christians being persecuted in the United States is contrary to what we have known, this nation has been an anomaly to that both historically and world-wide at the present time. It has been occurring here for a long time in minor ways, but it will become more open and flagrant especially since Democrats in office or soon to be in positions of authority have already said it. Remember a few years ago when our own King Cuomo, excuse me, Governor, said that people like us were not welcome here.

While persecution is not something we look forward to with emotions of happiness, neither is it something to fear. We can determine in advance to respond as the apostles did in Acts 5:41 that they were *“rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.”* I want to prepare you to do the same.

I also want to make sure you understand what God has already revealed about His plan for the future. There is much hope for the believer in the study of eschatology - the doctrine of last things. The details will become known as time unfolds, but He has given clear revelation of the major events of the end times.

We start this morning by continuing in our study of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. In God’s gracious timing, this is the passage which was already next in this sermon series.

¹³ *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.* ¹⁴ *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.* ¹⁵ *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* ¹⁶ *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.* ¹⁷ *Then we who are alive*

and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ *Therefore comfort one another with these words.*”

The Concern - 1 Thessalonians 4:13

This is the second issue of concern which Paul addresses with the Thessalonians. The chapter begins with his pleas and exhortations that they walk to please God. He commends them for doing well in this, but encourages them to do even better, to excel, to abound in it. He then pointed out three areas in which they were to do this.

First, they were to pursue sanctification for that was God’s will for them - and for all Christians. Sanctification and holiness have the same word root. We were set apart to Christ at salvation and we are to be increasingly set apart to Him in living in practical holiness as we live. We are to be holy for God is holy. He is very specific here that they are to live contrary to their culture by abstaining from sexual immorality and instead live in sexual purity with their own spouse. He includes the warning that God is an avenger and to reject what he was telling them was rejecting God who gives them the Holy Spirit.

Second, though they were doing well at loving the brethren as evidenced in their actions in proclaiming the gospel throughout Macedonia and nurturing the relationships formed with the new believers that responded, Paul encourages them to excel, to abound still more in it.

Third, Paul exhorts them to live their lives in a quiet fashion in which they would attend to their own affairs and work with their own hands so that they would behave properly toward outsiders and not have need. This exhortation is directly related to the next subject Paul is going to bring up for we find out in 2 Thessalonians that some of them were responding incorrectly about Paul’s teaching concerning the return of Jesus for they had stopped working and had become busybodies. He will address this subject again in more detail in that letter, but in this letter Paul makes his first clarification about what he had taught them about Jesus’ return.

Verse 13 begins with a transition that Paul did not want the brethren to be ignorant, without knowledge, concerning those that “are asleep,” an interesting euphemism for death. The root word has a basic meaning of lie with its cognates having meanings related to that such as recline, lie down, lie upon, a bed, a bedroom, and sleep as with the participle form used here, κοιμωμένων / koimōmenōn. However, 14 of the 19 times it is used in the New Testament, it is used as a euphemism for someone that was dead, and it is used in that sense all 9 of the times Paul uses the word. It is not hard to see why the word is used in this manner since the body of someone who is dead can appear to be asleep if laid out and it is a much more pleasant word than saying the person is dead. However, it can cause confusion.

Jesus used this word in John 11:11 to describe Lazarus which resulted in His disciples concluding that Lazarus would recover from his sickness. Jesus then had to be blunt and tell them that Lazarus is dead. This confusion has also resulted in some churches teaching a doctrine called, “soul sleep,” in which the body is dead, but the soul is in a sleep like state waiting to be awakened at Jesus’ return. However, that would be contrary to the other insights the Scriptures give to us about the state of the soul after death in which there is definite cognate awareness. Paul’s statements in 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 that to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord and Philippians 1:21 that *to live is Christ and to die is gain* certainly suggest this. However, Jesus’ story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31 is clear that the souls of the dead are mentally aware.

The Thessalonians would have understood Paul’s metaphor without confusion because he continues on to state that his purpose is that they would not grieve as “the rest” who were without hope. The idea of hope here is having an assurance that allows you to look forward with confidence to that which is good and beneficial. Funerals which lack hope are filled with overwhelming grief that is inconsolable. People will exhibit that in different ways ranging from extreme anger to extreme depression and wailing to stone faced silence. The common thread is the deep pain of sorrow within the soul. Paul wants them to understand a truth of which they were ignorant that would alleviate the grief with hope.

Please carefully note that distinction here. Paul is going to give them hope which will moderate their grief, not eliminate it. I have been among Christians who had the idea that Christians are not to grieve over the death of a loved one, and that is wrong. If you do not have sorrow when someone dies, there is something wrong in you. Even Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb and He knew he was about to raise him from the dead. Jesus has conquered death and given us hope that transcends it, but it is still an enemy and will be until Jesus returns. The closer the relationship, the greater the personal grief will be in missing that person. And while there will be joy that the Christian is with the Lord, there will still be sorrow that they will not be present to participate in events that you know they would enjoy. It is common to hear references to what a loved one who has passed away would have enjoyed. It is proper to shed a tear when we remember someone we cared about that is no longer with us simply because we miss them. And I will add, it is proper to weep with those who are weeping for in doing so we show our empathy and that is comforting. We want our loved ones to be remembered.

It is proper for Christians to grieve, but we do not grieve as those who do not have hope. That being true let me quickly add here that the Christian may or may not go through the various "stages of grief" identified by various psychiatrists, so don't try to analyze or stick people into those theories. (Yes, there are more theories about grief than just Kubler-ross). In fact, the context here shows that Paul is addressing a very particular concern that had developed among the Thessalonians that those among them that had died would miss the return of Jesus. They were uncertain of what had happened to their souls

The Belief - 1 Thessalonians 4:14

¹⁴ *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."* This is the underlying truth that would bring comfort. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the foundation of our faith. Paul points out that these are the essential elements of the gospel stating in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, ³ *"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures . . ."* All that Jesus claimed about Himself and all that He taught were confirmed when He conquered death and came out of the grave alive. The fact of Jesus' resurrection was attested to by multiple witnesses on multiple occasions and even to multitudes at one time. Paul then argues in verses 17-20 that this resurrection is essential to our faith. If Christ had not been raised from the dead their faith would be in vain and those who had *"fallen asleep in Jesus have perished."* But Paul continues, *"But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep."*

Paul now applies these truths to the Thessalonians' faith by assuring them here that God would be bringing with Him those who had already died. In order for that to happen, they would have to already be with God. I mentioned earlier several passages that showed that the soul had mental awareness after death. Those same passages also show that the souls of the righteous are *at home with the Lord*.

The Promise - 1 Thessalonians 4:15

Paul continues in verse 15 and gives them additional knowledge about what will happen. ¹⁵ *"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep."*

Paul first points out that what he is telling them is not something he came up with on his own. What he is telling them has come *"by the word of the Lord."* What Peter states in 2 Peter 1:20-21 applies to the apostle Paul, ²⁰ *"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."* Peter even later specifically states in 2 Peter 3:15-16 that Paul wrote Scripture. This is an important point for we are followers of Christ, not mere men, so we need to have confidence that the writings which we hold to be sacred are from God who has revealed His inerrant word to us through men moved by the Holy Spirit.

Paul then gives a sequence of what will happen at Christ's return. Those who are living and remaining do not precede those who have fallen asleep. Paul makes it clear in the next verse that he is referring here to the resurrection, but before I get to that, I need to point out two other important points from this verse.

First, these events occur at the "coming of the Lord." The term here, παρουσία / parousia, which according to TDNT has a general meaning of either "to be present" or "to have come" as in having arrived. I don't care for translating this as "coming" because it causes confusion with a more common Greek word group for "coming" (ἐρχομαι / erchomai). Some want to make this a technical term for "advent," but such usage would have to be determined by context, and the word does not really convey the idea of return. I think Young's literal version does well as translating this as "the presence of the Lord" with the specific "presence" determined by the context. In this passage it will be specifically tied to the "snatching away" (the rapture) of believers in verse 17.

Second, note that Paul includes himself as one that could be "living and remaining" when this event happens. This brings up the doctrine of what is called the imminent return of Jesus. I discussed this to some degree in my sermon on "*God's Revelation for the Future*" (8/16/2020). I have placed a more extensive paper in the back on this topic and posted it with the sermon on the webpage. The doctrine is developed from the many admonitions in the New Testament that we are to be ready and alert for the Lord's return (Luke 12:39-40 & also Matthew 24:44; 25:1-13) for He is near and at hand (1 Peter 1:13 James 5:8,9), so we should have an eager anticipation of His coming (Romans 8:23; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:7-8; Hebrews 9:28) keeping in mind that He said He is "*coming quickly*" (Revelation 2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 12 & 20) and would return unexpectedly "*like a thief*" (Revelation 3:3; 16:15). Simply stated, Jesus can return for His church at anytime. Though other prophecies could be fulfilled before that blessed event, none must be fulfilled prior to it.

The Future Fulfillment - 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Verses 16-17 describe additional elements and the sequence in which they will happen when the παρουσία / parousia of the Lord occurs. ¹⁶ "*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.* ¹⁷ *Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.*"

First, the Lord's presence comes about because He Himself will descend from heaven. Second, this is accompanied by a shout with the word here, κέλευσμα / keleusma, referring to a call of command. Third, one of the archangel's will add his voice to the shout. Fourth, the trumpet of God will also sound. Fifth, the dead in Christ will rise first. Sixth, those alive and remaining will also be caught up. Seventh, both groups will join together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Eighth, they will then always be with the Lord.

This will not be a hidden event as so many of the cults have claimed in trying to explain away their false predictions. Revelation 1:7 proclaims, "*Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him . . .*" The cacophony of sounds - shouting, an archangel voice, and a trumpet - will get people's attention, and this matches what the two angels told the disciples in Acts 1:11 that Jesus would return in the same way they had seen Him go into heaven, which was into a cloud.

Paul had said in verse 15 that those living and remaining would not precede those who had fallen asleep in Jesus, and now he specifically states the dead would rise first. Since their souls were already with the Lord, it would appear that their resurrection bodies are raised to join their souls at this event. It is after that those who are alive and remain are changed to receive their imperishable and immortal bodies as described in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54. This fulfills 1 John 3:2 that we are changed to become like Jesus when He becomes visible because we will see Him as He is.

This event is referred to as the “rapture” which comes from the Latin word, “*rapers*,” which was used to translate ἁρπάζω / harpadzo in verse 17 meaning “caught up” or “snatched away.” The timing of when this will happen is debated, and I believe we should be gracious with one another when debating this issue. However, my own conviction after many years of study on the topic, and the doctrinal statement of this church, is that it will occur at or near the beginning of the 70th week described in Daniel 9:27 also known as the Tribulation Period. This is called the Pre-Tribulational position. A primary reason for this is the doctrine of imminence as already mentioned, particularly that we are to be eagerly anticipating and looking for the Lord’s return and not other things such as antichrist. Secondary to that are the passages such as 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9 that are clear that Jesus “*rescues us from the wrath to come*” and “*that God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” The Tribulation period concerns God’s wrath on Israel and the world and not believers who are not even mentioned in Revelation after chapter 3. While no position is without difficult areas, the various mid-Tribulation and post-tribulational positions are simply not as strong in their Biblical support.

The promise is that all believers will be gathered together in the clouds and meet the Lord in the air and will always be with Him after that. This is referring to physical proximity and not just His spiritual presence as in the present time (Matthew 28:29).

The Comfort - 1 Thessalonians 4:18

Paul concludes with a command to “*comfort one another with these words.*” This is the same word we have seen several times in 1 Thessalonians already, παρακαλέω / parakaleō, which is to “call alongside” and so translated in other contexts as exhort or encourage, but in this context, it is the fulfillment of his purpose. He did not want them to be ignorant of these important truths about the Lord’s promises to us concerning our future at His return. These promises give us hope for the present and the future. Those who have already died will not miss the Lord’s return, in fact, their souls are immediately with Him upon death, and they will even get their resurrection bodies before those that are alive and remaining. This is comfort for believers that grieve over the departure of a loved one.

It is also a comfort for those that are facing tribulation in this world including death, for it is the assurance of what will happen to them. You are only passing through this life, and for Christians it does get better than this, for we are only a heart beat away from heavenly bliss. Having a promise that I will be with the Lord forever transcends all the temporary problems I have or will have in this life here for it not only assures where I am going, but it also gives me the purpose for the road of life I am currently walking.

Final Thoughts

It has been a hard week for those of us that love the historic America, the America that was the land of freedom of religion, thought, and assembly. The land of Pilgrims’ pride where the rule of law and respect for others allowed us to dream and work hard to fulfill those dreams, and even to travel around the nation fairly safely. It has always been a flawed nation because people are sinful, but it was a great nation in which truth and justice could be pursued. However, America has been sick with many cancers for a long time, but instead of national repentance and pursuing the Great Physician, the nation has sought its own way according to its own pride. Kings, kingdoms and nations pass away, and the United States is not exempt. We are seeing the last gasps of a rotting corpse and grief fills our hearts.

However, we who are Christians do not grieve as those who have no hope, for we have a great and abiding hope in the Lord Jesus Christ who paid the penalty of our sins with His own death, was buried and then rose in victory over death. He has ascended to heaven and one day He is returning from there for His people. We live on this earth as aliens and strangers for our citizenship is in heaven for which we are ambassadors pleading with people to believe the gospel and become new creatures in Christ. We are

willing to sacrifice ourselves in service to our King, who will never fail us for He will fulfill His purposes in and through us according to His own will. In this world we will have tribulation, but we have joy, for our savior has overcome the world and is with us always for now and eternity.

As we now prepare for Communion, I want you to consider all that Jesus Christ has done for you, and to contemplate the precious promises He has made to you. The rapture is not an escape from tribulation, only God's wrath to come. The promise of Jesus' return is not for the purpose of enabling you to endure the present while waiting, it is to be motivation to live boldly here and now for His glory in expectation to be found walking worthy of Him when He returns. It is an assurance that nothing can separate you from His love or your final destination. According to 1 Corinthians 11, we practice Communion because it shows forth His death until He comes. Please take a few moments to reflect and pray in preparation for it.

Introduction

The Crowds

The Capital

The Loss

The Judgment

Daniel 9; Romans 1:18-32

The Plan

Preparing for the Future

The Concern - 1 Thessalonians 4:13

Review: Pleas and exhortation to walk to please God - _____ still more

God's will: Your _____ - abstain from sexual immorality, walk in sexual purity

Love the brethren - excel still more / _____

Live in a quiet fashion, mind your business, _____ with your hands so that you will not have need

Asleep / _____ for died: κοιμωμένων / koimōmenōn

False doctrine of "Soul sleep" - souls have mental _____ after death (2 Cor. 5:6-8; Phil. 1:2; Luke 16)

Grief: the deep pain of _____ within the soul

Hope _____ grief, it does not eliminate it

Christians are to properly grieve which includes showing _____ to one another

Secular theories of grief vary and people _____ have to go through their "stages of grief" to be healthy

The Belief - 1 Thessalonians 4:14

The death, burial & Resurrection of Jesus Christ are the _____ of our faith (1 Cor. 15:3-4, 17-20)

God would bring the souls of those who had already *fallen asleep in Jesus* _____

The Promise - 1 Thessalonians 4:15

This doctrine comes from _____ via Paul (See 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:15-16)

The "coming," παρουσία / parousia: general meaning of either "to be _____" or "to have come" (arrival)

Paul includes _____ among those that could be "alive and remaining" at the presence of the Lord's coming

Imminence: The Lord could come at _____ - we are to be ready & eagerly anticipating the Lord's return

The Future Fulfillment - 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Sequence of events: descent, shout, voice, trumpet, dead rise, alive raptured, meet, eternity

Jesus return is not hidden, it is will be _____ to all (Rev. 1:7)

Dead in Christ precede those alive & remaining - both received imperishable & _____ bodies (1 Cor 15)

Rapture, from Latin "*rapers*" translates ἁρπάζω / harpadzo = caught up / _____ up

Occurs at / near beginning of Daniel's 70th week, the Tribulation period fits _____

Pre-Tribulational view fits " _____ " passages (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Revelation 3:10)

Various Mid-Tribulational and Post-Tribulational views _____ in Biblical support

All believers meet the Lord in the _____ and will be with Him forever more

The Comfort - 1 Thessalonians 4:18

In this context, παρακαλέω / parakaleō, (call alongside) is to _____

These promises give us _____ in the present and the future dealing with death of others or facing our own

Promises of future in eternity give hope transcending _____ tribulation & giving purpose to life

Final Thoughts

It is hard to see the _____ of a nation that you love

We grieve, but we still have hope in Jesus Christ and we are _____

The rapture should motivate us to _____ for Christ in the here and now since I know my future

KIDS KORNER – Parents, you are responsible to apply God’s Word to your children’s lives. Here is some help. Young Children – draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. Older Children – count how many times the word “hope” is used. Talk with your parents about the hope the Christian can have in the promises of Christ for eternity with Him.

THINK ABOUT IT – Questions to consider in understanding the sermon and its application. What was your previous understanding of the events in Washington, D.C. on January 6 before hearing eye witness testimony? Any changes to your understanding? What do you expect from the new government forming? Why do you think God is judging our nation? What do you think you need to do to prepare for it? Should we fear persecution? Explain. What were Paul’s please and encouragements in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12? How are you doing at living in the manner he describes? Anything need to change? If so, when will you do it? Why is “asleep” a fitting euphemism for death? How is the doctrine of “soul sleep” contrary to the Scriptures? Have you seen people who have no hope grieve? Describe. Should Christians grieve? If not, why not? If so, what is proper? How does hope change grief? Are secular theories of grief helpful or hindrances? How can you help someone who is grieving? Why would belief in Jesus’ death and resurrection give them hope concerning those that had already died? Where does the soul of the Christian go when your body dies? What is the source of Paul’s teaching? Why is that important? What is the sequence of events that occur at Jesus’ coming according to this passage? How does Paul’s inclusion of himself as among those that could be living and remaining help us to understand the timing of the rapture in relationship to the Tribulation? How public will the Lord’s return be? (Some cults claim it will be hidden). What is the meaning of “rapture?” What will happen to the physical bodies of those who “are asleep in Christ” at the rapture? What will happen to the physical bodies of those who are alive and remain at the rapture? Why is it more reasonable that the rapture will occur at the beginning of the Tribulation period than in the middle or at the end? How does this doctrine comfort those who were grieving? How can this doctrine encourage you when facing tribulation in this life? How can this doctrine help you face the future of what life will be like in this nation in the future?

