

I THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

Humor: Joy's comment on fish, "They are not dead. They have fallen asleep."

Introduction: "What happens after death" is the most crucial question which troubled the hearts of many.

Hinduism: Most Hindus believe that humans are in a cycle of birth, death and rebirth called samsara. When a person dies, their atman is reborn in a different body, may be even reborn in an animal form. When you achieve *moksha*, the atma will be delivered from the cycle of death and rebirth and will become one with Brahman.

Islam: Most Muslims believe that when they die, they will stay in their graves until the Day of Judgement. On that day, they will be raised from their graves and brought before Allah and judged on how they lived their earthly lives. Jannah (Paradise) is a place described as a 'garden of everlasting bliss' (eating, drinking, rest, very beautiful girls). But there is no assurance of salvation. You don't know where you will be. It is said that even Muhammad was not sure of his own salvation. Allah judges arbitrarily.

Atheism: Life ceases after death. One Atheist claims, "I have always felt that when I die, I am dead and gone, my conscious life will end, my interactions with others will end, and I will be simply GONE. I don't know what causes consciousness but I expect that it will end. My afterlife will be in the memories of those I knew, those who loved me, those who carry me on in their hearts. I, myself, cease to exist."

There was an inscription in Thessalonica which read: "After death, no reviving, after the grave, no meeting again." The Greek poet Theocritus wrote, "Hopes are among the living; the dead are without hope."

- ❖ **Acts 17:11**, Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this."

Scripture for Exposition: I Thessalonians 4:13-18

- ❖ **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**, But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Background: The basic theme of this epistle is the salvation and sanctification of the Thessalonians. After exhorting them about the sexual purity (1-8), brotherly love (9-10), and lazy behavior (11-12), Paul shifts to write about *Parousia* (The Second Coming of Jesus Christ).

- By reading the passage, we get the impression that the Thessalonians expected the Lord's coming within their lifetime. When other believers died, they were perplexed. What would happen to those who die before the Lord's second coming?

There are four truths to observe for our meditation and obedience:

I. THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS

Scripture: I Thessalonians 4:13, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope."

I.1 BELIEVERS MUST NOT LIVE IN IGNORANCE ABOUT THE RESURRECTION (OF THE DEAD).

- ❖ **I Thessalonians 4:13**, "But we do not want you to be **uninformed** (agnoeō—
ಅಗ್ನೌಯೆಡ—ignorant, no knowledge), brothers (all believers), about those who are asleep..
 - Do you know what would happen to those after they die? Will they immediately enter into the Lord's presence or will they fall into soul sleep?
 - Do you know what happens at the Lord's second coming?
 - Do you know who are the dead in Christ who will rise first?
 - Do you know what is rapture and when does that take place?
 - Do you know when will the judgment be? What judgment will be there for believers?
- Note:** It is not God's will for you to remain ignorant about such things.
- ❖ **Acts 17:11**, "Now these Jews (in Berea) were more noble (open-minded and not easily deceived) than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."
 - ❖ Modern believers are just concerned for their prayers to be answered, their 'felt needs' to be met, and their personal problems to be solved. They don't want to probe and learn the Christian doctrines and practices, which makes them strong in their faith. *Consequence? No maturity and prone to deception.*
 - ❖ Despite the great advancement in technology and literature, in spite of plenty of Christian resources available, many modern Christians are ignorant about many issues taught in God's Word.
- ❖ **2 Timothy 3:16**, "**All Scripture** is breathed out by God and **profitable for teaching...**" Why teaching? Because God doesn't want us to be ignorant.
 - ❖ Church is not an entertainment club or a blessing center; it is an educational society devoted to build God's people on God's Word.
 - ❖ **Samuel Chadwick (1860-1932):** "No man is uneducated who knows the Bible, and no one is wise who is ignorant of its teachings."

- ❖ Show “Systematic Theology” by Wayne Grudem: *“I have not written this book for other teachers of theology. I have written it for students—and not only for students, but also for every Christian who has a hunger to know the central doctrines of the Bible in greater depth.”*

1.2 BELIEVERS ARE ASLEEP WHEN THEY DIE. THEY ARE NOT DEAD LIKE OTHERS.

- Metaphorical expression—temporal sleep and then awake.
 - ❖ **John 11:11**, “Our friend Lazarus has **fallen asleep**, but I go to awaken him.”
- **But this does not mean ‘soul sleep’** (remain in the state of unconsciousness in the grave until the Lord comes)

Note: Three times the word asleep is used in 1 Thessalonians 3:13-15,

- ❖ **1 Thessalonians 4:13**, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are **asleep**...(present tense participle...about those who are sleeping)
- ❖ **1 Thessalonians 4:14**, “God will bring with him those who have fallen **asleep**.”
- ❖ **1 Thessalonians 4:15**, “we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen **asleep**.”
 - **Ray C. Stedman** (20th century’s pastor and expository preacher): Asleep (Koimao) is never used in the New Testament of anyone but believers. It never says of a non-believer when he died that he “fell asleep.” There is a wonderful lesson in that. It shows that death, for the believer, is nothing more than sleep. When your loved ones fall asleep you do not run to the phone and dial 911 for emergency service for them. You know that they are quietly resting, that they will awaken again, and that you will have contact with them again soon. That is why the New Testament regards the death of believers as nothing but sleep.

1.3 BELIEVERS’ LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER AS SEEN IN THEIR GRIEF.

- ❖ **1 Thessalonians 4:13**, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, **about those who are asleep**, that **you may not grieve** as others do who have no hope.”
- **Jeffrey Peterson in his commentary of Thessalonians:** The letters present the Thessalonian church as a community with strong internal bonds, most poignantly indicated by the grief occasioned when members of the community died (1 Thess. 4:13).
- **John MacArthur:** Many of the Thessalonians expected the Lord to come in their lifetime and were confused and grieved when their fellow believers died before His coming.
- **Paul Washer:** One of the truths that most stands out to me when I read this text is love. Love for each other. These believers so loved the other believers who already died that they could not even bear the thought of eternal bliss without them. This is

the way they loved and so Paul encourages them not to grieve as those who do not have hope.

- Do we have such love for one another? How do we respond when someone is seriously sick? What is our response when someone in our community dies?
- **Illustration:** Lazarus friend was a convert from a Hindu background for four years. His wife was not yet converted. He suddenly died in his office from a heart attack. He was a part of a mega church. None from the church was there to help for the burial or to comfort his unbelieving wife. The unbelievers helped in sending the body to his hometown.

I.4 BELIEVERS MUST NOT GRIEVE LIKE OTHERS WHO HAVE NO HOPE.

I.4.1 Paul isn't saying we must not grieve at all.

- ❖ **Acts 8:2**, “Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.”

I.4.2 Paul's point is not to grieve like others who have no hope.

- **Fear**—expectation of evil; **Hope**—expectation of good. What hope? Resurrection of the dead. We will see this later in detail.
- Others (unsaved) have no hope of resurrection, i.e. eternal life with glorified bodies.
- Death on earth for a Christian is birthday in heaven.
- **D.L. Moody (great evangelist)**, “Someday you will read in the papers, 'D. L. Moody of East Northfield is dead.' Don't you believe a word of it! "At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now.”
- But what is the basis for the resurrection of believers?