

*Edgemont Bible Church*  
*Pastor Al Osden*  
*Thessalonians*

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Intro: Unlike most modern day discussions on Eschatology, Paul speaks more as a Pastor than a theologian in dealing with this issue. The Thessalonians were months old in the Lord under difficult persecutions. They had lost loved ones. Paul had taught them about end times, the Lord's return 1:9-10; 2:19; 3:13 and about the Day of the Lord 5:1-3. But as young Christians, they may have confused some of the issues especially with the difficulties that they were suffering 3:3-4. First, it seems that they were afraid that they had missed the Rapture and were in the midst of the Day of the Lord which was a surprise to them 2 Thess 2:1-2. Plus there were false teachers furthering the confusions 2 Thess 2:2. Paul reassures them that persecution is normal and to be expected 3:3-4. Within all of this confusion, the Thessalonians seemed to be concerned for those who had died and whether or not they would participate or miss the rapture. Paul writes to alleviate confusion and concern. Vs 13, But I do not want you to be ignorant - ignorance is overcome through knowledge. Concerning those who have fallen asleep - **koimao** - can be used of normal sleep, more often refers to those who have died in Christ (vs 13-15; Mt 27:52; Jo 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Co 11:30; 15:6,18,20,51; 2 Pe 3:4). Paul deals with their concern. Paul's concern for them that they would remember their "Hope," "lest you sorrow as others who have no hope - Le 19:28; De 14:1-2; 2Sa 12:20. Grief is normal and should be experienced at and for the appropriate time - Jo 11:33,35; Ro 12:15. But because we have a hope that goes beyond the grave, we shouldn't sorrow as others without hope.

#### XI. What Happens to Christians When They Die?

##### A. The Foundation upon which the Rapture rests. - vs 14-15a

##### 1. The Death of Christ—vs 14a

a. For if - not a question of doubt, but better translated "Since" or "based on the fact"

b. we believe that Jesus died

i. doesn't use the concept of sleep for Christ

ii. Christ experienced all the dimensions of death for our sins

- the Physical

- the Spiritual - 2 Cor 5:21

- transforms death to sleep (for the body) for the believer

- when believers die, their spirits immediately go into the presence of the Lord - 2 Cor 5:9

##### 2. The Resurrection of Christ - vs 14b

a. indicates the Father's acceptance of His sacrifice in payment of the wages of sin

i. enabling Him to be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus - Ro 3:26

ii. and was raised because of our justification - Ro 4:25

- b. Even so - links the resurrection of Christ to ours - vs 14c
- i. Jo 14:19 "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.
  - ii. 1Co 6:14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.
  - iii. 1Co 15:23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.
  - iv. 2Co 4:14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.
- c. God will bring with Him - vs 14d
- i. Some see this as God will bring with Him the departed souls to be reunited with the resurrected bodies
  - ii. Others see God bringing all believers dead and living back to heaven with Him - seems to be the emphasis, though both are true
  - iii. What the passage doesn't teach is that He immediately returns with those saints to set up His kingdom. God has purposes for everything in its time
    - an event like this - taking all believers out of the world - must serve a purpose of God
    - the purpose must be in agreement with how God works
    - a post tribulation rapture does not serve any apparent purpose
      - the rapture of Mt 24:40-42; Lk 17:30-37 is of unbelievers
      - this is a gathering of the elect, but it is not the rapture - Mt 24:31; Mr 13:27
    - there is good reason within the purpose of God to deliver the elect from the time of the tribulation
      - they are already righteous
      - one of the purposes of the tribulation will be to punish unbelieving Israel and an unbelieving world
    - to deliver from the universal destruction that will come upon the earth during the tribulation would mean to remove them from not through - Mt 24:22; Mr 13:20; Rev 3:10
    - to deliver from the universal destruction of the tribulation before it starts would be consistent with how God worked with Lot, Noah – 2 Pe 2:9
    - a rapture that would result in fulfilling Jo 14:1-3 would require going to heaven afterwards
- d. in Jesus. - vs 14e – the condition or realm under which “those who sleep” were in when they died - 1Co 15:13,18,23

### 3. The Revelation of Christ - vs 15a

- a. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord,
- b. Jo 14:1-3 - "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

### B. The Participants of the Rapture - vs 15b

#### 1. Two groups of people will participate in the rapture

##### a. we who are alive and remain

- i. "We" would indicate (not prove) that Paul believed that he could be here for the rapture
- ii. he never predicted a time when the Lord would return – Mt 24:36; Acts 1:7
- iii. Paul taught as though he had a fervent hope that he would be one of those "who are alive and remain"

- Ro 13:11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

- Ro 8:23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

- 1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

- 1Co 15:51-52 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

- 1Co 16:22 If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come! (Maranatha)

- 1 Th 1:9b-10 how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

- 1Th 3:13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

- 1Th 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Tit 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

iv. Paul also realized that he might die before the rapture

- 1Co 6:14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

- Php 1:20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

- 2Ti 4:6-7 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

b. will by no means precede those who are asleep - vs 15c – the living will not have any precedence over those who have died before the rapture