

A Heavenly Homecoming

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Introduction: Most everyone in the western world knows about the Rapture of the Church. Knowing about something is different is not knowing it! I hope you understood that? That describes where the Thessalonians were and where many in the Church are today concerning the Rapture of the Church; we know about it but very few of us actually know it as doctrine. Our study of 1 Thessalonians brings us to one of the classic New Testament passages on the subject. I will cover half of it this week and the remaining portion in next week's study. Many have called this part of 1 Thessalonians the theme of the epistle. It is a thrilling and comprehensive revelation of the pretribulation rapture of the church. Let's take time to know the doctrine of the Rapture and realize the truth found in God's word about "A Heavenly Homecoming".

I. The Difference Jesus Makes v.13

1. We are not to be ignorant concerning the dead in Christ.
 - a. We are ignorant due to lack of teaching.
 - b. We are ignorant due to lack of listening.

2. We are not to grieve like those who have no hope; rejected Jesus.

Implication: Grieving for the Christian is different than for the non-Christian!

 - a. The Bible refers to "them which are asleep" (likens death to sleeping)
 - b. The Bible refers to "others which have no hope" (they have no expectation)

II. The Assurance Jesus Brings v.14

1. We have assurance that God will bring the dead in Christ with Jesus and those living at the time will not go before the dead in Christ.

Implication: The fact of Jesus death and resurrection assures the eventual resurrection of the dead in Christ.

 - a. Notice Christ died. (Jesus endured actual separation from God for the world's sins. "It is appointed unto man once to die, after this the judgment".)
 - b. Notice the Christian sleeps. (Through repentance and forgiveness of sin the Christian has death transformed into sleep).

III. The Authority Jesus Has v.v.15-17

Implication: The Lord Jesus has a personal interest in every Christian, He will personally come.

1. The Lord's personal word. (A direct revelation to the Church through the apostle we have the Lord's word) Many Christian family members have ask at a loved one's death how do I know; you have the Lord's word! The living at the Rapture will not be called first.
2. The Lord's personal return: (a) a shout (loud command from authority), (b) the voice of an archangel (the messenger of authority (Michael)), (c) the trumpet call of God (call of authority).
3. The Lord's personal call: (a) calls us up, (b) calls us permanently
We meet Jesus in the air, therefore He will lead us into heaven as the bridegroom leads His bride to the marriage supper.

IV. The Confidence Jesus Supplies v. 18

1. This should bring confidence (comfort and encouragement) over the doubters.

Implication: Doubters may sound convincing but Jesus supplies confidence.

There have always been doubters and nay sayers concerning the Rapture. Let the word of God have the final word in your heart.

Conclusion: The Rapture is imminent but that does not mean it is immediate. Our Christian loved ones who lay asleep in the cemetery (which means sleeping place) will be Raptured first then the living will follow. What do we do in the meantime? We stay obedient to the Lord's instructions; we continue the Great Commission. There is no time for the Church to develop a lazy mindset, many are lost today and must be reached with the gospel. All of them may not accept Christ but if only one does it will be worth our effort and expense. Let's renew our commitment to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and walk away realizing any day, even today could be the day Jesus calls us to the clouds for "A Heavenly Homecoming".