

FAITH BIBLE FELLOWSHIP of Fairfield Glade

Pastor ~ David M. Evangelista ~ March 8, 2009

"The Comfort of His Coming" ~ I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Many believers in Thessalonica were concerned about their loved ones who had passed away because they learned that the Lord would come again. What about them? The apostle Paul answers these questions and many more. He based his encouragement and comfort on five fundamental facts:

1. **Revelation** of God's truth.
2. **Return** of Christ's coming again.
3. **Resurrection**: the Christian dead will rise.
4. **Rapture** Living believers will be caught up. Christians will be forever with the Lord.
5. **Reunion** (*See I Thessalonians 4:13-15*). Philosophers have wrestled with the question of immortality--spiritists have tried to communicate with the dead--scientists have investigated the experiences of people who claimed to have died and returned to life again. They came up with no satisfactory answers! Paul solved the problem when he wrote: "**For this we say unto you by the WORD OF THE LORD.**" No guesses here! Final authority on this subject is found in the Lord God!

1.) Revelation: We born-again Christians need not wonder about death or life after death because we have a **revelation** from His word! His revelation is based on the historic fact of our Lord's resurrection.

2.) Return: Paul made it clear that the soul of the departed believer went to be with the Lord--those who sleep in Jesus God will bring with him (4:14). The fact of our Lord's return is comfort to us in the time of bereavement because we know that He will bring with Him His people who have died in the Lord.

3.) Resurrection: The Christian dead will rise! (*Verses 15-16*). When Paul preached the doctrine of the resurrection to the philosophers from Athens, some of them sneered and mocked him. To the Greeks, being rid of the body was their great hope! After all, who would want to have his sick decrepit run down body back! When our Lord returns in the air, He will issue "the shout of command" and "the dead in Christ will rise first (*see verse 16*). They shall have new bodies! Resurrection does not mean that He will put the elements of the old body together again--because resurrection is not reconstruction! The resurrection of the human body is like the growing of a plant from a seed. Born-again Christians will receive glorified bodies like the glorified body of our Lord Jesus. (*See Philippians 3:20-21*).

4. Rapture: Living believers will be caught up. The word "rapture" is not found in Scripture, but that is the literal meaning of "caught up", found in I Thessalonians 4:17. When the Lord returns in the air, we who are alive will be caught away quickly, in the "*twinkling of an eye!*"

5. Reunion: Christians will forever be with the Lord! (*See I Thessalonians 4:17-18*). It will be a glorious meeting because we shall have glorified bodies. The suffering we endure today will be transformed into glory when He returns! It will be an everlasting meeting for we shall forever be with the Lord!

Application: Walk in this promise! Death is a fact of life. The only way we can escape death is to be alive when the Lord Jesus returns. Remember, death is not an accident; it is an appointment! There is a quaint inscription on a gravestone in an old British cemetery--it reads as follows:

"Pause, my friend, as you walk by; as you are now so once was I. As I am now, so you will be. Prepare, my friend, to follow me!" There was a visitor who read that epitaph and added these lines: *"To follow you is not my intent, until I know which way you went!"* We Christians have wonderful assurance and hope, because of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and His promised return. Are we ready for His return? (See Acts 16:31 and John 3:12).

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