

Paul's Letters to the **Thessalonians**



Lesson 5-Death and Christ's Coming!

Focus: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

- **Instructions and counsel on the subject of death and the Second Coming! (v.13-18)**
 - *Today we'll pick up our lesson from verse 13 of chapter 4.*
 - (v.13-15) Here the apostle begins to instruct on the subject of death and the Second Coming. This subject is NOT something that we should be "ignorant" about. Paul here insisted that the brethren should not be ignorant of it! He pointed out that the dead are "sleeping" but that their day of awake is coming! We should not sorrow as those who have no hope! Christ Jesus was dead, but was then resurrected to life! That is our hope! Christ "was dead" but now He is "alive forevermore!" He holds the keys to death and the grave for He Himself has overcome it! **(Revelation 1:18)**. Our hope looks to the resurrection! We, like Christ, the Apostles, the Jews of Old, and even the faithful man Job, should all have our eyes upon the bodily resurrection as our hope of seeing the immortal life—eternity!
 - **Christ and the Bible writers called death a "sleep." Over 53 different times, in 17 different books of the Bible we can find it mentioned that way!** That's how Jesus pictured it. Just look at the Bible's verses pointing to it (**John 11:11-14**, 23-27; **Job 19:25-27**; **1 Corinthians 15:16-23**, 51-55). Wise old King Solomon said, "...the dead know nothing" (**Ecclesiastes 9:5,6**), and they have "no part in anything done under the sun." Death is an unconscious state like sleep. The dead know nothing, the Bible says. They cannot come back to haunt or interact with the living. (Only Satan and his evil angels can attempt to interact with the living—**Rev. 16:14**, but they cannot get past God's barriers and protection, which is why it's important for us to always obey God and to not step outside of His protective barriers). King David said to God in prayer, "No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave?" (**Psalms 6:4, 5**). Jesus tells us that we will not get to be with Him or to experience our eternal rewards until He comes again—that was His promise (**John 5:28,29; 14:1-3**). Christ says the time "IS coming" when the dead who're in their graves will all hear His voice and come to life. Some for eternal life and others for their condemnation. None are experiencing their eternal rewards yet. Christ will "come again" to receive us all to himself. Why should He need to come again and resurrect anyone, if everybody was already there! He wouldn't.
 - (v.14-18) Paul reminds believers not to sorrow as those who are hopeless in the world! We truly have a blessed hope in Christ! **Christ overcame the grave—therefore we also know that through Him we shall experience the same!!** We are not hopeless. In the world, there is not much of any hope except a cold and dark grave for eternity. But, in Jesus, there is the true promise of life everlasting! Paul says that our resurrection will be just like as with Jesus' resurrection—a real event! (v.14). Also, the living will not "precede" the dead or go first (v.15), but actually both the living and dead Christians will meet the Lord at the same time, "in the air." This is because the dead will rise first! The all are caught up to meet Christ at His coming! At the very time when Jesus comes with a Trumpet blast, the "dead in Christ" will rise to life and we'll all meet the Lord in the air together! No one ever goes before. We should remember and comfort with these words!
- **A Little History—Where did the idea of the immortal soul come from?**

- *Many Christians today believe that when one dies, they will go consciously to heaven immediately from the point of death. However, that is not what we've seen here. The Bible says "the dead know nothing!" In fact, the Bible uses the word "soul" over 950 times in the Bible and never once uses the phrase "immortal" in connection with the soul. The idea "immortal soul" does not exist in the Bible. In fact, it says, just the opposite. "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). The Bible says that God "...alone has immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16). If God alone has it, then that means that we don't! In fact, the Bible says that we "seek" for immortality (Romans 2:7). Why should we seek for something we already have? (That is in fact is we had it, but we don't). Clearly, this gift is bestowed upon people at the second coming of Christ (See 1 Corinthians 15:51-54).*
- So, where then did this idea of an immortal soul come from? Well, it first came out of the mouth of the serpent back in Genesis!! God said if people ate the fruit they would "surely die" (**Genesis 2:17**). Satan on the other hand though said, "You shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). Satan basically said, you won't really die, you're immortal. He has always suggested the lie to man since then that in dying, you do not really die, but rather you just continue to exist in some other form! Nothing could be farther from the truth! Death is Death! That's what God said. It is entirely the opposite of life or conscious existence! God formed Adam from the dust of the ground and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life! Then Adam "became a living soul" (**Genesis 2:7**). Adam "became" a living soul, by the combination of the dust or body and life from God. He did not exist before, and apart from God's life, and a body formed from the dust, man is nothing. Dust + Breath of Life = A Living Soul. Death is the opposite. See **Ecclesiastes 12:7**. When man dies his body goes back to the dust and the breath of life returns to God who gave it (compare the idea of the breath of life with Job 27:3 for more clarity. KJV makes an interesting point of it). The identity of man is then stored in the hands of God until the resurrection when He brings us back to life. Even Christ Jesus trusted his life and personal identity into the hands of God the Father at His death (See Luke 23:46). But that didn't mean that he was consciously going to see God on that day; Christ didn't see the Father again until after His resurrection on Sunday morning (John 20:17).
- The idea of the immortal soul has been passed down by almost every pagan culture and spiritualist since the time Satan first uttered those bewitching words to Eve. The Egyptians, the Greeks, the Native Americans, the Celts, etc. They've all put their hopes upon the false notion that death would not really be death, but merely some type of transition or continued life in another form—a life that never ended. Socrates and Plato kept this idea very much alive in the Greco-Roman culture. In the middle ages it was adopted by the Roman Catholic church as being their official doctrine on death—although mixed with the ideas of heaven and hell, plus Purgatory or Limbo. Several ambiguous verses of Scripture were painted to be used in support of the notion while others were clearly ignored. The idea has remained official doctrine within many of the protestant churches who came out of the Roman church from the Reformation. Many Christians who've studied their Bible's very thoroughly have realized it just plain isn't the truth. Death is really death—just like God said! (the opposite of existence).

Question (s) for the Heart:

Is it your desire to trust your life fully into God's hands and to meet Him peacefully at His coming?
