

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 20, 2021 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

CATCHING CHRISTIAN: A Study of 1 Thessalonians

“On That Great Getting’ Up Mornin’”
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

“¹³ But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.” -1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NKJV)

END TIME EVENT <i>Below is a list of supposed end-times events, words, or ideas commonly espoused</i>	BIBLICAL <i>Is it in the Bible? If so check the box</i>	NOT BIBLICAL <i>If it's not in the Bible check this box</i>	DOGMA <i>Should we be dogmatic about this view/event?</i>
Second coming of Christ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Premillennialism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The millennial reign of Christ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-tribulationalism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rapture <i>*although the word never appears in the Bible the concept does</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Great White Throne Judgement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Battle of Armageddon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postmillennialism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eschatology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amillennialism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Antichrist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post-tribulationalism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Apocalypse	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Panmillennialism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Mark of the Beast	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Four View of the Endtimes

Historical Premillennialism, Dispensational Premillennialism, Amillennialism, Postmillennialism

Some questions to consider:

- (1) Why should I look forward to Christ's return?
- (2) What scares you the most about end times discussions and talk?
- (3) Why do some people shy away from talking about the second coming and the end times?
- (4) Why do you think some people so obsess over the end times and Bible prophecy?
- (5) Do you feel that end times discussion and an over emphasis on the end times can be discouraging to some? Why or why not?
- (6) Is end times talk and Bible prophecy emphasis helpful in drawing other to Christ or does it push them away? Why?
- (7) Is teaching on the end times and Bible prophecy important? Why?
- (8) Is an over emphasis on the end times unhelpful? Why or why not?
- (9) How do achieve a healthy balance when it come to the end times and Bible prophecy?
Why is it important to be balanced in this area?
- (10) Why don't I look forward to Christ's return?

For centuries, thoughtless fanatics have littered the path of Christianity... especially those who have earned the label "prophecy fanatics." Most of them have been well-intentioned, highly intense souls who have found it almost impossible to retain their equilibrium with the subject of the future and future events. As a consequence, they have left in their wake messes of tragic proportions, the worst of which has been the reactionary fallout. These "fanatics" have consistently turned scores of people away from Christ, His church and away from the Bible's prophetic message. Instead of sifting through the hype and abuse of God's prophetic message in His Word, many people have reacted by discounting and even scoffing at the Biblical picture of the future... essential the "over-fanaticism" of some believers with the end-times has so turned so many away that they mock the whole idea. Unfortunate and tragic! Christians today need to take a sane and sober...a more balanced approach to God's plan for the events yet to come, for end time events, prophecy and the such. We'll take a brief look at it in this study. And although we will uncover no dates, nor discover every future event spelled out in detail, we will learn enough to help us live more wisely in the here and now while we anxiously await the yet to come.

EXTREMES WE NEED TO GUARD AGAINST

The return of Christ is the most mentioned event in all of Scripture. In the New Testament alone, it is referred to over 300 times. Indeed, the Lord's final recorded words in the Bible concern His imminent return (Rev. 22:20). Unfortunately, this Biblical truth has been met with two extreme reactions that we need to avoid.

2 Extreme Reactions to the Second Coming that Chrstians Should Avoid:

1. **Fanatical Overemphasis and Preoccupation** – This reaction characterizes those individuals who go off the deep end concerning prophecy. They often try to set a date when Christ will return, even though He said centuries ago that such prediction were doomed to fail (Matthew 24:36, Acts 1:6-7). These people usually see prophetic significance in every news headline and contemporary events. Their vision is so fixed on Christ's coming and related future events that they are generally irresponsible when it comes to present, earthly matters.
2. **Theological Ignorance and Disinterest** – The other extreme is to be completely unaware or disinterested in the Savior's imminent return. People who react in this way do not realize or care that the events of history are occurring in accordance with God's infallible timetable. All too often, their lack of heavenly mindedness seriously hinders their evangelistic zeal, personal purity, and exercise of hope in a better life beyond their earthly one.

Christians must seek a balance in the area of prophecy. Those who are future minded in a Scriptural way are of more present good than those who go to one extreme of the other.

TRUTHS WE CAN COUNT ON

The first step to achieving balance in prophetic matters is to consult the Scriptures. Only there are we provided with the clear, trustworthy revelation of what God desires for us to know about His future plans. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 presents us with some of this material. In fact, these verses were written to bring a balanced perspective to some early Christians who had gone to extremes concerning Christ's return. The passage was also written to settle the fear of other believers who apparently had been told that deceased Christians would not be resurrected when Christ returned. The bottom line is that this text does not venture into fanatical speculation; rather it, sets forth prophetic truth that we can count on no matter what.

¹³ But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words." -1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NKJV)

3 Truths We Can Count On:

1. **Regarding our death and resurrection (vv.13-14)** – *¹³ But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.* Some Christians in Thessalonica had been misinformed "concerning those who have fallen asleep" – in other words, those Christians who had already died. These deceased believers were with the Lord spiritually (2 Corinthians 5:6-8, Philippians 1:23), but their bodies were physically "asleep" in the earth. The Apostle Paul wanted to give the ill-informed believers the data needed to handle their grief over deceased brethren with a sense of hope. This would be quite unlike the grief experience by unbelievers, for many non-Christians believe that there is no life after death; therefore, they

have not tomorrow to look forward to... no expectation that one day they will be reunited with the ones they deeply miss. Christians, however, need not despair through the intense pain felt because of the death of a Christian loved one. They can have hope in the midst of their sorrow and hurt. On what basis? Notice verse 14, ***“¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.”*** Our hope, as Christians, is grounded in the historical fact of Christ’s physical death and bodily resurrection from the dead. When individuals put their trust in the Savior, we can rest assured that death will not close the book on their lives. Rather, death for them will eventually result in their resurrection from the grave to everlasting life with Christ. And what effect will this resurrection have on a Christian’s body? Plenty! The decay, disease, and weaknesses that plague our bodies now will be stripped away. Our perishable and mortal bodies will become imperishable and immortal. The things that tear and wear us down will no longer have a grip on us. When Christ returns, He will upgrade all His people to the status of Christlikeness, even in their own bodies (1 Corinthians 15:50-55, 1 John 3:2).

2. **Regarding Christ’s coming and others’ joining (vv.15-17)** – ***“¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*** In these verses God unveils the specific order of events accompanying Christ’s return. Let’s examine them in the order they are given here, which is also the sequence in which they will occur in human history.

Sequence of order of events at Christ’s return:

- (1) **Christ will return to earth (v.16a)** – ***“¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God...”*** Presently, Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven (Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3). At the time that has been set by the Father (Acts 1:6-7), Christ will leave His position and “descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch angel, and with the trumpet of God.” The dramatic and majestic events accompanying His return will certainly be worthy of the King of kings and Lord of lords.
- (2) **Deceased Christians will rise from their graves (v.16b)** – The last part of **verse 16** says, ***“...And the dead in Christ will rise first.”*** Exactly how God will reassemble and resurrect these believers is not mentioned. But that He has the power and knowledge to do it is beyond question. After all, anyone who could create the entire universe from nothing (John 1:3) and sustain the whole created order in existence (Colossians 1:17) could certainly manage some bodily resurrections.
- (3) **Living Christians will be transported with resurrected Christians to meet Christ “in the air” (v.17a)** – Notice the first part of **verse 17**, ***“...¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”*** At this time, the bodies of all living believers will be changed to imperishable and immortal bodies... just like those of the resurrected believers (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Of course, the Rapture will occur “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” but the point is that it will happen just as God says it will.

(4) **All resurrected and raptured Christians will be with Christ forever (v.17b)** – Look at the last part of **verse 17, “...And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”** Never will they be able to lost their new life with the Lord. They will be secured in Him forevermore.

3. **Regarding confidence and comfort (v.18)** – The conclusion of this great prophetic passage seems only natural... notice **verse 18, “¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.”** Notice that it does not say that the wonderful truths should prompt us to set dates, sell our possessions, and watch for Christ’s return from the highest mountain. Nor does it suggest that we should go our merry way without paying any further regard to these future events. Rather, God wants us to take this knowledge and use it to comfort and encourage each other. When we grieve, we need to be encouraged with these truths so that our sorrow will be permeated with hope, not despair. We can find strength in the fact that one day our Lord will call us home to be with Him forever... strength even when we experience mistreatment, wonder whether our evangelistic efforts are worthwhile, or become tired of struggling against temptation.

OUR RESPONSE TO CHRIST’S SOON COMING

How can we prepare for the Lord’s imminent return? What is an appropriate response to this assured prophetic event? Paul tell us in Titus 2:11-13,

“¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” – Titus 2:11-13

In Titus 2:11-13 we can find a simple, threefold answer on how to prepare for the Lord’s imminent return and an appropriate response to this event that is sure to happen...

3 Essential Way to Be Prepared for the Lord’s Return:

1. **Make certain that you have personally received the salvation God has provided for you (v.11)** – Through Jesus Christ, God has made it possible for all sinners... including you... to be pardoned from their sins. Your pardon has been secured by Christ, who willingly chose to pay for your death sentence by giving up His own life for yours. However, your pardon does not become effective until you accept Christ’s payment for your sins. When you do trust His death, God will grant your pardon and give you everlasting life. Not until you take this step of faith will you ever be able to have a firm hope that will carry you through this life and into the life beyond.
2. **Continue to resist and stand firm against a corrupt lifestyle (v.12)** – Don’t let Christ’s sudden return catch you off guard. Keep on preparing for His coming by constantly fighting against **“ungodliness and worldly lusts.”** Paul even tells us how, **“... we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.”**
3. **Live in a sensible, and godly manner in the meantime (v.13)** – Don’t fall prey to prophetic fanaticism or ignorance. Instead, mature in a lifestyle that brings God glory and honor in the present, while you anxiously await, **“blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.”**