

Hope Fueled Contentment

4:13-5:11

vs. 13-15, We do not want you to be uninformed.

What will happen to those who have recently died? Will they be separated from Jesus?

Answer: They will be united with you (the church) and with Jesus.

Those who have fallen asleep.

Matthew 9:23-26 When Jesus came to the leader's house, he saw the flute players and a crowd lamenting loudly. **24** "Leave," he said, "because the girl is not dead but asleep." And they laughed at him. **25** After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. **26** Then news of this spread throughout that whole area.

Fact: the girl was dead

The Point: Death is no match for the life giving power of Jesus.

Those who have been transformed by the gospel will experience the resurrection life. This is why believers can grieve with hope.

Majority worldview of the residents of Thessalonica: Death is simply ceasing to exist. "Into nothing from nothing how quickly we go." ~ Roman Grave Marker

vs. 15-17, Words of comfort

Early Christian thought connected hope to the "Day of the Messiah."

Philippians 1:10 so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ,

Philippians 2:16 by holding firm to the word of life. Then I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn't run or labor for nothing.

1 Corinthians 15:23 But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, at his coming, those who belong to Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:8 and then the lawless one will be revealed. The Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and will bring him to nothing at the appearance of his coming.

2 Peter 3:12-13 as you wait for the day of God and hasten its coming. Because of that day, the heavens will be dissolved with fire and the elements will melt with heat. **13** But based on his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

The emphasis for Paul is not on the "current state of the dead" but his focus is to tell the church what lies ahead.

The imagery he uses is vivid and grand!

Apocalyptic writing - literary genre that foretells supernaturally inspired cataclysmic events that will transpire at the end of the world.

God's people are hard wired to have an Apocalyptic Imagination.

Assumptions:

- God will not let human sin and the power of evil consume the world he created.
- God will break into time and space in a radically powerful way to reset the balance of power and restore all that has turned to chaos.

Isaiah 63 & 64

Story of Exile

- The people of God rebel.
- Suffering that takes place because of foreign oppression.
- Where is God? Israel crying out in pain.
- They created this mess all on their own.
- God is true to his promises and shows his compassion.
- God comes to their aid.

Isaiah 64:1 If only you would tear the heavens open and come down, so that mountains would quake at your presence—

Key elements to an Apocalyptic Perspective

1. Cosmology - there is much more going on in our world than we can see. (vs. 16)
- Ephesians 6:11** Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil.
2. Revelation - a window is given into the future. (vs. 15)
3. Eschatology - knowledge of significant future events. There is hope that all believers will be together with Jesus. (vs. 15-17)
4. Dualism and Conflict - There is a battle of good versus evil.
Daniel and Revelation (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, 2:8)
5. Divine Sovereignty - God has ultimate power over evil.
This is Paul's confidence as he writes the Thessalonians (4:15, 5:24)
6. Radical Transformation - What God intends to do in the future will change everything. God's work is not yet complete (already / not yet). Forever together with our Savior! (vs. 17)

Remember: Paul is addressing real situations and real questions and concerns that are coming from the Thessalonians.

Key word in verse 16, First
The dead in Christ will rise first.

Specificity related to their friends dying as martyrs.

If so, Paul is explaining that God would restore their honor and dignity even if it was taken from them at their death (the goal of the executioner).

vs. 17,

Caught up - this is where the idea of a rapture is rooted (to take away). If we look through the lens of "rapture" eschatology, Jesus' return (the first of two future appearances) involves a secret taking away of believers from the earth.

The other viewpoint is that Paul is describing a very public, visible, and loud return of Jesus. There will not be two appearances of Christ, but only one, the Day of the Lord.

Meet the Lord - Is Paul describing the concept of a dignitary arriving and the townspeople going to meet this person of importance with an honorary parade?

Notice the use of the word Lord (Kyrios / strong political connotation) in vs. 16 and 17.

"Paul evokes the scene to create an impressive image of the coming of the Lord. The Lord himself will give the command to start the parade. The beginning of the parade will be announced with the archangel's cry and a blast of the herald's trumpet. The Lord will be accompanied by 'all the saints,' the heavenly host. The arrival of the Lord descending from heaven and accompanied by hosts of angels will be an impressive sight." ~ Raymond F. Collins, *The Power of Images in Paul* (Quoted by Nijay Gupta, 1-2 Thessalonians: A New Covenant Commentary)

Because of many circumstances, the situation among the Thessalonian church seemed bleak. They are struggling with grief and on-going persecution.

Paul is responding to these realities.

1 Corinthians 15:52, 57 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 will be changed. **57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

vs. 18, Bring comfort to one another with these words.
To be with the Lord is to be beyond the reach of evil.
God will wipe away every tear.

Revelation 7:17 For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them; he will guide them to springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 21:4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.

Because of our hope we are people of action.

- Our posture is not to deal with life by just waiting to die and go to heaven.
- There is real conflict and we must engage. **Ephesians 6:12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.
- Prayer is a war-time walkie talkie. Life is serious. People are of great importance. The risk is great. The stakes are high.
- We must be aware of and know the enemy. We also must be aware of and know the resources we have (faith (loyalty), hope, and love).

Chapter Five - Our energy is not spent predicting.

Fact: Jesus will return. The day of the Lord will arrive.

Circumstance: It will be a surprise (like a thief in the night).

vs. 3, The world tries to mitigate risk in all kinds of ways.

vs. 4, But you, Brothers and Sisters, you won't be dismayed. You are not risk adverse.

Why?

vs. 5, You are children of light and children of the day.

vs. 6-7, You will be awake (you are aware) and self controlled.

Spiritual awareness - cultivating a relationship with the Holy Spirit who guides God's children into all the truth (John 16:13). It is the tangible evidence of spiritual growth (armor of God, worship).

Faith, love, and hope are the virtues that will diminish fear.

vs. 9-10, We are God's children and we will live together with him.

vs. 11, Be encouraged and be an encouragement to others!

Take Away:

- Know the enemy.
- Start, continue, and trust your training (Cultivate).
- Cooperate with your brothers and sisters.
- Be of one mind with those who care for you (leaders).
- Live your life in service to King Jesus.
- Live in a state of readiness.

Wholeness and Holiness