



Sermon Series: Facing the End Times. Part 2

Sermon Title: Exit Strategy

Date: 4/23/2023

Matthew 24:3–14, 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

These are signs of the Times. They invite us to live in holy anticipation of Christ's return. It should encourage us that God has revealed the exit plan.

Big Idea: Know God's exit plan, and you will face the end times with joy. His exit plan consists of 3 events on God's prophetic timeline.

Event #1. Christ's Return

1 Thessalonians 4:15–16

The coming of the Lord describes a 2-stage event, the first of which is Jesus' return for his church. Then, at the end of 7 years of Tribulation, Jesus will return with his church. The first part will not be visible. The next will be unmistakable. At that event, **Revelation 1:7** says, "Every eye will see him."

Event #2. The Resurrection of Dead Believers

1 Thessalonians 4:15–16

Paul wrote to new believers in Thessalonica. They were anxious about what had happened to their deceased relatives. The Thessalonians were products of Greek & Roman culture, which anticipated only a disembodied spirit existence after death. Paul corrects that misunderstanding based on Jesus' bodily resurrection.

If you die before Jesus returns, your soul (immaterial being) goes to be with the Lord. Not yet a glorified resurrection body like Jesus has. But when Christ returns, we will have bodies similar to his. **1 John 3:2**

It will happen in the twinkling of an eye (according to 1 Corinthians 15:52). The dead in Christ will rise up with immortal superior physical bodies. When Paul writes in **1 Thessalonians 4:16** that the dead in Christ

will rise, the word he uses literally means “to stand up.” You’ll stand up before you rise up.

And it’s not a reconstruction; rather, a transformation. You will come back in a new and much-improved body but with continuity between who you are now and what you will be in the resurrection. You’ll be the same but more impressive. **Philippians 3:21**

Dead believers will receive glorified bodies, and they will get them first before anyone else who is still alive does.

III. The Rapture of Living Believers

1 Thessalonians 4:17

The term “caught up” refers to a sudden snatching away. The rapture of the church is a sudden snatching away of believers. When Jesus returns at the rapture, believers who are alive will be instantly translated – changed from one condition to another – into a new body. And you won’t be alone. You will be surrounded by clouds of other believers.

If you know Jesus, you are His. He will come to claim you as his own. In the rapture, we will change physically (no more blind eyes, deaf ears, cancer), spiritually (your sanctification complete) in character, and instantly. No more struggles with a sin nature. **1 Thessalonians 4:17**

We’ll meet the Lord in the air. He will then take us to the place he’s prepared for us (John 14). He’ll ensure we see the new Jerusalem that will eventually be lowered to the new earth on which we will live (Revelation 21).

The best, even then, is yet to come. The rapture precedes an eternity that will be amazing. And those believing relatives and friends you now miss will be with you forever.

The rapture could happen at any moment. Nothing stands in the way. It remains today, 2000 years after Jesus' resurrection, an imminent expectation.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 (NIV) — Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Discussion Questions:

- **What about the sermon stuck with you this week? What part challenged you thinking?**
- **How does the world react when Christians discuss the rapture?**
- **How can belief in the rapture offer peace and joy to a believer?**
- **Do you pray for Jesus to return or do you want Him to wait so more people can get saved?**
- **Do you discuss the rapture with your unsaved friends? What is their response?**
- **Do you believe that Jesus will also rapture the children of believers?**