

The Return of Christ

Last week, we learned that death is not the end. Today, we anticipate the greatest event still to come: the return of Christ. The Thessalonian Christians were young in faith and uncertain about what happens when believers die. Paul comforts them, and us, by reminding us that Christians do not grieve like those who have no hope. Because Jesus died and rose again, those who belong to Him will be raised, the living will be transformed, and death itself will be defeated in victory.

I. The Dead Will Be Raised (1 Thessalonians 4:13–16; John 5:28–29)

- A. Paul writes, *We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, concerning those who are **asleep**, so that you will not grieve like the rest, who have no hope* (v. 13).
 - 1. Death is called “sleep” for the Christian; it is temporary, not final.
- B. *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a **shout**, with the archangel’s voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first* (v. 16). The Lord Himself will come in power, and His voice will awaken the dead.
- C. Jesus promised: *An hour is coming when all who are in the graves will hear his voice and **come out**—those who have done good things, to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked things, to the resurrection of condemnation* (John 5:28-29).
 - 1. Every person who has ever lived will be raised.

II. The Righteous Receive Glorified Bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51–53; Philippians 3:20–21)

- A. Paul calls this a “mystery”: *We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be **changed**, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet* (vv. 51–52). Whether alive or dead, all of God’s people will be transformed.
- B. *What is sown in corruption, is raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in **power*** (vv. 42–43). The body that is frail and weak will be raised in glory and strength.
- C. Philippians 3:21 tells us, *“He will **transform** the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body.”*
 - 1. Our new bodies will be patterned after Christ’s own resurrected body—fit for eternity, never again subject to decay or death.

III. Death Is Swallowed Up in Victory (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

- A. Paul says, *When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in **victory*** (v. 54).
- B. Death, the last enemy, has ruled over mankind since the garden of Eden. But through Jesus’ death and resurrection, the sting of death has been removed and the power of sin broken.
- C. That is why Paul can declare: *Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your **sting**?* (v. 55) The grave has no hold on the child of God.
 - 1. And so he praises: **Thanks** be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! (v. 57).

IV. As We Close

- A. The dead will be raised at the Lord’s coming.
- B. The righteous will be changed into glorious, eternal bodies.
- C. Death itself will be swallowed up forever.
 - 1. *Therefore **encourage** one another with these words* (1 Thessalonians 4:18).
 - 2. The return of Christ is not a threat to the believer—it is our greatest hope.