

The 2nd Coming of Christ

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[0:00] 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and verse 13, and we'll read through chapter 5 and verse 11. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God.

And the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage each other with these words. Now, brothers, about times and dates, we do not need to write to you, for you know very well, that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Well, people are saying, peace and safety. Destruction will come on them suddenly as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

[1:40] But you brothers are not in darkness, so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day.

We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then let us not be like others who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.

For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. Imagine a moonless night in the middle of December, we'll say 1944, and you're stationed at an outpost in the Ardenne Forest in eastern France.

[3:08] You've been fighting nonstop for the past six months, ever since your division landed on Normandy in June, and three days ago, a German sniper shot your best friend.

And you're cold, and the icy wind blows through your uniform, and you stomp your feet to try to keep off the frostbite.

And you're lonely, you're exhausted, and you're standing on guard duty. And you wonder, how much longer is this going to last?

When can I finally go home? And when can I see my wife again? I miss her so much, it's killing me. And it seems like I've been wearing this uniform and sleeping on the ground and fighting this war forever.

And as you ponder these things, something inside of you begins to die. Your hope dies. The Thessalonians were in a situation a lot like that.

[4:16] Their hope was beginning to wane, and they were discouraged. Some of their friends had died. Some of their best friends and some of their family had fallen asleep, as Paul says.

And things were not going as well as they would like them to go, at least according to their thinking. And they were confused. Apparently, they thought that those who had died were somehow not going to experience the full glory of Christ and His return.

We're not exactly sure what they were thinking. Maybe they weren't clear on the bodily resurrection of the saints. Maybe they were thinking that it was only the departed soul that got to experience everlasting bliss.

Maybe they thought the departed were gone, gone for good. And that was it. Either way, they were discouraged. And they were grieving like men who had no hope.

You see that in verse 13. Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep or to grieve like the rest of men.

[5:28] Why is Paul writing? He's writing to inform them because they're ignorant. And he's writing to inform them because their ignorance is causing them to grieve like the rest of men.

And in verses 14 through 17, he's going to tell them, inform them why they have hope. Why they have hope they're not to grieve like the rest of men.

And in verse 18, he's going to tell them what to do with that hope. When they've regained their hope, what should they be doing with it? So, as they are now, they're ignorant and they're grieving like the rest of men who have no hope.

And what a statement. What a statement. There's a lot of talk about hope out there in our world today. And much of it is nothing but false hope.

And it's proven false when people die. And then their hope is shattered. They have no hope after that. And you can see it in the way that they mourn, in the way they grieve.

[6:38] They grieve as people who don't expect anything else good to happen. Their dreams are in the dust. And then foolish men come. You've been to funerals.

You know how this works. Those foolish men come and they say things like how their ideals will live on forever. Or how they will live in our memories. Or something like that.

Hopeless nonsense, really. And the Greeks, they were much like modern man in a lot of ways. They didn't have hope either.

They thought the bodies of men disintegrated upon death. And they went into the ground. And then the person's soul became sort of like this thin, transparent replica of the body.

And that shade went into Hades. And when you read Homer's Odyssey, Homer, or Odysseus, actually goes into Hades. And repeatedly the words gloom and sadness over and over again.

[7:42] So that was death. That was the afterlife for a Greek. There was gloom and sadness. And the shades of dead men wandered around hopelessly.

Well, if you were a sophisticated Greek philosopher, you didn't think anything so barbaric, so idiotic as that, you might say.

You weren't so old-fashioned. You realized that that's what the country bumpkins, the illiterate people, thought. No, you stared reality in the face. And you realized that when a person dies, that's it.

The end was the end. And man had no soul. And when he died, that was it. History went on without you. So you were but an actor that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more.

Life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. And so they grieved as men with no hope because they had no hope.

[8:55] But what about modern man? What about evolutionary man? Do they have hope? Well, forgive me for this lengthy quote by Bertrand Russell.

He's a famous atheist philosopher. This is what he said. And see and hear the hopelessness of man without God.

That man is the product of causes which had no prevision. That is, no foresight of the end they were achieving. That his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs are but an outcome of accidental collocations.

That is, just things coming together. Of atoms. That no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave.

That all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius are destined to extinction and the vast death of the solar system.

[10:01] And that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of the universe in ruins. Only within this scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.

Unyielding despair. That is the outlook. That is the only possible outlook for a man without Jesus Christ.

And Paul answers that like a gunshot and he says, wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong.

Life is not safely built on the foundation of unyielding despair, of a foundation with no hope.

There is hope. There is hope for life after death. And there is hope for these bodies. These bodies that we are possessing right now. There is hope for this world.

And hope is the only firm foundation for us. So why can we have hope? Why can we have hope? So we look at our text.

[11:15] We can have hope because there is such a thing as bodily resurrection. There is such a thing as bodily resurrection. You see that in verse 14.

We believe that Jesus died and rose again. He died and he rose again. And the resurrection is an event that tears a gaping giant hole in the fabric of history.

It seems that again and again a person lives and a person dies and we see him no more. And again and again the event is repeated apparently. And that is how history goes.

And people struggle with hope. Because we are apparently all caught up in this grim nightmare where we die and we are no more.

And we are never seen again. And into that reality, into that apparent reality, Christ comes. And he not only comes, he raises, he comes back from the dead.

[12:21] He raises the dead himself. At a word, men who were dead come to life. But more importantly, he died and rose again himself.

And Paul said it in 1 Corinthians. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. You are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are pitied. We are to be pitied more than all men. Do you hear what he's saying? Without resurrection, all we have is unyielding despair.

But he goes on. He goes on and he turns away from unyielding despair. And he says, but Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

So this Jesus was raised to life. This Jesus who said, no one takes my life from me. I lay it down of my own accord and I take it back up of my own accord again.

[13:23] This Jesus who says, Talitha, little girl, wake up. And a girl, a 12-year-old girl who was dead, wakes from the dead.

Or he says to Lazarus, come forth. And this linen-wrapped, stinking corpse breathes again.

It's that Jesus who died and rose again. And so he brought life, everlasting life to light.

And if he rises again, then that means that death is not the end. Death does not have the final word for his people.

His resurrection proves that he is the Lord of the living and the dead. And that is amazing. He is the Lord of the living and the dead. He calls things that aren't as though they are.

[14:26] Because there's no difference to him. Now think of someone you have lost. Think of someone you have lost. Maybe someday it will be your husband or your wife.

Maybe it's one of your parents. They're gone from you. They're gone. They are not to you. But they are to Jesus.

He knows them. He rules over them. He is their Lord. Why? Because Jesus is the Lord of the living and the dead.

Remember the Sadducees came to Jesus with that ridiculous story of a woman who marries seven brothers. And they asked him, whose wife will she be in the resurrection?

They're trying to prove that, you know, there's no way this resurrection thing can happen. And Jesus replied, you are in error. Why? Because you don't know the power of God nor the scriptures.

[15:26] So let me ask you a question. When Moses spoke to the Lord in the burning bush, who did the Lord say he is? He said, I am the God.

I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And the Lord isn't a God to the dead, but to the living. So in one sense, whether living or dead, it's all the same to our Lord Jesus.

No one ever, ever leaves his rule. No one ever escapes his authority. And this Jesus, who died and rose again, is God.

And so when he calls someone his, when he calls you to himself, death cannot be the end for you. It cannot be the end for you.

He died for you, body and soul, so that he could have you. And body and soul, he will have you.

And if that means raising you from the dead, he will raise you from the dead.

[16:28] And so that means, Paul says, dear Thessalonians, that when Jesus comes back, God, who raises the dead to life, will raise your friends, those who have fallen asleep too, and they will come with him.

So Jesus' resurrection proves that there will be another life for this body, for all who belong to him. And that is good news for us, isn't it?

That is good news for us. I hope the familiarity of resurrection doesn't make you say, so what? I already knew that. Just think of it. Your mom or dad, who died so many years ago, they loved the Lord, and you laid them to rest.

One day, you will see them standing in their own bodies with you again. Think of your husband or your wife when they die, if they've already died.

[17:37] You bury them in hope. You bury them, giving them over to Jesus. And then one day, Jesus is going to raise them up and give them back to you.

You'll see each other again. And that day will come. It will come. Jesus arose, and when he comes in clouds of glory, he will bring your loved ones with him.

Your husband, your wife will have all their blemishes taken away. They will be perfect. They will be wearing their heavenly bodies, prepared to live with God forever and ever.

C.S. Lewis said, if you saw them now as they will be on that day, you would be tempted to worship them. Because they would be so full of God, and his glory will be shining out of them.

Their bodies will be perfect. Their souls will be perfect, and they will be full of glory. And the only thing keeping you from worshiping them is that you too will be perfect.

[18:47] And that's what resurrection means. It means that we can have hope. Real hope. Not any of this living on in the memories of those who love them and things like that.

I don't know about you, but I don't really care about living on in people's memories. That isn't good news for me. What good news is for me is that one day I'll have my body back, and it will be perfect, and you will be there with me.

Well, Jesus died and rose again. And when he comes, God will bring me and you with him, body and soul. And that is good news. That is hope.

Well, why can we have hope? We can have hope. Because Jesus Christ, when he comes, his coming will be glorious. It will be glorious.

Look at verse 16. The Lord himself will come down from heaven. What makes the second coming so glorious? Well, it's not all the things that is going to be going on.

[19:51] Paul is going to talk about that. But what makes the second coming so glorious is that the Lord himself will be there. And he will be there in all of his divine glory.

His divine, overpowering glory. Remember when Isaiah saw the Lord Jesus high and lifted up. He said, I'm undone. I am ruined. He was shocked to his core.

And when Jesus comes back, he is going to come with all that glory. He's going to come with all that soul-shocking splendor. See, he was born as a baby in a barn.

And he had shepherds to attend him. And Mary was there. And she treasured all these things in her heart. But it won't be that way the second time.

At his face, the sky will be rolled back as a scroll. And the mountains will melt. And the sea will flee.

[20:54] Why? Because the Lord himself will come. And men will crawl into caves and into the holes in the ground. And they will cry out, hide me from the face of the Lamb.

And we will be there with our loved ones with him. And our eyes will not be on the writhing world underneath our feet as we are lifted up.

They will be on Jesus Christ and him alone. For he comes to be marveled at. 2 Thessalonians 1:10 says, On that day he comes to be glorified in his holy people.

And to be marveled at among all those who have believed. That day will be a day for us to marvel.

To just gaze and wonder and worship.

And it says he will come down. He will come down. When he ascended, the angels came to the disciples and he said, Why are you looking up? In the same way that he went up, he will come back down.

[21:58] One commentator said, He will come down in majestic leisure. He wasn't snatched into heaven immediately.

It took time for him to go up. And it will take time for him to go down. And if he is coming to be marveled at, it will not be instantaneous. When a king walks an isle to receive his crown, He doesn't hurry up the isle.

He walks slowly with all the majesty that a man can have. Because he wants all eyes to be on him.

And when a bride and her day comes, She doesn't run up the isle.

She walks down the isle slowly so that everyone can look at her and smile and see and rejoice in her happiness and in her little glory.

We'll multiply that all by 10 million times over and over again. And instead of bridesmaids, you have archangels.

[23:02] And instead of canon and G, which is very lovely, it says you are going to see, you are going to hear the trumpet of God.

When God descended on Mount Sinai, there was blaring trumpets. And it will be the same when Jesus Christ comes back. And he will come back with a loud command.

And at his command, the dead will rise. And it all, if you put it all together and you think about it, it will be glorious.

It will be wonderful. And his coming and divine glory and splendor is good news for us. That is a reason to hope.

This world is going somewhere. It's not going into the debris of a universe and ruins like Bertrand Russell thought. This world is going somewhere.

[23:59] The death and the darkness is not at the end. Christ coming down and majestic beauty is at the end.

And thinking about that changes everything. The wedding at the end of all the hassle of the wedding preparations is supposed to make it worth it.

And Jesus coming down in power and glory will make all of our troubles, all the hassles and trials that we face worth it.

Well, why can we have hope? Because Christ's coming will be glorious. And because we will all be there with him forever.

Look at verse 17. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

[24:59] And so, we will be with the Lord forever. As Christ comes, he gives a loud shout and the dead in Christ rise first.

And then, all together, the living and those who have just been raised will be lifted up to meet the Lord in the air to never part again.

Christ's coming will be glorious for us because we will be there with him. We will take part with him in his descent.

And all the ones that we have buried in hope will be there with us. And we will be with the Lord forever. So, whether you die or whether you live until the very end, if you are trusting in Jesus, you will not miss a thing.

His coming begins the time when we will never be apart. We will never have to leave him. So, now it's a time of leaving, isn't it?

[26:08] People fall asleep. They die. And they leave us. And one day, it will be our turn. And we will have to say goodbye to the ones that we love.

And we will go and be with Jesus. If Jesus tarries, that's the way it will be for us. And that will be the way it is until he comes.

People leaving all the time. But when Christ comes back, that will be the end of saying goodbye.

And it will begin our heavenly reign with Christ forever and ever.

So, we all meet him in the air and to descend with him. And his glory becomes our glory. And every day after that, forever and ever, we will be with him.

And that is our hope. That is our hope. Right now, we struggle. Don't you struggle? We struggle with seeing Christ by faith. It's so hard. This world is going so fast.

[27:12] And we have a heart that is against faith. And so, we struggle with seeing. But in heaven, faith is obsolete. It's like that 15-year-old computer.

Do you even think about that thing anymore? No. There's no use for it. And you'll never think about faith again. Because you will have Christ.

You will have Christ. And Christ will be there. And you will be there with him. And so, we won't struggle to see him. Because he'll be right in front of us. And his life and his joy will become our life and our joy.

We will enter into the joy of our master. And we won't ever long for home. Do you ever feel that?

You're just like, this world is not my home. And I want to be home. There will be no more of that.

Because we will be home. And we won't ever be wishing for more. Now we wish for more. I need more and more of Christ. Then, he will fill us.

[28 : 13] He will fill us. And we won't ever long to see our husband or our wife or our friends again. Because they will be there. We won't be married anymore.

We won't be married anymore. No doubt. Because our marriages, our husbands and our wives, that relationship will be swallowed up with something better.

Things aren't going to go from better to worse in any way. And I'm sure we just don't have any conception of what our relationships with each other are going to be like.

We have no way of thinking about how beautiful they are. And so God probably doesn't bother telling us. Why would he tell us something that we could never understand? But one day, all of that, our marriages and this world and everything, will be swallowed up in glory.

And we will be together with Jesus. And that is a reason to hope. That is a reason to hope. So, we do have every reason to look forward with confident expectation.

[29 : 26] But this hope is only for those who are called brothers. And that's how Paul starts out this section. Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant or to grieve like the rest of men.

This hope that I've been talking about is for brothers. And so I have to ask you, is that you? Is that you? Has God brought you into his family?

Have you come to your senses? Like the prodigal son, have you come to your senses and gone back home? If not, I want you to stare reality in the face.

And the reality is, you have no hope. None of the things that I have been talking about will be good things for you.

God will raise you to new life. But only to give you a body that is able to bear unending punishment. Everlasting pain.

[30 : 28] And Christ coming in great glory. It will be a time for you when you are begging the hills and the cliffs and the mountains to fall on you. To hide you from the face of the Lamb.

And words cannot express the horror that you will feel on that day. That will grip your soul. You will be so terrified you will have no hope.

And your dreams will turn to ashes. And your hopes of a godless eternity where it will just be you will be shattered. And you will know nothing but God's burning anger forever and ever.

Some people foolishly say that when man says no to God, says, God, I don't want you. Hell is God saying, okay, have your own way.

Your wish is granted. But that's not true at all. The second coming of Christ will be horrific for you.

[31 : 28] It will be infinite horror. Because you will not be able to escape God. You will not be able to get away from Him. He will be everywhere. And He will be angry with you.

Look at chapter 5, verse 3. While people are saying peace and safety, destruction will come on them suddenly. He will come as a thief.

He will come as a thief in the night. So, if you're an unbeliever, you've kept Him out of your life.

You've shut the door. You've barred the way. There's no way you're going to let Him in.

And if you continue to ignore His pleas to come. If you continue to ignore His commands to repent. His call to repent. Then when you least expect it.

Like a thief in the night. He will break in. He will break into your life. You will not be able to keep Him out. And He will bring destruction. Like a thief brings destruction.

[32 : 25] Christ will knock down your door and come into your life. Whether you like it or not. And you won't escape. And it will be sudden.

Like labor pains of a pregnant woman. For nine months. Seems like nothing is happening. Right? It's growing. The baby is growing.

And it doesn't seem like the baby is ever going to come. But then it happens. Out of the blue. Yet totally expected.

Nine months later. Pain comes. And so does the baby. And my unbelieving friend. Just because the baby takes nine months to get there. Doesn't mean the baby is going to stay away forever.

That it won't come. And just because there's no labor pains now. It doesn't mean. That that is the way it will always be. That the pain won't come.

[33 : 23] And just because Jesus tarries. Doesn't mean He's going to stay away forever. And no matter how much you say. Peace. And safety. Peace. And safety. It doesn't change the fact that when Jesus comes.

It will be anything but peace and safety for you. He will bring. Everlasting pain. So don't. Ignore. Christ's coming.

Don't ignore. Christ's coming. While He's still a long way off. Sit down. And think. Can I with my 10,000 men.

Defeat Him. The King. Who is coming with His 20,000 men. You know. You can't. And so what do you do. When you're in that situation.

When He is coming. To make war on you. And you can't defend yourself. You sue for peace. You come to your senses. You stop living in the hog pen.

[34 : 23] And you run home. And Jesus will run to meet you. Because He has died for sinners just like you. He has died for sinners just like you.

Who are just as bad. Who are worse. He has died for sinners like you. And so the way you come to Jesus. Is you cry out for mercy. You go to God the Father.

And you say. I'm not ready for Christ's coming. I'm not. It's going to be horrible for me. I am scared. Please. Have mercy on me. For Jesus sake.

And you repent. You repent. You turn away. And you believe the good news. Well brothers and sisters. What do we do.

With this hope. I hope you've been encouraged. I hope you now have hope. Verse 18 says. And tells us what we do with it. We encourage each other with these words.

[35 : 22] So do you remember that soldier at the beginning? Imagining being that soldier. And you were alone. And you were cold. And you were getting that dreadful feeling.

Deep down inside of you. That this war is going to last forever. And you were going to be on watch forever. And you were sad because your best friend was gone.

If you were in that position. What would you need? What would you need? You would need encouragement. You would need someone. One of your friends.

To come and sit down by you. And talk with you. About the way it's going to be. When this is all over. You need that friend to talk about.

What it's going to be like after the war. About the big parades. About the victory parades. That you're going to have. And how you're finally going to see. Your wife or your girlfriend again.

[36 : 25] And you need to hear them. Telling you. That it's. Telling you. Remember what it was like. To sleep in a bed. Remember what it was like. On a lazy summer day.

To sleep in the hammock in the yard. And this whole business. It's not going to last forever. It's not going to be this way. It's going to be the way it used to be.

You would need that kind of encouragement. To start hope up again. And brothers and sisters. We are all soldiers. We are all fighting in this battle. And the night is growing longer.

And longer. And. There are certain times. When we really need encouragement. When someone that we know.

And love. Has died. That is a time for this kind of encouragement. To remind them. That this is not the end. But our best things.

[37 : 22] Our best things are still ahead. Or maybe it's just when the fight gets too much. And we're discouraged. And we're run down. And we're starting to lose perspective.

We need someone to come up. Beside us. And sit down. And tell us. The way it's going to be. And how it's all going to be better someday.

And. And. We're going to have that big victory parade. When Jesus Christ comes back. And what it's going to be like. For. To be with Christ forever.

And have our loved ones with him. And. We need to. Receive that encouragement. And we need to give that encouragement. We need to be able to tell. That sister.

What it's going to be like to rest. And not. This. Every. Week. Once a day. Or once a week. Rest. Rest. That we enjoyed. Now. This. The short rest.

[38 : 19] But everlasting. Eternal. Sabbath. And we have to tell her. The. It's going to be. The way it used to be. When it was. In the garden.

The way it was supposed to be. And you encourage her. By showing her. Jesus. And what he's coming to do. He's coming to save them. And. And make everything. All right.

And you talk about. Empty graves. Empty graves. And you talk about. Going home. And. If she's lost. Her husband.

Or. He's lost his wife. Tell them. They're. They're not going to sleep forever. One day. Jesus will wake them up. Just the same. As he woke up. That little girl. I'm not saying.

