

HEAVEN – Our Dual Citizenship and Our True Home

Week 3: Rapture Ready! (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE FOCUS

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (ESV)

OVERVIEW OF WEEK 1

Day 1: To Live informed (1 Thess. 4:13-14)

Day 4: Caught Up (1 Thess. 4:17)

Day 2: This We Declare (1 Thess. 4:15)

Day 5: Be Encouraged (1 Thess. 4:18)

Day 3: The Return (1 Thess. 4:16)

VERSES TO MEMORIZE

() **Level 1: 1 Thess. 4:13-14**

() **Level 2: 1 Thess. 4:13-18**

Most of us think of heaven as a place we go to after death. But one generation of Christians won't experience death! When Jesus returns to take his followers to heaven, those of us who are alive at that moment will be changed forever.

GROUP DISCUSSION. What will happen when Jesus returns? On a small card or piece of paper, each member of the group should write one thing he or she has heard or has thought will happen at the time of Christ's return and share it with the group. As your group gives you an opportunity speak about whether or not you think that particular event will really happen or not and give the reason(s) why or why not.

PERSONAL REFLECTION. What feelings come to mind when you think about Christ's return? Ask the Lord to use this time of study to encourage you to look forward to that moment with anticipation and joy.

Paul's teaching about Jesus' return was prompted by a problem in the Thessalonian church. These Christians were concerned about fellow believers who had died. When Paul was with them, he had told them about Jesus' return to take believers to heaven. But after Paul left, some

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of the Christians had died. Would they miss Christ’s coming? Would their bodies be left behind? Would these Christians ever see their friends again? To answer these questions from a biblical world view read *1 Thessalonians 4:13–18*.

1. As you glance through the passage again, do you think Paul looked toward Christ’s return with anticipation or with dread? What specific words or statements in the passage lead you to that conclusion?

2. Why is a Christian’s grief over the death of a friend different than the grief of the person who doesn’t have a relationship with Christ (vv. 13–14)?

3. What was the source of Paul’s teaching about Christ’s return (v. 15), and why is that important?

4. What sequence of events does Paul lay out (vv. 16–17)?

5. Do you think everyone in the world will hear the shout, the angel’s voice and the trumpet blast (v. 16) or just the Christians? Explain your answer.

6. Paul included himself among those who would still be alive at Jesus’ coming (“we who are still alive,” v. 17). What does that tell you about when Paul expected Jesus to come back?

7. If you knew for certain that Jesus would return in one week, how would your life change?

Who would you seek out to talk to about believing in Jesus as Savior and Lord?

8. Do you think Paul’s instruction calmed the concerns of the Thessalonian Christians or did it just raise more questions? Explain.

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9. What effect did Paul want his teaching to have on Christians (v. 18)?

How did this passage have that effect on you?

10. What confident hope can you share from this passage with someone who is convinced that death is the end of our existence?

Give God praise for the assurance he gives us of being “with the Lord forever.”

Living It Out

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul gives us more instruction about what will happen to us when Jesus returns. *Read 1 Corinthians 15:51–54.* What additional insight about Christ’s return for Christians does this passage give you?

Read 15:58 for some practical ways this teaching will change your life.
