



## Sermon Discussion Questions

May 12, 2024

*Like a Thief in the Night*

# LOVE IN THE AGE OF RAPTURE

1 Thessalonians 4:9-18

1. **Opening Discussion Questions** (in a group setting you may only want to do one of these)
  - a. (If you are in a group with someone who has recently lost a loved one you may want to avoid this question unless you are sure the individual will be okay with the discussion.) Ask each member of your group to describe the last funeral they attended. What was the general mood of that funeral? Why was it that way? Have you ever experienced a funeral that was actually a celebration? If anyone in your group has attended a non-Christian (Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, etc.) funeral ask them to describe the major differences.
  - b. There are two old, non-Biblical, proverbs: “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy” and “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop.” Which one would you say is closest to your own philosophy of life? How does that philosophy tend to affect your relationships with others?
2. **Sermon Outline/Key Points**
  - a. One Day, Every Christian Will Rise to Meet Jesus in the Air.
    - i. The Thessalonians Had Both Awareness of and Concern About Christ's Return.
    - ii. Our bodies will rise glorified when Jesus returns.
  - b. In the Meantime, Live Quietly and Love Extravagantly.
    - i. Increase in real, practical love for other believers.
    - ii. We are called to live quietly while loving extravagantly.
  - c. Love In the Age of Rapture Demands Urgency in Sharing the Gospel.
    - i. Those who don't know Jesus need the same hope and comfort we have.
    - ii. We do much as a church but need to urgently do more.
3. **Study/Discussion Points:**
  - a. **Sunday Afternoon** – As soon as possible after listening to the sermon set aside some time to ponder these questions prayerfully:
    - i. What one thing most stood out to you in this sermon?
    - ii. What new truth did you learn or of what truth were you reminded?
    - iii. After listening to the sermon, is there a Scripture passage you feel led to meditate on or commit to memory this week?

- iv. What is one specific thing you feel God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
- v. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?

*b. Monday – Every Christian will rise to meet Jesus in the air.*

- i. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is possibly the most recognized passage in the book. Read it slowly and carefully as if you had never heard the words or the concepts before.
  - 1. If you were to describe Paul’s intent in writing this paragraph in a single word, what would it be?
  - 2. What do you find comforting in the passage?
- ii. Paul begins the passage by saying “But we do not want you to be uninformed”.
  - 1. What does this opening suggest to you about the Thessalonians he is writing to?
  - 2. Paul uses the same (or very similar) phrase in Romans 1:13; 11:25; 1 Corinthians 10:1; 12:1; and 2 Corinthians 1:8. After reading these passages what do you think Paul’s intent is when using the phrase?
- iii. After rereading verse 13 imagine that you are one of the Thessalonian Christians. What question would you have probably asked to prompt this response from Paul?
- iv. Before becoming Christians, the Thessalonians would have been immersed in Greek religion and philosophy. Based on what you know about Greek mythology how might this background have been a factor in their concern? How does Paul recognize this in verse 13?

*c. Tuesday – Every Christian will rise to meet Jesus in the air.*

- i. Begin by rereading 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.
- ii. What euphemism does Paul use repeatedly to describe the death of a Christian?
  - 1. Read these verses where the same phrase is used: Matthew 9:24; 27:52; Mark 5:39; John 11:11–14; Acts 7:60; 1 Corinthians 15:6, 18, 20, 51.
  - 2. Based on all of these passages what could we conclude about death? How should we view death?
  - 3. What significance do you see in the fact that Paul carefully avoids the euphemism when talking about Jesus?

iii. By reminding the Thessalonians of Jesus' death Paul would have reminded them of truths he taught while with them. What truth about His death can be gleaned from these passages:

1. 1 John 1:1-4
2. 2 Corinthians 5:21 and 1 Peter 2:24
3. Romans 6:10, Hebrews 9:28 and 1 Peter 3:18
4. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9-10

d. **Wednesday** – *Every Christian will rise to meet Jesus in the air.*

- i. In 1 Thessalonians 4:14 Paul links Jesus' death and His resurrection as an almost seamless event.
  1. According to 1 Corinthians 15:17 how important is the resurrection to our faith?
  2. What value would the cross have been if there had been no resurrection?
- ii. Read these verses and discuss what lesson we can learn or what assurance we receive because of the resurrection:
  - a. Genesis 1:31, Romans 8:19-22, and Revelation 22:1-3
  - b. 1 Peter 1:3, Ephesians 2:4-7, Romans 6:4 & 11
  - c. Romans 4:25, 1 Corinthians 6:11, and Isaiah 53:11
  - d. John 6:44, 1 Corinthians 6:14, 2 Corinthians 4:14
- iii. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15 what is the basis for Paul's assurance that Jesus will bring the Christians who have already died with Him when He returns? How do Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31 and Luke 21:33 (all are identical) reinforce Paul's authority in saying this?

e. **Thursday** – *Every Christian will rise to meet Jesus in the air.*

- i. 1 Corinthians 15 provides much detail about our resurrection. Today, read the entire chapter.
  1. How do verses 51-52 compare with 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17?
  2. How do both passages assure us that if we die first or live until Christ returns the end result will be the same?
- ii. How do 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15 encourage you to share your faith with others?

f. **Friday** – *Live Quietly and Love Extravagantly.*

- i. Begin by reading 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12.
  1. To you, what stands out most in this passage?
  2. Paul commends the Thessalonians for their love in verses 9 and 10.

- a. Why do you think he would then command them to do even more?
  - b. What do you think a group with such a reputation might do to love each other even more? A group you are part of?
  - c. What application might be made to Christians who are participating in truly loving congregations today? Put another way, when will we have shown sufficient love for one another?
- ii. What do you think Paul means when he says that the Thessalonians have been “taught by God to love each other”? How do you think God did it in their lives and can do it in ours (see Galatians 5:22 and 1 Corinthians 12-13)?
    1. How do 2 Peter 1:3-4 and Romans 5:5 provide assurance that we can do as Paul commanded the Thessalonians?
    2. What parallel do you see between these verses in 1 Thessalonians and the prophecy presented in Jeremiah 31:31-34?
  - iii. Many authors see verse 11 as an admonishment to work and provide for your own needs as opposed to “forcing” others to care for you as you sit waiting expectantly for Christ’s Second Coming.
    1. Why might that have been a problem the Thessalonians faced?
    2. How do Ephesians 4:28 and 1 Peter 2:12 address such a problem?
- g. *Saturday – Urgently Share the Gospel.*
- i. Read the entire focal passage, 1 Thessalonians 4:9-18, one more time then write a short summary of what Paul says in your own words.
    1. After a week’s study what most stands out as important to you for your own Christian life?
    2. What three different sources of encouragement does Paul provide in verses 16 and 17?
  - ii. What do you think Paul expected the results would be when he wrote this passage? What was his purpose according to verse 18?
4. **Application:** Robert McCheyne, a godly preacher 200 years ago, used to ask people: “Do you think Jesus Christ will return today?” Most would reply, “No, not today.” To which he would respond: “Then, my friend, you had better be ready; for He is coming at such an hour as ye think not.” Are you ready if it is today? What are you doing to help others get ready?

#### 5. Prayer Points:

- a. Adoration – Psalms 8:1 and 29:1-2
- b. Confession – Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:8-10
- c. Thanksgiving – Psalms 95:1-2 and 100:4-5
- d. Supplications –Matthew 21:22 and John 16:19