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### Personal Study through the Bible-18 (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

There are two prevalent myths about studying the Bible for yourself. I have noted the first one, *that the Bible is too difficult for anyone to understand for himself*, in previous lessons. As I have noted, there are three levels of understanding: the basic, the exegetical, and the metaphysical. Anyone who can read the Tulsa World newspaper can understand the Bible on the basic and metaphysical levels. The only difficulty is filling in the details, which requires both exegesis and metaphysics working in tandem. Every pastor should be trained exegetically and philosophically. So, while you may need help in filling in the exegetical and philosophical details, say of detailed truths regarding the virtues of faith, hope, love, sanctification, and the rapture in the first four chapters of Thessalonians, you most certainly can understand these virtues on a basic level as instantiated in the Thessalonians and Paul. By understanding the basic structure of truth in these chapters, you are better prepared to receive as well as examine what a pastor teaches you.

The second myth about personal Bible study is that the Bible is boring. Even if I could get a carnal believer to accept my argument about the fallaciousness of the first myth, he might respond with something like, “Well, I guess I can understand it on the basic level, but frankly the Bible bores me to death.” I have never understood this. Furthermore, I am often surprised when even doctrinal believers ask me why it is that I get so excited when I teach—as if something is wrong with me, as if it is abnormal to be so enthusiastic about God’s Word. I am afraid that the problem with those who think the Bible is boring is in their own tastes and preferences for what they find interesting and exciting. It is a “testimony” to their own dullness with regard to God, the plan of God, and truth as such. They always seem to be on a frantic search for something in the kosmos to excite them or make the Bible and God more exciting and relevant to their cosmic, carnal lives.

Christianity is filled with people looking for some teacher who can make the Bible come alive for them. They seem to always be looking for someone with a new dynamic method to ‘make God’s Word come alive.’ This is very strange indeed, especially coming from born-again believers. It is as if the Bible had died, and there is this frantic search for someone to come and restore it to life. The truth is that the Bible is already alive. And it makes me come alive.

How can the Bible be dull? Consider what you have personally studied in 1 Thessalonians 1-4. What is boring about the faith, hope, and love in these Thessalonians who are going through trials and tribulations? What is dull about the dangers of sexual immorality on the believers’ sanctification? What isn’t exciting about the rapture? Contrary to this myth, the Bible is filled with God, drama, pathos, virtue, vice, supernatural events, remorse, contrition, murder, torture, and happiness in and through suffering. It is the story of man caught up in the angelic conflict. It is the story of ultimate despair of Hell and the ultimate blessedness of glorification

and being with God forever. I challenge you to find anything that comes close to these themes in the kosmos with all of its titillating modern media.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 again. We have noted two of the three events mentioned in 4:16, The Lord's shout and the voice of the archangel Michael. The third event is that of the sounding of the trumpet of God. According to this context, this trumpet has to do with the resurrection of the *dead in Christ*. In studying the trumpets of God, it is very important to make some distinctions, for there are many trumpets in the Bible, and some of them are associated with tribulation. However, this trumpet is connected with the *dead in Christ*, which is used in the Bible only to refer to saints who lived in the period beginning at Pentecost. This phrase is never used of Israel or of Gentile believers in the Old Testament, nor is it ever used of saints in the tribulation. The church enjoys a special relationship embodied in the phrase "in Christ," which is a result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit," read 1 Cor. 12:13. Again, this trumpet of God must not be mixed or confused with other trumpets. For other trumpets associated with the tribulation, read Revelation 8:2-9, 21; 11:15-18; Matthew 24:31.

The trumpet of God in 1 Thessalonias 4:16 is the same one as mentioned in 1 Cor 15:51-52—read now; we will look at it later. It is important to pay attention to details when you study the scriptures. In 1 Thess. 4:16, it is the "dead in Christ" who will be raised. This is a term for church age believers. This term is never used for any other people. It is the special relationship that church age believers have with Christ that marks the limits of the inclusion in the resurrection of this passage.

In sum, the first response to the threefold event (shout of the Lord, voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God) is that the dead in Christ shall rise first. We will note a few more details about this *exciting* rapture in the next lesson.

*In 'Ehyeh,*

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