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Personal Study of the Bible-63
1 Thessalonians 4- Spiritual Application:
The Rapture: the Blessed Hope

We are now in chapter 4 in our reflection on spiritual applications in 1 Thessalonians. Read this chapter and then reread these verses for today's lesson:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Note the practical benefit in verse 18: COMFORT! There are at least five ways that prophecy in general and the Rapture in particular provide comfort. First, biblical prophecy reminds us that God is sovereign. In a world that seems to be growing in increasing lawlessness and wickedness, we need to remember that our God, Esse, Subsistent Being, sovereignly controls it all. Obviously, He is not impressed with the supposed great power of men and nations; read Isaiah 40:12-26; Psalm 2:1-12; and Revelation 1:18. Just as the prophetic word proclaimed and saw fulfillment of the prophecies of the Virgin Birth, ministry, and substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, and the subsequent church age, God has also prophesied and guaranteed the Rapture of the Church. Understanding this brings great comfort to the believer, especially in times of great uncertainty and massive evil evidenced by good being called evil and evil being called good.

Second, Bible prophecy reminds us that God is Good. Christians live and suffer in a world torn apart by sin and corruption. Many live out their lives with unresolved problems and terribly unjust situations. Biblical prophecy reveals with crystal clarity that the ending of the story is good for the children of God. And it is a good that we really cannot fathom. Paul understood this so well; read Romans 8:18. Taking us Home is the ultimate good. It is with the Lord that we will all experience full and unhindered fellowship and be *forever* free from death, pain, and the other ravages of sin. Prophecy shouts to us that God is Good. I will have more to say about this in our next Bible class as I expand on my thought experiment about the child who was playing Hide-N-Go-Seek in an abandoned refrigerator only to suffocate to death. Where was God? Just watching! Not a chance!

Third, Bible prophecy motives us to live out, execute, the spiritual life. The Bible teaches that when believers focus on their future with God, it cleanses them from evil and gives them supernatural hope; read 1 John 2:28; 3:3. It is those who neglect what the Bible says about the

future who get entrenched in kosmos diabolicus, i.e. brainwashed by Satan's Zeitgeist; read Matthew 24:48-51. The believer who lives with the expectation that His Lord could return any day will certainly not let carnality take over his life.

Fourth, Bible prophecy helps us establish proper priorities. There is a prominent myth perpetrated by the kosmos that living in light of heaven distracts one from being a "productive" member of society or even a good earthly person. This is false! All one has to do is examine history and see that those who have transformed the world the most are those who believed in and lived for Heaven. Heaven is not escapism—it is Real! Recall, that it was the Christians who were the first ones to save children who were left out in the elements by parents who did not want them, and it was Christians who created the first hospitals. Look what Jesus did for mankind: not only in His exalted teachings, but His sacrifice for all of man's sins. Yet, His whole life was dominated by Heaven. Christians are exhorted to live their lives in light of the end times and ultimate realities; read 2 Peter 3:10-13. It is unfortunate that many of God's children seem to make decisions about their future earthly resources without even a thought concerning the kingdom to come. Our goals and purposes are to be altered by an understanding of what the Bible says about prophecy, about our future.

Fifth, Bible prophecy gives us Hope. If there is anyone who ought to live out their lives in total confidence, it is the child of God. If there is anyone who ought not to live with an attitude of defeat, fear, and depression about the future, it is the Christian. Though no human being is exempted from pain and suffering in the human condition, all believers have the privilege of living the Great Hope of the Rapture; read Titus 2:13 and see its contrast with unbeliever's reality in 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

I have often been asked about what happens to people who cannot believe (as opposed to will not) at the Rapture. Basically, there are two categories of people that would fit in this category. First, there are those who at one time were capable of believing, e.g., an elderly person with Alzheimer's or an adult who is in a coma due to being assaulted. These people, having failed to trust Christ while they had an opportunity to, will not be raptured, and when they die they will be sent to Hades to await the Great White Throne Judgment.

Second, there are those who never had the capacity to believe; e.g., babies, infants, and those who are mentally impaired. The Bible does not speak at length about this, but it does speak about the character of God/Esse and how He is always lovingly working to bring all to Himself. Because of the character of God, there is every reason to believe that these people will have an eternal destiny with Jesus in heaven. Because of His great love, we can expect that at the Rapture all infants and mentally impaired people go along with the redeemed to be forever with the Lord. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world—including infants and the mentally impaired, who lack capacity to exercise faith in Christ and *have never said NO to Him*. Remember, there is nothing meritorious in faith itself. Having never resisted the grace of God, God is free to apply the finished work of Christ to their account *for them*. Read the following passages on God's attitude to infants and children, Matthew 18:1-14; Mark 10:13-16. We also have direct testimony that one day David would join his deceased infant; read 2 Samuel 12:22-23. This evidence coupled with the fact that there is not even a hint in God's character or the Bible that any infant is ever associated with Hell makes it clear that infants and those who are mentally unable to believe will be in heaven with believers.

*In 'Ehyeh,
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