

Sermon Notes for Oct. 30, 2005

Understanding Basic Biblical Theology And Its Impact On Your Life

The Person and Work of Jesus Christ To Save Man From His Sin “Will Jesus Come Again To This Earth?” I Thess. 4:13-18

A new preacher had just begun his sermon. He was a **little nervous**, and about ten minutes into the talk **his mind went blank**. He remembered what they had taught him in seminary to do when a situation like this would arise – **repeat your last point**. Often this would help you remember what was coming next. So he thought he would give it a try. **“Behold, I come quickly,”** he said. Still his mind was blank. He thought he would try it again, **“Behold I come quickly.”** Still nothing. **He tried it one more time** with such force that he fell forward, knocking the pulpit to one side, tripping over a flowerpot, and falling into the lap of a little old lady in the front row. The young preacher apologized and tried to explain what happened. **“That’s alright, young man,”** said the little old lady. **“It was my fault. I should have gotten out of the way. You told me three times that you were coming.”**

Introduction

A. DISCUSSION Of The Return Of Jesus Christ.

1. Many of you have perhaps heard of the **Left Behind** series written by **Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins**.
 - a. basically 12 books were written on the second coming of Christ
 - b. at last count, sales of these books had reached 1 billion dollars
2. When I was in college, a **B-movie** came out called **“A Thief In The Night.”**
 - a. depicting the second coming of Christ and Christians being taken from the earth
 - b. the “day after” the Second Coming of Christ, was something to behold, as millions of Christians had been taken into heaven with Jesus. The movie showed people looking for lost Christians.
3. Does the Bible teach:
 - a. that Jesus will come back to this earth?
 - b. that the church of Jesus Christ will be “raptured” or taken from this earth?

B. DEPENDANCE Upon God’s Word Regarding The Return Of Jesus Christ.

1. We need to look at some interesting **Biblical facts**:
 - a. there are more than **2160** references to the second coming of Jesus Christ in the Bible
 - b. there are over **1845** references to the Second Coming in the **Old Testament**
 - c. there are over **318** references to the Second Coming of Christ in the **New Testament** (out of 260 chapters!)
 - d. **17 Old Testament** books give the Second Coming prominence; **23** of the **27 New Testament** books refer to this great event

e. **for every time the first coming of Jesus Christ is mentioned in the New Testament, His Second Coming is mentioned 8 times**

2. We need to look at a chapter in the New Testament that clearly teaches the Second Coming of Jesus.

I. The TEARS Of God's People.

A. QUESTIONS About the Return Of Jesus Christ.

Vs. 13a – “Brothers, we do not want you to be **ignorant about those who fall asleep.**”

1. The **perplexity** of the early church.

a. the church of Thessalonica was a relatively young church

1. they had recently come to know Christ as their Savior

2. Paul was personally teaching them about God's Word and spiritual life

b. during Paul's teaching they had heard about the return of Christ to the earth, His Second Coming

1. Paul had taught that Jesus Christ indeed would return to this

earth

2. and that those who were still alive would be taken back to heaven with Him

3. some of the people at Thessalonica feared for those who had died that they would “miss His return” because they had died

4. Paul's letter to the church would deal with this problem

2. The **picture** of Christians dying.

a. the **inevitability** of Christians dying

1. Paul clearly taught that Christians, like everybody else, will die

2. Christians are not immune from death

b. the **imagery** of Christians dying

1. but notice what Paul called the death of the Christian

a. He did not say that they died, but that they “**fell asleep**”

b. death has such a final, total sense about it

c. but what do you think when you think about **sleep**?

1. sleep is something we **look forward to** – ESPECIALLY when we are very tired

2. sleep is a **time of rest and refreshment**

3. when a person sleeps, **HE WILL GET UP!**

4. so, the clear teaching here is that after a

person

goes to sleep, (i.e. dies) **HE WAKES UP, IN HEAVEN!**

2. Paul is teaching here that while the body may die, THE SOUL

DOES NOT. Look at **II Corinthians 5:6-8** – “Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are **at home**

in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith,

not

by sight. We are confident, I say, and would **prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.**”

B. QUALIFICATIONS About The Death Of The Christian.

Vs. 13 – “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, **or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.**”

1. The **grief of the world.**

- a. Paul did not want these Christians to be hopeless, for they had the certain hope of heaven
- b. **CERTAINLY**, Paul did not want the Christians at Thessalonica to grieve like the world around them
 1. the Greek world had no view of life after death
 - a. in a sense, it was a hopeless world to them
 - b. illustrations:
 1. **Greek philosophers:**
 - a. **Aeschylus** – “**Once a man died, there is no resurrection.**”
 - b. **Theocritus** – “**There is hope for those who are alive, but those who have died are without hope.**”
 2. **on many Greek tombstones**

**I was not,
I became;
I am not;
I care not.**
 2. the church was surrounded by the hopelessness of people

after

their death

2. The **grief of the Christian.**

- a. if we truly believe in Jesus Christ, **should** we grieve at the loss of loved ones?
 1. **Ecclesiastes says in 3:4** – “There is a **time to weep** and a time to laugh.”
 2. Jesus Christ Himself cried at the death of Lazarus – in fact, the text in **John 11:35** says “**He wept**” (wailed, cried out loud)
- b. there is an inherent danger in Christians **NOT** properly grieving
 1. a broken heart is no different than a broken leg
 - a. a leg that is broken will take time to heal
 - b. you must allow a broken heart to heal
 2. A.G. – death of his mother
- c. we are simply **not to “grieve as those who have no hope”**

1. as Benjamin Franklin said, “After death, we are food for worms.”
 2. 3 sisters at a funeral in Columbia, SC
- d. Pastor Steve Malone** said it well – “Grief is a very powerful human experience and emotion. However firm our Christian faith may be, the loss of a relative or friend, causes a profound emotional shock . . . **It calls for radical and painful adjustments which may take months or longer. A Canadian evangelist,** put it well when he said, after the death of his first child at the age of 21, “**The struggle, is to bring our faith and our emotions together. . .**”

II. The TRUTH For God’s People.

A. The DEATH AND RESURRECTION Of Jesus Christ.

Vs. 14a – “We believe that Jesus died and rose again.”

1. Paul TELLS US WHY WE SHOULD HAVE HOPE – **JESUS DIED AND RESURRECTED.**
 - a. this is the **foundation of our hope** – a hope based on the fact of Jesus’ finished work on the cross
 - b. the fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and took that finished work to God the Father in heaven
2. But, not only did Jesus Christ resurrect from the dead, **SO SHALL WE!**
 - a. notice Jesus’ own words – **John 11:25** - Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. **He who believes in me will live,** even though he dies.”
 - b. **Romans 6:5** – “If we have been united with him like this in his death, **we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.**”
 1. THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO “IDENTIFY WITH CHRIST”
 2. to identify with Christ in
 - a. His death
 - b. His resurrection
 - c. His ascension

B. The RETURN Of Jesus Christ.

Vs. 16 – “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.”

1. The **revelation** of Jesus Christ.
 - a. the Scripture is teaching that Jesus Christ will return to this earth for His church
 1. the Scripture says in verse 16 that **Jesus Christ will come HIMSELF**
 - a. He will not merely send His angels
 - b. NO, HE WILL COME HIMSELF, IN GREAT POWER
 2. and it will be **quite a scene!**
 - a. “**with a loud command**”
 1. Jesus Christ will let out a shout, that will be heard around the world

- soldiers
2. this Greek word is a word used by a military officer for a battle cry, calling all of His
- together
3. Jesus will call out for all of His people
- b. **“with the voice of the archangel”**
1. not only will we hear the commanding voice
- of
- Jesus
2. an angel will, as well, cry out with Him
- c. **“with the trumpet call of God”**
1. often, in Scripture, the trumpet was a battle
- cry
- for war
2. at other times, the trumpet blared at special
- times
- for the people of God
3. at still other times, the trumpet signaled the people together for a long journey
4. **John Calvin** – “As a field marshal gathers his armies to battle by the sound of the trumpet.”
- b. and when He calls, His church will come
2. The **resurrection** of the dead.
- Vs. 14** – “We believe that Jesus died and rose again and **so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.**”
- a. the dead in Christ will rise first
1. those who have already died in the Lord, will come with Jesus
- when He comes from heaven
2. but notice, that those who have already died in the Lord will **COME WITH JESUS FIRST**; before those who are living
3. and at that time, these saints will be given a glorified body
- b. **IMAGINE WHAT THIS SCENE WILL LOOK LIKE!**
1. thousands and thousands of saints coming with the Lord Jesus
- in the air
2. saints that have gone before you
- a. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David
- b. the twelve disciples, Paul
- c. my mother, grandparents, your loved ones
3. The **regeneration** of the living.
- Vs. 15** – “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.”
- a. those believers who are still alive at the coming of Christ will follow those who have already come with Christ from heaven
1. those who have died will come with Jesus in the air

2. those who have not died will be taken up into the air and given a glorified body
- b. this is commonly what theologians call **the Rapture**
Vs. 17 – “After that, we who are still alive and are left will be **caught up** with them in the cloud, to meet the Lord in the air.”
 1. the Greek word “caught up” is **harpazo**
 - a. to snatch up, to seize, to carry off by force
 - b. the word often denotes the emotion of “a **sudden swoop of a force that cannot be resisted**”
 - c. the **Latin equivalent** to this Greek word is **rapere**, which means to be seized or snatched away
 - d. the **English word** for rapture means to “**be swept away with joyful emotion**”
 2. the Rapture suggests **immediacy**
 - a. a parallel text is **I Corinthians 15:51-52** – “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--**in a flash**, in the **twinkling of an eye**, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”
 - b. notice two key words that describe the “quickness” of this event
 1. **NIV – vs. 52** – “in a **flash**”
 - a. the Greek word is **atomos** – from where we get our word atom
 - b. this means the tiniest fraction of time
 2. **NIV – vs. 52** – “in the **twinkling of an eye**”
 - a. a word speaking of the blink of an eye
 - b. it is estimated that the blink of an eye happens in **1/50th of a second** and that we blink **25 times in a minute**
 - c. Christ’s return will happen in an instant
 3. the essential meaning of this verse and word is that the return of Christ will be:
 - a. powerful
 - b. loud
 - c. instantaneous

1. those who are believers will be taken in an instant – God will IMMEDIATELY be with Jesus and the host of heaven
2. those who do not know Christ will not have enough time to even know what happened, much less get ready for it. They will be left behind.
3. can you imagine what the rapture will be like?

Pastor Rick Kallstrom – “All over the world **people will be missing**, but they won’t be the ones that are lost. **Parents that never accepted Christ** will wake up and find that their young children have vanished, gone without a trace. **Some husbands** will awaken to find their wives missing. **Some wives** will awaken to find their husbands missing.

People will show up for work and find that **many of their co-workers** are gone and no one knows where or why. **People riding in cars, trucks, buses, trains and airplanes will be gone. Traffic will come to a standstill** all over the world as accidents abound everywhere, with no driver in view anywhere.

People from all walks of life will be filing missing person reports, and frantically trying to find their loved ones. But the loved ones will not be found on this earth, for they are gone forever, gone to be with Jesus, the Savior of mankind.

Many will seek an answer in the churches, but **most Pastors will be gone. Most church members will be gone.** Those left behind will be the ones that just went thru the motions of attending church and thinking all was well with their soul. **But those left behind in the churches will know where the others have gone. They will know.”**

III. The TRUST Of God’s People.

A. The ETERNITY Of God’s People.

Vs. 17a – “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.”**

1. There are some important points to take from this text.
 - a. yes, Jesus died and resurrected
 - b. yes, Jesus will return for His church
 - c. yes, we will all meet Jesus in the air
2. **BUT . . . DON’T MISS THIS MOST IMPORTANT POINT – WE WILL BE WITH THE LORD FOREVER!**
 - a. “we”
 1. all of the believers who have ever lived, will be together

- a. those who have died; your loved ones, father, mother,
 - brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, friends
 - b. EVERY CHRISTIAN WHO HAS EVER LIVED!
 - 2. the Body of Christ will all finally be together!
 - a. people of all races, languages
 - b. saints of all generations, all ages
- b. **“will be with the Lord”**
 - 1. we, as believers, will be **WITH** our sovereign, gracious, merciful, faithful God!
 - 2. we will no longer look to God in faith – we will see Him face to face, AS HE IS!
- c. **“FOREVER”**
 - 1. but . . . we will all not only **be with the Lord** and with one another . . .
 - 2. but, we will all be with the Lord **and with one another FOREVER!**

B. The ENCOURAGEMENT Of God’s People.

Vs. 18 – “Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

- 1. The words that Paul has given to the church are supposed to comfort them.
 - a. as the church of Thessalonica wondered what happened to those who died in the Lord, they now knew
 - b. as we struggle with the death of Christian loved ones as well as our own mortality, now, we know
 - 2. It is interesting to note that the word for encouragement is the Greek word **parakalew**.
 - a. **two Greek words**
 - 1. **para**
 - a. to be beside
 - b. to be near
 - 2. **kalew**
 - a. to call
 - b. to invite
 - b. **KJV, NASV** translate the word as comfort
 - c. it is the **same root word used to describe the Holy Spirit**
 - 1. one who is called to one’s side
 - 2. an intercessor
 - 3. one who pleads the case of another
 - 4. KJV, NASV - comforter
3. **All of this means that THIS IS HOW WE ARE TO ENCOURAGE AND COMFORT ONE ANOTHER AS CHRISTIANS!**
 - a. **ESPECIALLY** those who have lost a loved one!
 - b. we are to come up beside the one grieving and say:
 - 1. feel free to grieve, but not as those who have no hope
 - 2. because Jesus is coming again

3. and He will take us home to be with Him AND TO THAT LOVED ONE THAT YOU JUST LOST!
4. There was a little, **five-year-old girl** who was **watching her brother die of a very, very painful disease.** He was much older than she and she loved him a lot. And after he died and the funeral was over she said to her mother, **“Mommy, where...where did brother go?”** To which her mother replied, **“Well, he went to heaven to be with Jesus.”** She said, **“Oh.”** And that satisfied her little mind.
 Not long after that she heard her mother having a conversation with a friend and her mother was weeping and saying, **“I’ve lost my son...I’ve lost my son...I’ve lost my son.”**
 Later in the day the little five-year-old went to her mother and said, **“Mommy, is somebody lost when we know where they are?”**

Conclusion:

1. As one Pastor wisely said, **“The Second Coming is the next big event on God’s calendar.”**
 - a. now, nobody knows when that will happen
 - b. so, don’t get upset when you hear that someone knows the day, because He doesn’t
 - c. DESPITE what has been going on in our world from 9/11 to all of these hurricanes, we STILL don’t know!

2. The question is NOT . . . when will Jesus Christ return – NO . . . the question actually is – **WILL YOU BE READY?**

a. **Jesus Christ Himself said this to His disciples:**

Matthew 24:36-44 –

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, **people were eating**

and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and

took them all away. **That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**

Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of

night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his

house be broken into. **So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."**

b. Learn from some handicapped children how to properly apply God's Word - **Shepherd's Home, in Union Grove, Wisconsin,** is a loving home for the mentally ill, but it has a problem. **They can't keep their windows clean.** For you see, many children have been nurtured in Christian love through this home. **Many have also come to know Jesus as their Savior. They have also learned about the soon return of Jesus.** This is a teaching the children of Shepherd's Home have taken seriously. And that's the problem--**each day the children run to the window and press up against it, to see if this is the day Jesus will return. That's why they can't keep the windows clean.**

1. Paul's words to the church at Thessalonica were intended to encourage those who were

grieving over the death of fellow believers. What should be the difference between

the

grief of non-believers and the grief of believers when they lose a loved one to death?

2. What is the spiritual significance and application of Paul referring to the death of Christians as “going to sleep?”
3. Paul is describing in our text the “Rapture” of the church at His Second Coming. Discuss what will happen at the Second Coming to believers who have already died and to those who are still living at His return.
4. Discuss the possible response of those who will be “left behind” after Christ’s Second Coming. Discuss how the loss of Christians will affect the world. (Try to put yourself in the “shoes” of those who are left behind.)
5. How do you respond emotionally to Verse 17 – “and so we will be **with the Lord forever.**” How does such a verse impact you spiritually?
6. How would you use these verses to encourage a believer who has lost a fellow believer to death? (Use the entire text to answer this question.)