

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**  
**November, 2020**  
**Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam**

Death.

It strikes often and without warning. Death is no respecter of persons – the young die just as easily as the old; the rich and famous die just as easily as the poor and the unknown. Death came into the world as a result of sin. And the Bible is very clear, the soul who sins is the one that will die! We will die one day.

We may have questions about death and the fate of those who have died before us. Some of those questions will be answered today. Let us consider: **The Coming of the Lord.**

Before we look at what Paul says about the coming of the Lord, note how he refers to the believers who had died. He called them the dead in Christ, and those who have fallen asleep. When Paul describes death as a “sleep” he isn't trying to make something bad seem a bit better. No, Paul is describing what death is like for a person who has died as a believer in Jesus. Death is like a sleep in which a person is unaware of anything around him, but from which he awakes to use all of his abilities and senses again.

We aren't afraid to lay our head on our pillow at night and fall asleep. We are confident that we will wake up to a new day. We don't have to be afraid to lay our head down on the pillow of death and fall asleep, either. Jesus will wake us to a new and glorious eternal day.

Those who don't believe that the dead will live again find no comfort when death strikes close to them. When a loved one dies, they will grieve in a way that shows that they have no hope. Instead of finding comfort in the promises of God that say the dead will live again, those who have no hope after death may find comfort in buying an expensive casket or expensive flowers for their loved ones.

There is nothing wrong with having beautiful caskets or beautiful flower arrangements. St. Paul is not saying that grieving is wrong, he says that Christians are not to grieve like unbelievers. Naturally people will grieve at the death of a loved one.

Paul says that Christians are not to grieve as though there is no hope. That is why Paul taught that Jesus died and rose again, showing His power over death. Paul said that if Christians believed that Jesus had risen, they should also believe what Jesus said, Because I live, you also will live. Jesus' resurrection and our resurrection go hand in hand.

What about the believers who are still alive at the coming of the Lord? Will they have an advantage over those who are in the grave? Not at all. Paul writes, 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.

The second coming of the Lord will not be a humble one like when Jesus came to the earth the first time. The mighty God, the One who fills the universe was born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. Jesus was burped, He had to have His diapers changed and had to be fed. But that baby was the mighty God in human form!

When Jesus comes again, He will come in all of His glory. The voice of the archangel will fill the air and the piercing sound of the trumpet will call the dead from their graves, All this will take place in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye as Paul tells us.

When the archangel gives the loud command, when the trumpet call of God ends time as we know it, the dead, the sleeping Christians, will rise to life, be united with their souls, and join the living Christians. Paul wants us to know that all the believers will enter eternal life together.

The reuniting of Christians will not take long. It will happen in the twinkling of an eye. What a joyful scene that will be for believers who have been parted from loved ones by death! Then Paul says that believers will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

Why will the believers rise to meet the Lord who is coming down to us? Peter answers that: The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Before the destruction of the earth takes place, all believers will be safely gone!

Then we will meet the Lord. We won't be ashamed to meet Him because we will be perfect just like He is! Our bodies will be changed.

In eternity this body will not have a sinful nature and we will not get sick and never die. We will never cry, we will never be cold or hot; we will never get into an argument or have cancer. Our bodies will be glorious!

Then, our text says, we will be with the Lord forever. Eternal life will be awesome! And the best part is that we will see Jesus and speak to Him, and thank the One who loved us the most!

At the end of Revelation Jesus said, I am coming soon. It has been almost 2,000 years since Jesus said those words. When will the end of the world take place? Soon. When will all believers be in heaven? Soon. But we don't know the exact day. But we should be ready for it.

It seems as though we are living in the last days. There are wars and rumors of wars; famines, earthquakes and tsunamis occur; Christians are suffering in the world; false prophets are everywhere; people are falling away from the faith; basic love for others has grown cold. Jesus could be coming soon!

When? Peter wrote, the day of the Lord will come like a thief. I remember Thanksgiving, November 26, 1981. We came home from spending the day with a nearby pastor and his family. We drove onto the mission grounds and noticed that the lights were on in the house. I parked the car and noticed that there were two men in the house. We were being robbed! I caught one of the young men, but we never did get back everything that had been taken. If we had known we would be robbed, we would have stayed home. We would have been ready!

When Jesus comes back, His return will be unexpected. When Jesus returns the hubbub of life will be going on as usual. The unbelievers at the time of Noah were surprised when the waters came pouring down. The unbelievers living in Sodom were surprised when fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them. When Jesus returns on the last day, the unbelievers will be surprised and then horrified that they didn't listen when told about the wonderful work Jesus did for them.

But it will be too late for last minute conversions. When Jesus comes, believers will be taken to their new home while the unbelievers will be taken to their eternal punishment. The last day will be unknown, unexpected, and sudden.

- *The second coming of our Lord is so near that it could happen today, before I finish this sermon.*

- *With every passing day I hope people see the truth, repent, and trust in Jesus as their Savior.*
- *Hold on to Christ in faith until Jesus comes.*
- *Our troubles and sorrows may end today.*
- *God has promised us many things, but He has never promised us another tomorrow.*
- *Don't stop making plans for the future.*
- *Don't quit your jobs and look up to the sky.*
- *As long as this world lasts do all you can to spread the gospel.*
- *Be faithful! Use God's Word and the Sacraments so that God's grace is before us.*
- *A new and awesome life could begin today!*

Those who have fallen asleep in Christ are celebrating new life with God right now. Their souls are with their Savior. They are enjoying the victory Jesus won for them!

When I was young I thought that I would be old in the year 2000. I thought surely I would be in heaven by then! But I am still here. When will I be with the Lord? God's Word says, soon. Jesus has won the great victory over sin, death, and hell. We know that! Jesus said on the cross that His work of saving sinful mankind was finished, completed! One day we will be with the the Trinity, the angels, and all the saints of God singing songs of triumphant praise to the God who loved us most!