

1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18

Don't be ignorant about those who are sleeping in the Lord

Quotable Quote on Christ's Second Coming

"The doctrine of the Lord's second coming, as it appears in the New Testament, is like a lofty mountain which dominates the entire landscape. . . Whatever doctrine I was pursuing, whatever precept I was enforcing, I found it fronting toward and terminating in the hope of the Lord's second coming." (A. J. Gordon)

Remember the Thessalonians were quite new in the faith. They probably didn't know many believers who had died. They were also thinking Christ would be returning shortly. They might have never thought about this before.

Verse 13

Sleeping is a comforting picture of death, but it is one the Bible only applies to believers.
How is this fact obscured today?

What wrong idea might people get from the word "sleep"?

Believers are not to grieve like unbelievers. Do you agree that they have no hope?

One of the events starkly showing the differences between believers and unbelievers is a funeral.

Verse 14

Instead of saying Jesus slept, Paul wrote that he died. Why do you think he did that?

"in him" – literally "through him". The idea is that because Jesus lives, we too live. He, the head, rose, therefore, we, his body, will rise.

Verse 15

“According to the Lord’s own words” – we do not have any words like these recorded in the Bible. Either the Lord gave them directly to Paul or else they were passed down orally by the believers.

Verses 16-17

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 says all this will happen in the twinkling of an eye.

What picture of Judgment Day and heaven do verses 16-17 suggest?

Verse 18

How can we do an even better job of encouraging each other with the teaching of Christ’s return?

The Popular but Unscriptural Teaching of the Rapture

The word “rapture” comes from the Latin translation of “caught up” of 17. It is where we get our word, “raptor” for a bird of prey which swoops down and snatches its prey.

The error of the popular teaching of the rapture is that it separates what is described in these verses from Judgment Day. Most place the unscriptural teaching of the Millennium (a thousand reign of Jesus on earth) between the rapture and Judgment Day.

Some biblical facts to keep in mind to see that the rapture is unbiblical.

1) The Bible always connects Jesus’ coming with Judgment Day and the end of the universe. See, for example, Matthew 16:27; 2 Peter 3:10.

2) The resurrection of believers and unbelievers occur together. John 5:28-29

Whenever there is an error in teaching, it hurts believers and has the potential to rob people of their faith. What problems are caused by the teaching of the rapture?