

“What's Up!”

The Journey Part 12

The Purpose of This Series- This series is entitled “The Journey” particularly for the purpose of learning to live the affective and fruitful life of a believer. These thirteen messages are shared to give the believer, young or old, new or seasoned, a clearer picture of the life intended for them and what God has for them. I believe this series will help the believer tie up some loose end and help them walk with confidence and abundance.

The Purpose of This Message- Today we are going to walk in some territory that has taken a backseat to many other popular teachings. For some reason, heaven and it's discussion among critical thinkers in the church has come under scrutiny because of it's seemingly escapism mentality. It as if one needs to be almost apologetic to speak on the subject for fear of ruffling the feathers of a here and now message. Well, this message is unapologetic! It is bold, it is straight and it is accurate. Two things happen because of the lack of teaching on this subject matter, one, you become ignorant about all the reasons we serve God. Second you lose a huge source of encouragement. Both of these are key components in a healthy Christian walk. “What's Up?” Jesus, He's coming back for you and I. Dig deep into this message, it will help you understand and will encourage you in your walk with Christ.

“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. 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.

I Thessalonians 4:13-14

“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.”

I Thessalonians 4:15

*“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.”*

I Thessalonians 4:16

“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. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

I Thessalonians 4:17-18

Knowing- An interesting movie that is out is called “Knowing,” a PG-13 released on March 20, 2009. The main character, (Nicolas Cage) John Koestler, a widower and professor of astrophysics at MIT, where he helps students focus on the research paper over **Determinism** verses **Randomness**. He asks for an explanation and one of the students defines Determinism as occurrences in nature are determined by an unbroken chain of prior occurrences and that everything that has lead up to this point was for a purpose. The question was, “What caused the earth to be perfectly position at the exact distance from the sun to survive.”

On the other hand, it all happened by **Randomness**, a lack of order, or purpose, or cause, all

that happens occurred by coincidence. The idea is that all that exist is nothing but a **chain of random accidents**. There is no grand meaning, no purpose.

Today, as we review this scripture, they will confront some of the same ideas, Determinism or Randomness that may be laying ever so quiet in the back of your mind. Is there a purpose, an unbroken chain of prior occurrences that leads up to a certain end point? Or does the debate of Randomness wonder through your mind when it comes to what God's Word has to say? It is very clear in this passage of scripture that there is a purpose, Determinism is at the heart of all we believe and do and we are **not to neglect conversation on this matter**.

Who Stole My Heaven?

I thought of other titles such as, "Who stole my heaven?", "What's Wrong With Heaven?", "Silence On A Big Subject." It is something that Paul commands us to talk about and it is something that he talks about on **several occasions in I Thessalonians**.

I believe that's why the American band, **Los Lonely Boys wrote** and released a single in **mid-2004**, "**Heaven**" reached the Top 40 on the US Billboard Hot 100 chart, **peaking at #16 in August**. Later that year, the song began a **sixteen week run at #1**. It even crossed over to become a minor hit on country radio, where it peaked at #46. Here's one of the lines of the song:

**I've been lost in my own place
And I'm getting weary
(How far is Heaven?)
And I know that I need to change
My ways of living
(How far is Heaven?)
Lord can you tell me?**

I Thessalonians

When Paul wrote this letter the Thessalonians had become believers in Christ at the most a matter of a few months and the big questions of life and death were being addressed. Obviously, Paul had taught them about eternal life and since each chapter of I Thessalonians addresses this subject, it must have been a heavy subject on his heart. He must have helped them transition their worship of idols to worship a coming King, one who would bring them to an eternal Kingdom.

But the details of heaven must have been a little foggy or someone kept confusing the Thessalonians because it caused them to ask questions like, "If you die, what happens then?" We can tell by Paul's writing that there was a need to address heaven, death and eternity very specifically. Actually, if you read on over in II Thessalonians you will see that Paul was having to take some extra time correcting some very unhealthy and untrue ideas concerning the coming of Christ.

"Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come."

II Thessalonians 2:1-2

I'm not sure if you ever saw any of the left behind movies. I've not seen any of the recent ones, but I do remember those made either in the 60's or 70's. I remember the stories of the mark of the beast and people being killed who wouldn't take the mark. It was such low production but the message got through. Every time a train went past our house sounding his horn I double checked to see if one of my parents were home... just in case:) One thing I knew is, I didn't want to get left behind.

There was someone associated with or within the body of believers in Thessalonica who had been spreading false statements, either by pretending to have a prophetic word, an authorized public statement, or some fabricated letter from Paul that said that Christ had already come back and already left again, it was all over. This was their "Left Behind" story. You can see how this would be a hard blow to anyone attempting to put their trust in God and finding out that the boat left the dock two weeks ago.

This news left the believers confused, some, probably were upset. It would be easy to believe that some of them lost hope and walked away from the group while others sat and worried or fearful contemplative mode thinking that they missed what we called "The Rapture."

Where's Heaven?

Recently, for some reason, the idea of heaven has gotten a bad wrap. There are obvious challenges to having an escapist mentality, hoping that we can avoid life and just move on to heaven. The older I get I understand my grandmother losing her eyesight and mobility, sitting in her rocking chair and wondering why God hadn't taken her home.

We need to encourage each other and engage with each other in reminding each other of the understanding of verses 13-17. Paul supplies us with a complete understanding of verses 13-17 so that we can fully do what he asks the believers to do in verse 18, "*encourage each other with these words.*"

"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."

I Thessalonians 4:13

1. Understand God

God communicates and He wants us to know things! For example, we read, "God said" ten times in Genesis 1 alone. God wants to reveal to us so we can understand His purpose and plan in this world. Many people have speculated about what God truth is, contradicting each other. Philosophers and religious leaders have all attempted to tell what God is thinking or up to only to muddy the water.

What's The Bible?

The truth is, God wants you to know what He is up to. Through His clear and divine revelation we call the Bible, you and I don't have to guess. You could say that the Bible is really compiled of many of His thoughts, several books rather than a single book. But each book compliments the other ones. The last division of our Bible contains twenty-seven books we call the New Testament. It begins with the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John which is a record of the life, death, burial, resurrection, and return to heaven of Jesus. And within the following books it clearly provides

instructions to Christians and Christian churches about how to think and live in light of who Jesus is and what he has done and is going to do.

Roughly three-quarters of the Christian Bible is the Old Testament. The Old Testament has 929 chapters and 23,214 verses. The New Testament has 260 chapters and 7,959 verses. In the Old Testament, the longest book is Psalms and the shortest book is Obadiah. In the New Testament, the longest book is Acts and the shortest book is 3 John.

Verbal Plenary Inspiration

This belief that God shared His thoughts as human authors, whom he inspired to perfectly record his words, is called **verbal** (the very words of the Bible) **plenary** (every part of the Bible) **inspiration** (are divinely inspired revelation). Very simply, this means that God the Holy Spirit inspired not just the thoughts of Scripture, but also the very details and exact words that were perfectly recorded for us as Scripture.

This doctrine challenges us in two ways to sit up and pay attention, first because we have to determine if God is capable of doing this, and the response would be a loud “yes!” The second challenge that we are faced with is it in God's character to do less? **God is a truthful God or does He lie** (Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2)? God is capable of communicating clearly with human authors and God does not lie, His Word is true. This unique collection of writings is perfect, and unlike any other writing and utterance known to man.

Scripture claims to be God-breathed or inspired:

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”

2 Tim. 3:16–17

The New Testament Is A Revelation Of Our Future As A Believer

*“Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, **searched intently and with the greatest care**, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.”*

1 Peter 1:10–11

- **Searched Intently/Careful search** (1567) (*ekzeteo* from *ek* = intensifies the meaning of *zetéo* = seek, the preposition “*ek*” in compound always seems to denote that **the seeker finds or at least exhausts his powers of seeking**) means to seek out, search diligently for anything lost, to seek in order to obtain or know and to exert considerable effort and care in learning something.
 - **Greatest Care/Inquiry** (1830) (*exereunao* from *ek* = an intensifier and *ereunao* = to search into, **investigate, explore**) means to search diligently for something, especially for something hidden **like miners** engaged in digging for precious metals in the bowels of the earth. This word was first used to tell of a **dog sniffing** out something with his nose.

“It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they

spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.”

1 Peter 1:12

This is incredible passage of scripture indicating the process by which we have this revelation in our hand. The purpose was so that we would not be ignorant as to what God wants us to know and what we should share with each other. Peter explains how the prophets of old did not just write in a delusional trance, but “searched intently and with the greatest care...”, (Vs. 10) trying to pinpoint times and circumstances as the Holy Spirit stirred their hearts. They had this great revelation and understanding that what they were writing had future significance, that it would reveal to future people the work of God through Christ. And, the angels so desperately wanted to understand what God was up to, but God reveals it to man.

You Must Understand To Stop Being Ignorant

It was Paul's desire that no one remained ignorant about what happens to our life after death. To do so you must get understanding to stop being ignorant, that would be found in the Word of God. You cannot fully conceive God's truth on the matter of death and resurrection, (or on any matter), if you are open to the idea, a distorted view of God's Word, a struggle with the accuracy of God's Word. You cannot have a Biblical view of God's future if you believe there is inaccuracies in the Biblical views past! Actually, if you believe there is error in God's Word then you cannot help but be ignorant, because your belief is in something with error and that would not be wisdom or evidence of understanding, but error itself and ignorant. Where does this all stop or end? It's simple to me, **“Believe it all or don't believe it at all.”**

That's why Peter's words were so strongly written, making the most important point, the key subject for discussion and conscience decision on the accuracy of God's Word. Look what he says,

“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

2 Peter 1:20–21

Peter says, **“above all,”** there is nothing more important, if you don't get this right you will always live in error. Your understanding this point is the foundation for understanding everything else. The Word of God was not a commentary on his own personal spiritual experiences and observations. These were words written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for our leading and understanding so we can get it right.

See, not only are the 27 books of the New Testament complimentary to each other, there are roughly **three hundred explicit Old Testament quotations** in it, words of the prophets who gave the greatest care to hear the Holy Spirits voice so that you and I would know what to believe and how to proceed in this life. Within the New Testament are upwards of **four thousand Old Testament concepts, ideas and thoughts developed within the New Testament.** Mark Driscoll states...

“The Old Testament is a series of promises that God makes and the New Testament is the record of the fulfillment of those promises.”

That is just one of the reasons the Bible is the bestselling book of all time. It is now available in nearly three thousand languages. True Christians believe that Scripture is not only accurately written, but accurately written, then it is without question the highest authority. During the Protestant Reformation, the slogan ***sola scriptura*** (and sometimes *prima scriptura*) became popular to summarize this conviction; **it means Scripture alone is our highest authority.**

2. Understanding Christ

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”
1 Corinthians 15:17

Listen, if this book we call the Bible is inaccurate and Jesus never rose from the dead, that is not the end of the Gospel, because the Gospel is not just a message of Jesus, it is a message of redemption! If the Bible is inaccurate and Jesus never rose, you and I would still be lost. We would still be experiencing what so many experienced before Christ came into the Word. If Christ never came you and I would still be lost in our sins. Christ coming didn't create the idea that we needed a savior, that we needed to be saved, that we needed redemption. Christ coming finally relieved the hopelessness of sin and condemnation. His coming met the need that so many generations grieved and looked for. Even in the Jewish tradition, Christ fulfills their very activities, but they cannot see it. They keep looking for a messiah. And so does this world. They are looking for one to rise up and save mankind. More now than ever before. This world is not without the need to be redeemed and saved, we are selling out to anyone who can offer that.

In his 700 page book called, “***The Resurrection of the Son of God***”, notable New Testament scholar **N.T. Wright** tells us that during Christ time many people, Pagans and Jews alike, believed that there was something after death. But Christians claimed something specific and different happened to Jesus in His death and resurrection and it would happen to his followers as well. See, many people are talking about life after death, but they are not talking about resurrection! They are talking about a continuation of life, but at a different location. But as a Christian we are talking about a “new” life, with a new body, a new purpose and a new world in which we will live.

It was very obvious during the days of the New Testament how different the Christian's view of resurrection and eternal life was from everyone else's. Today it is not so, we don't realize the full difference. The significance of Christ resurrection has become more about us going to heaven and getting on God's team rather than the abolition of sin so we could encounter what Christ experienced. It's popular to think “heaven.”

We need help, we need a savior! It's hard for many people to understand why we celebrate Easter. The main reason we do is because if Christ didn't resurrect then there is still no savior, no salvation, no forgiveness of sin, no hope of resurrected eternal life. Christ' life, his power displayed and miracles performed would have been wasted if he had not followed through in this final point, raising from the dead.

If the resurrection of Jesus didn't take place, a few billion people who worship Jesus

would still be lost in their sins looking for another route to connect with a living God. But He did resurrect, and you can believe mostly by the affect it had on His disciples:

- Christ resurrection was so transformational that the disciples happily exchanged their lives as martyrs and no longer feared death but looked forward to it.
- His resurrection was proved what they believed was true since no group of men would carry out a continued sacrifice of life when they had so much opportunity to live. Think about it, they were treated as kings, why live in poverty and abuse...unless it's all true.
- The central truth of the early church was that Jesus was resurrected and that we would follow Him at death through our own resurrection.

The Historical evidence of Jesus' Resurrection

Thomas Arnold (professor of Modern History at Oxford):

“No one fact in the history of mankind . . . is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort” than the fact that “Christ died and rose from the dead.”

1. Josephus (AD 37–100)

Josephus was a Jewish historian born just a few years after Jesus died. His most celebrated passage, called the “*Testimonium Flavianum*” says:

“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.” (Flavius Josephus, “Jewish Antiquities” in *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 1999), 18.63–64)

2. Suetonius (AD 70–160)

Suetonius was a Roman historian and annalist of the Imperial House. In his biography of Nero (Nero ruled AD 54–68), Suetonius mentions the persecution of Christians by indirectly referring to the resurrection: “Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition [the resurrection].” (Suetonius *Vita Nero* 16.11–13)

3. Pliny the Younger (AD 61 or 62–113)

Pliny the Younger wrote a letter to the emperor Trajan around 111 describing early Christian worship gatherings that met early on Sunday mornings in memory of Jesus’ resurrection day:

“I have never been present at an examination of Christians.

Consequently, I do not know the nature of the extent of the punishments usually meted out to them, nor the grounds for starting an investigation and how far it should be pressed. . . . They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day [Sunday in remembrance of Jesus' resurrection] to chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god . . .(Pliny the Younger Letters 10.96.1–7)

4. The Jewish explanation

The earliest attempt to provide an alternative explanation for the resurrection of Jesus did not deny that the tomb was empty. (Matt. 28:13–15) Instead, Jewish opponents claimed that the body had been stolen, thus admitting the fact of the empty tomb. But this explanation is untenable for the following reasons.

1. The tomb was closed with an enormous rock and sealed by the government, and there is no explanation for how the rock was moved while being guarded by armed Roman soldiers.
2. If the body were stolen, a large ransom could have been offered to the thieves and they could have been coerced to produce the body. Or, if it had been taken by the disciples, then the torture and death they suffered should have been sufficient to return the body and expose the crime.
3. Even if the body was stolen, how are we to account for the fact that Jesus appeared to multiple crowds of people, proving that he was alive?

For further study on the resurrection:

- Dr. Normal Geisler: http://www.equip.org/site/c.mul1LaMNjRE/b.2548567/k.FFA4/I_Believe_In_The_Resurrection_of_the_Flesh.htm
- N.T. Wright: http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Jesus_Resurrection.htm
- *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* by Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona
- *The Resurrection of the Son of God* by N.T. Wright

God doesn't want us to be ignorant so He provided us with His Word. Jesus doesn't want us to be ignorant so He provided us with His Word. Peter doesn't want us to be ignorant. And He provided us with his word.

3. Understanding Paul

"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."

I Thessalonians 4:13

Fall Asleep/Are Asleep (2837) (*koimao* related to *keímai* = **to lie outstretched, to lie down**) literally refers to normal sleep but is used **figuratively** in the present context referring to those who are dead and specifically those who are **"dead in Christ"** ("those also who have fallen asleep in Christ")

The word "sleep" in the Bible is used of normal sleep, a recovery process by which the body goes into a temporary rest.

- John 11:11-12- Jesus says that Lazarus is asleep.
- Acts 7:60- When Stephen was being stoned to death he fell asleep.
- I Corinthians 11:30- Paul says that a number were asleep.
- II Peter 3:4- mentions that the fathers fell asleep.
- Death for a Christian is a temporary, physical a physical condition not one of the soul.

The term "sleep" or the concept of sleep does not refer to the soul. **There is no such thing as souls sleeping.** When Stephen was dying in Acts 7 he said, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*" The Apostle Paul supports this thought in Philippians 1:23 when he says, "*Far better to depart and be with Christ.*"

So why does Paul tell them about those who "fall asleep?" Because he doesn't want them to grieve, just like the rest of the men who have no hope.

Foreign Films: I see this so vividly when I watch a foreign film. I know it should be so obvious to me in any show I watch here in America, but I am so conditioned to think that this is "normal." But when I watch a foreign film I can see the hopelessness of the people. They are so lost and they grieve without hope. Paul didn't want the Thessalonians to feel this way. As a matter of fact, he wanted them to be relieved, to absolutely view death in different terms.

Funerals: Over the years I have done several funerals, where the unbeliever has passed away and funerals for the believer and those who came, friends and family members who were unbelievers and the difference is day and night, the extreme difference is elated joy to hopelessness and terrifying. For the unbeliever it is a terrible reality of finality, no tomorrow, no future, no hope, finality.

We Have This Hope

John 14- The disciples were confused because Jesus was leaving, headed to the cross. In the middle of their distress He comforted them with these words, "I'm coming back."

1 Corinthians 15:51-58- In Corinth, there was great resistance the idea of the resurrection and the Corinthians were confused...will there be one? Paul writes them about resurrection .

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52in 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. 53For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 55'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' 56The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

I Thessalonians 4:13- Here they are, distressed and disturbed. But Paul affirms that those who have died have not done so in vain. Be encouraged...He is coming back for you!

The Rapture

Where do we get that concept, Rapture?

“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.”

I Thessalonians 4:17

The verb "will be caught up," is the verb *harpazo*, snatched. It means to snatch up, to seize, it means to carry off by force. And it has the idea of a sudden swoop of irresistible force that just sweeps us up. From a Latin word connected to this word comes our word rape, to give you the idea of the force, the seizure, the snatching concept. And so there is coming a snatching away, a seizing by force, the swooping us off, gathering us together to the Lord in the future. And Paul says in order to eliminate your ignorance and your consequent grief and to bring you comfort, I'm going to tell you about it.

Four Things About The Rapture

1. **The Pillars Of The Rapture-** The rapture is not a philosophy or speculation based on some religious myths to make people feel better about dieing. Jesus Himself gives us **three pillars** which we can trust in the coming of Christ,

“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.”

I Thessalonians 4:14

1. **The Death of Christ-**

There is no doubt here, “We believe!” If we believe that Jesus died, that's where it all begins. Do you believe He died? But listen, historians believe that He died, but it's important to start here to move on.

To believe in the Rapture, the coming of Jesus to snatch away His church, you must believe in the death of Christ. To believe in the death of Christ is to believe that His death paid my penalty for my sins. And his payment for my penalty gives me this eternal life. He became sin for us when He died for us, this is where we start.

Redemption

The word and derivatives thereof (e.g. redeemer, redeem) **appears** roughly **150 times** in the Bible, with only roughly **20 occurrences in the New Testament**. Redemption has often been taught as the price paid to free a slave, (taught by Origen in the early days of the church.) The idea is that Jesus died to pay off Satan to “redeem” us, but we must understand how wrong this illustration is, **Jesus owes Satan nothing**.

Redemption is synonymous with being liberated, freed, or rescued from bondage and slavery to a person or thing. If you want to see redemption in action, don't look at the slave in the market, look at God's people in Egypt whom He saves from slavery and tyranny under Pharaoh during the Exodus. God liberates Israel, but in no way did He pay off the satanic Pharaoh. Pharaoh and Egypt was clearly crushed by God. (Other verses providing the Exodus as the prototype of redemption include Exodus 15:1-18, Deuteronomy 7:8 and 15:15, 2 Samuel 7:23, 1 Chronicles 17:21, Isaiah 51:10, and Micah 6:4.)

"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.'"

Exodus 6:6

We Need Jesus!

"He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption."

Hebrews 9:12

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

1 Peter 1:18-19

The Benefits of Being Redeemed By Christ Now

- **The Curse of the Law**

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.""

Galatians 3:13

- **Satan & Demons**

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Colossians 1:13-14

- **The Flesh**

"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7because anyone who has died has been freed from sin."

Romans 6:6-7

- **The World**

“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which[a] the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Galatians 6:14

The Benefits of Being Redeemed By Christ Yet To Come

- **The Return of Jesus**

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.”

Job 19:25

- **A Resurrection Body**

“Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

Romans 8:23

- **Life Forever With God**

“But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself. Selah”

Psalms 49:15

How To Receive The Redemption of Christ

*“This righteousness from God comes **through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe**. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”*

Romans 3:22-24

God has done all He can do for you, it is up to you to take what He has done and allow it to have its full affect in you. You must apply your faith and believe. Believe that He has redeemed you from the curse of the Law. That Satan and his demons are restricted to you as a believer with God's Word invested and expressed by you. That the flesh will have to submit and the world is no longer your life attraction. The redemption of Christ's work sets us free!

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

John 11:25-26

After-life Theology According To Jesus

There are thousands of stories of the after life. Some seem better than others and therefore seem the most likely to accept. But in all reality,

there is one After-life theology, the creator's teaching. Jesus gives us four facts about the after-life:

1. **Jesus is the resurrection and the life-** He is the after-life. There is no resurrection into the blessed after-life without Christ' intervention. No man will see it outside of Him. Many attempt to find an after-life without Him but they will only find disappointment and painful grief.
2. **Whoever believes in Jesus will have this life and after-life-** Plain and simple, believe in and on Jesus and you will live eternally.
3. **Whoever is alive with this belief will never die-** This is more than a comforting statement, this is a living statement. You don't have to wait until you die to find this out, you can know it while you are alive!
4. **Do you believe this?** Again, Martha had no problem "believing" in Christ. But there was a faith issue she had with the after-life. She was mixed up theologically and had her mindset on how it was and had to be. Why is this so important? Because if you cannot get this theology correct it will distort the rest of God's theology. Your theology of the after-life will have and does have incomprehensible affect on God's ability to move in your present life! Look again at Martha's theological response after He asked her if she believed,

"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

John 11:27

- **She believed Him to be the Christ-** He was the promised Messiah that came to this earth by the appointment of God to take away the sins of the world that had been announced throughout time by the prophets. She had no trouble believing Jesus was the Christ.
 - **She believe Him to be the Son of God-** That can take many people years to grasp. That God sent His own son to this world to die for us that we might be "saved." This is such a necessary step in being "saved."
 - **She believed Him to be the One-** The one that would come as the King and totally rearrange the world as it was and under His leadership kingdoms would submit. He was that "one."
2. **The Resurrection of Christ-** *"We believe that Jesus died and rose again..."* Jesus being raised from the dead is a sign of God's approval of the sacrifice. Jesus Christ had triumphed over death for Himself and for every Christian.
 3. **The Reunion with Christ-** *"God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him."* Based on the death of Christ and its perfect work,

based on the resurrection of Christ and the Father's power, God is going to bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Christ.

2. **The Participants In The Rapture-**

"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."

I Thessalonians 4:15

Two kinds of people at the Rapture

1. **Alive Believers** who understand the death, resurrection and reunion and are alive and remain. Christians living at the time when the Lord comes back.

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Matthew 24:36

"He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."

Acts 1:7

"And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

Romans 13:11

2. **Dead Believers-** Those who believe the same way but are now dead, asleep.

3. **The Process Of The Rapture-**

*"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."*

I Thessalonians 4:16

"For the Lord Himself," It will not be an angel or angels, no substitute will be there because it will be the Lord. He is coming back for His bride. He is the bridegroom coming to take His bride. (Mark 13:26-27)

"He will come down from heaven." That's where Jesus is right now, at the right hand of the Father. (Hebrews 1:3) He's there, He's waiting to come down.

"...with I loud command," keleusma, a shout. This is a military term. It's as if the troops are all at ease and the command is **"Fall in."** **Luther translated the word meaning to stand up, it was a call to the church to stand up.** The church, the bride of Christ will respond!

"...with the voice of the archangel..." This is a unique statement, the only mention of an archangel is here and in Jude 9. In Jude 9 the archangel is designated as Michael and it could well be that he's the only archangel. The

Jews used to believe there were seven archangels. They all...their names all ended with "el" which is the term for God in Hebrew.

"...the trumpet call of God..." Trumpets are all over the Bible and were used for festivals, celebrations, convocations, judgments. But we know there's a trumpet at the Rapture. I Cor. 15:52 says *"The trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise."* Any time anybody wanted to get a crowd together to say anything to them for public announcements, proclamations they would blow the trumpet.

"...the dead in Christ will rise first." There will be a reunion. And what rises out of that grave is a glorified body to meet an already glorified spirit to become that eternal person in the image of Christ, like Him because they see Him as He is.

"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."

I Thessalonians 4:17

For those who are still alive, the living Christians, will be united to be a part of that group with Christ. Those who are alive and remain shall be caught, snatched up by irresistible force, plucked out of this world to meet with the others. This word, **"caught up"** is used:

- Matthew 11:12- a kingdom taken by force,
- John 10:12- a wolf snatching the sheep,
- John 10:28-29 when Jesus says, "No man can snatch you of My Father's hand," a violent act.
- 2 Corinthians 12:2, 4 of Paul being caught up into the third heaven.
- Acts 8:39, Philip caught up when the eunuch saw him no more and the Spirit of God just transported him supernaturally, it's a snatching.

"...together with them..." Everybody will be there. Those of days of old, those who you know now. It will be a wild experience as we realize those around us will be taking the same trip. We'll be caught up together with all those on this earth, in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

"...to meet the Lord in the air..." Your first visual encounter with Christ will be on thin air. You will not be in a judgement hall, on a mountain somewhere, but you will be with Him and millions of others standing in mid-air. I think you will be working on your "heaven legs." What an experience that will be.

"...who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

Philippians 3:21

"...we will be with the Lord forever." You will then realize that this is a final trip. This will never change, you will be with Christ forever. You will never have to question where you stand in your relationship with Christ. You will never be challenged by Satan or tempted again. You will never have to seek God for strength or do spiritual warfare again, you will be with the Lord forever!

4. **The Benefit of the Rapture.**

"Therefore encourage each other with these words."

I Thessalonians 4:18

"Therefore encourage each other with these words." Often the idea of the Rapture seems mysterious and a little spooky. The whens and hows are endlessly debated and confused. It is not meant to be a theological throw-down with Bobby Flay! It is meant to comfort you and I. The benefit of the Rapture in conversation and in thought is to capture focus on our future. It is not escapism or fatalism, it is realism! It will happen, it's going to happen and I believe soon.

Conclusion: Jesus has spent 2,000 years already preparing for us. That's our great hope. Although we as believers have an understanding of the seriousness of God's wrath against sin, we have this glorious truth of the gospel that Christ delivers us from it all or out of the coming wrath.

We do not want to be ignorant-

1. **We Want To Understand God-** God communicates and He wants us to know things!
2. **We Want To Understand Jesus-** Christ death, burial and resurrection causes us to understand God's plan for us and what can and will happen.
3. **We Want To Understand Paul-** So that we will see the work and plan of God for our lives, he doesn't want us to be ignorant!

We can Know Four Things About The Rapture

1. **The 3 Pillars Of The Rapture-**
 1. **The Death Of Christ**
 2. **The Resurrection Of Christ**
 3. **The Reunion With Christ**
2. **The Participants In The Rapture**
 - **Alive In Christ**
 - **Dead In Christ**
3. **The Process of The Rapture**
 - **Loud Command**
 - **Voice of the Archangel**
 - **Trumpet Call of God**
 - **Dead Shall Rise First**
4. **The Benefit of The Rapture- Encourage of one another**

For Further Study:

The First Resurrection concerns only believers and is composed of several distinct "stages" at different times. Note that all believers (not just saints martyred during the Great Tribulation) will reign with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom. The Second Resurrection deals only with unbelievers and occurs in a single "stage" or as a one time event. Both the First and Second Resurrections refer to physical or bodily resurrection, not spiritual resurrection.

- (1) The prototype resurrection forming the basis of the First Resurrection - Christ the first fruits of all subsequent resurrections of believers (1Co 15:20)
- (2) The Second "stage" of the First Resurrection - Believers who have died during the Church Age will be resurrected at the time the Lord returns to Rapture His Bride, the Church. (1 Th 4:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 1Co 15:50, 51, 52, 53, cp Jn 14:3)
- (3) The Third "stage" of the First Resurrection - The two witnesses who are killed in Revelation 11 are raised and then went up to heaven (Re 11:11, 12-notes Re11:11; 12)
- (4a) The Fourth "stage" of the First Resurrection - After the Great Tribulation, believers who have been martyred will be resurrected to immortality (Re 7:9,14; regarding saints martyred during the Great Tribulation, Re 20:4-6)
- (4b) The Fourth "stage" of the First Resurrection - After the time of Jacob's Distress or Trouble (= the Great Tribulation), the Old Testament saints will also be resurrected (see OT descriptions of resurrection - Daniel 12:1, 2, 13, Isaiah 26:19, Job 19:26)
- (5) The Second Resurrection - After the 1000 year Millennial Kingdom all of the unbelieving dead will be resurrected to stand before the Great White Throne judgment and since their names are not found written in the book of life, they will be cast into the Lake of fire, which constitutes the Second Death, eternal separation away from the glory of God. (Re 20:11-15)

Will the “Rapture” Be Pre, Mid, or Post (Richard Mayhue)

The following seven evidences point to a pretribulational rapture. In this writer’s opinion, they create a far more compelling case than the reasoning given for any other time of the rapture...

- (1) The Church Is Not Mentioned in Revelation 6-18 as Being on Earth
- (2) The Rapture Is Rendered Inconsequential if It Is Posttribulational
- (3) The Epistles Contain No Preparatory Warnings of an Impending Tribulation for Church-Age Believers
- (4) First Thess 4:13-18 Demands a Pretribulational Rapture
- (5) John 14:1-3 Parallels 1 Thess 4:13-18
- (6) The Nature of Events at Christ’s Posttribulational Coming Differs from That of the Rapture
- (7) Rev 3:10 Promises That the Church Will Be Removed Prior to Daniel’s Seventieth Week