

Jesus is Coming, Taking us to Heaven

1 Thessalonians 4:14–18

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Jesus' disciples and the Apostle Paul all believed that Jesus was coming in their lifetime. They didn't think two thousand years would go by without Jesus returning. Their teaching and preaching was focused on people being forgiving of their sins. They anticipated that Jesus would come sometime soon. They lived with this sense of urgency. That kind of urgency drove their thinking and actions. They spoke to people about Jesus. They traveled to villages, towns, and cities to talk about Jesus. They traveled to far away places to share the Good News of Jesus.

For them death was either filled with finality or it was the beginning of life in heaven. They knew Jesus would come quickly without notice. They were prepared but they wanted others to be prepared. When Jesus came they understood that was the end of life on this earth and the start of life in heaven. They were eager rejoice and give thanks for the victorious Savior and Lord to take away sin and open up heaven. They were waiting for the arrival of Jesus to receive their reward, a new body among the many other blessings. They didn't want anyone to suffer in hell.

1 Thessalonians 4:14–15 (NIV) 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. 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.

If I've fallen asleep before Jesus returns, then I will come with Jesus when He returns. Many believers have fallen asleep, died, and Jesus has not yet returned. All the promises of Jesus remain true and are still powerful. Everything Jesus said about living as His disciples is still true. All that is written about the return of Jesus still applies.

As Christians we may have grown complacent. We might have lost our edge and thought Jesus isn't coming in our lifetime. It's possible that other ideas about His return have invaded our thinking. We may even believe that life right now is too important to worry about Jesus' return.

The people in Thessalonica were still thinking that Jesus could come at any moment. They were living in a city that had experienced riots and contentious moments between Christians and the unsaved. More than one believer had been persecuted for their faith in Jesus. This wasn't a deterrent for these believers. They kept talking about Jesus. They kept talking about the forgiveness of sins. They kept talking about eternal life in heaven. They grieved for loved ones who came to Jesus but had died.

Paul writes these words of encouragement to them. He offers to them an explanation for how to live in the midst of their sorrow. He tells them that their loved ones are only sleeping. Jesus used the word sleeping to describe death for those who believed in Him. He is speaking of the rest that only comes from being saved from our sins and to be in heaven. To be sleeping means those who love Jesus and died are no longer burdened with this life. All their cares, anxieties, worries, suffering and pain have been taken away. They are at rest. They are waiting for them to return with Jesus.

I know that some day my body will quit working. Lightning might strike, cancer may take over, my lungs might stop functioning and this body will die. It doesn't matter if I'm on my motorcycle, in my bed, or walking along the beach. I know that when I die I will be in heaven. I will receive a new spiritual body that isn't overweight and is completely healthy.

I am encouraged by this and it gives me peace. If I die then I won't be here on earth when Jesus returns. I will be singing and shouting, I'm better at shouting, and rejoicing at the return of Jesus. I won't be lying in a grave. I won't be rotting skin and smelly. I will be resting in my new spiritual body in heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NIV) 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.

When Jesus returns you will see your loved ones and Jesus. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ will be dramatic. Nature is filled with dramatic events. Volcanos erupt and earthquakes happen. Tornados destroy, hurricanes bring floods and devastation. Blizzards happen every winter. They are powerful and we stand in awe and wonder at their power. They are nothing compared to what will happen when the command is given, the archangel speaks, and the trumpet sounds.

I've been to concerts that are loud. I've stood beside Niagara Falls. I've been to sporting events. Everyone of them has been so loud I could barely hear myself or the person beside me. The concerts have been fun. Being at the Falls is exhilarating. Screaming with a hundred thousand other people is invigorating. I've held my new born children and grandchildren. I know the joy, hope and peace that brings. I've experienced the contentment and peace of those moments.

They are only a sample of what it is like to see the sign of the Son of Man in the sky. All the joy I've experience in this life will feel imperfect to the elation of hearing the command of Jesus. The hope that has filled my soul will be complete at the voice of the archangel. The peace that has comforted my spirit will be all-satisfying when my the trumpet sounds. Glory, hallelujah, praise the Lord.

If I've died before all that happens then I'll be right behind Jesus, as he breaks through the clouds, with all the saints who have gone on before us. In my new spiritual body and I will rise to the occasion. I will be part of the multitudes of those who have fallen asleep. I will then be among those who have died in Christ. I will be singing the songs of heaven. I will be shouting the praises of the victorious Savior and Lord.

Who will be with me? My mom, my dad, my grandparents because they have died in Christ. I will be with those who loved Jesus from generations ago. Coming with Jesus will be Adam and Eve, Noah, Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jerimiah, Daniel, Peter, James, John, Paul. Coming with Jesus will be your loved ones, husbands, wives, parents, siblings, children who died in Christ.

You will see them, you will know them, they will know you. You and the others who are still alive when Jesus returns will be rejoicing. Your salvation is complete. You will receive a new body. What a glorious day that will be. In the majesty of Jesus' Second Coming all those who have died in Christ will rise to welcome the King and His living followers. Glory, Hallelujah, Praise the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NIV) 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 am looking forward to an uninterrupted life with Jesus. If you're caught up in the details of when, where, and how Jesus will return then don't miss that heaven is eternal. If you're caught up in your daily activities, wondering how you'll make to the next day, remember Heaven is forever. If you're thinking that this life is too much and you don't think you can go any further, know that you will be with Jesus forever when you're in heaven. No matter what you are doing when Jesus returns you will be rejoicing because your sins have been forgiven. No matter where you are when Jesus comes back you will meet Him in the heavens.

The problems of the moment will no longer matter. The troubles of the present will disappear. The burdens of your life will be meaningless. You will enter in the greatest forever possible. Forever in heaven is nothing like forever on earth. Anything you've experienced in this life can't compare very long to being in heaven for eternity.

We've mentioned before your new spiritual body. It will no longer be corrupted by any affliction or disease. You won't have any allergies, there will be no arthritis, diabetes won't exist. Your eyes will work perfectly along with your heart and every joint, muscle, and nerve ending. Every cell in your body, every chromosome, and all of your DNA will be perfect.

You will still have your personality: shy or bold, insightful or hands on, funny or serious. Your eyes will be blue or brown, or green just like they are now. You will laugh like you always have. Your voice will stay unique to who you are. You will be busy tending to the things of heaven, but it will never feel like work. You will find rest and peace, but you won't ever need to sleep. Every activity you do will be undeniably glorifying and honoring to your Creator God your Savior and Lord.

Choosing Jesus now in this life as your Savior and Lord is the only way to get to heaven. Jesus came from heaven. Jesus had everything in heaven as the Son of God. Jesus didn't need anything in Heaven. He was seated at the right hand of God.

He could see every person. He knew every mistake we made. He was aware of every possible attempted we made to do what was good, what was right. He saw us fail over and over and over again. Without any hope of every being good, being right, of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and spirit Jesus saw us miss the mark every time. Before you were born, before your grandparents knew each other, before there was the sky above and land below

Jesus knew that you and I would never be perfect. He knew we would fail, we would cuss, lie, cheat, steal, be filled with envy, and kill. He knew we would reject His guidance, His care, His love. He knew we would seek to be independent of Him.

He knew how to save to us. He knew He would come this earth, heal the sick, cast out the demons, feed the hungry, love the unlovable, be rejected, beaten and die on a cross. Jesus knew He would become our sin, be separated from God because of our sin, and provide forgiveness for every person from every generation, every nation, every tribe, every language.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 (NIV) Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Tell saints and sinners alike that they can be with Jesus forever. Every person needs to choose the grace Jesus offers. No one deserves to be in heaven. No one can earn the right to be in heaven. No one can get to heaven without Jesus.

What He is offering is grace. It is what we don't deserve. Our lack of faith binds us to eternal separation from God, but Jesus offers grace. Our unwillingness to trust God condemns us to eternal punishment, but Jesus offers grace. Our rejection of God demands eternity in hell, but Jesus offers grace.

But grace isn't free and it isn't cheap. To receive grace Jesus had to live the perfect life we can't. Grace cost Jesus His life. He paid our penalty, our punishment by dying on the cross. That's grace.

Jesus offers His grace, but you need to choose it. Each person that chooses Jesus' grace finds life in heaven. Each person that chooses Jesus receives power over temptation and sin in this life. Each person that takes Jesus as their Savior and Lord has hope in this life. Each person that loves Jesus finds peace. Every person must make this choice in order to be in heaven.

It isn't about being good, but choosing Jesus. It isn't about being in a church building, but choosing Jesus. It isn't about your parents, your siblings, your neighbor. Faith, grace, being in heaven is about you choosing Jesus. You can't pay lip service to Jesus and think you've chosen Jesus. You must love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and spirit.

You can fake out others, you can fake out me, but Jesus knows what you are doing and what you are thinking. He wants you to be fully committed to Him. He wants you to cast aside, throw away, reject your selfishness and your sin and to trust Him. He wants you to be His brother or His sister. He wants you to be in heaven with Him forever.

You can choose Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You can be forgiven of your sins and be empowered to overcome sin. You can find joy and hope. You can be at peace.

You must choose Jesus. Heaven is waiting for you when you tell Jesus that you have sinned against Him. Heaven is your eternal home when you speak to Jesus about filling your life with His Holy Spirit. Heaven will welcome you as you look only at Jesus.

I know that you want to be heaven. I know that you want to have the peace and joy of Jesus in your life today. I know that you want to overcome the power of sin in your life.

This is your day, this is your moment to call upon Jesus.