SLIDE 1

"THE COMING OF CHRIST"

June 25, 2023

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

Calvary Chapel Pahrump Valley

INTRODUCTION

1973 was the year I began seriously following Christ. Ever since then, I've been anticipating the return of Jesus Christ *for* His church, and eventually *with* His church to set up His kingdom here on earth.

All of this comes under the category of the doctrine of *last things*, or end times. The world as we know it is coming to an end, thank the Lord.

The big question is this: will you be on the right side of history, when it comes?

So, this is the backdrop for this morning's study. BTW, these notes will be contained in the YouTube video of this message, if any are interested. Lots of scripture going on the screen today!

TEACHING

SLIDE 2

Paul Answers Their Concerns About Dead Believers (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

***4:13** "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope."*

- This is what shepherds do. They learn their flocks, their congregations, and they impart the truth of God to them in His Word. They care.

- Their concerns had to do with the sequence of things at the Lord's coming.

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  Bible Teacher/Commentator Warren Wiersbe: "The believers in Thessalonica were concerned about their loved ones who had died. What if the Lord should return? Would their deceased loved ones be handicapped in any way? Will those who are alive at His coming have an advantage over the believers who have died? In this paragraph, Paul answered their questions."

  NOTE: We find our answers to these questions in God's written revelation, in the Bible. We don't look to spiritists, we don't look to philosophers, we don't rely on human reasoning, we look to the Word of God.

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  We rely upon the authority of the One who died and rose for us; our Savior Jesus Christ, who:

  2 Timothy 1:9-*10b*- "…has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, **10** but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, ***who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel**…"

- We sorrow … there is much pain in loss, which produces sorrow. But we do not sorrow as those who have no hope.

  I cannot even imagine life without Christ, without the hope of eternal life!

  e.g., experiment with rats by Johns Hopkins professor Curt Richter. In the 1950s, he conducted an experiment with wild rats.

  He put some wild rates into a jar filled with water, and within minutes they died.

  Next, he took other wild rats and put into a water filled jar. Just before they were expected to die, however, he picked them up, held them a little while, and then put them back in the water. "In this way," he wrote, "the rats quickly learn that the situation is not actually hopeless."

  This small interlude made a huge difference. The rats that experienced a brief reprieve swam much longer and lasted much longer than the rats that were left alone. They also recovered almost immediately. When the rats learned that they were not doomed, that the situation was not lost, that there might be a helping hand at the ready—in short, when they had a reason to keep swimming—they did. They did not give up, and they did not go under.

Conclusion: like these rats, we all need a reason to keep swimming.

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- Promises of eternal life for those who believe the gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

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John 5:24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

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John 11:21-26 Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. [22] But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” [23] Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” [24] Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” [25] Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. [26] And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this”

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Hebrews 2:14-15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, [15] and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

4:14 *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*

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- Paul applied the word *sleep* to those believers who died. Jesus used the same expression:

John 11:11–13 These things He said, and after that He said to them, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.” [12] Then His disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.” [13] However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.

- Paul did not say that the *soul* went to sleep at death. We just read that the soul of the believer goes to be with the Lord; “them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thess. 4:14).

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  Wiersbe: “He cannot bring them when He returns unless they are with Him. It is not the soul that sleeps; *it is the body.*

  “The Bible definition of death is given in James 2:26: *For as the body without the spirit is dead...* at death, the spirit leaves the body, and the body goes to sleep and no longer functions. The soul-spirit goes to be with the Lord, if the person has trusted Jesus Christ. *To be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord* (2 Cor. 5:8).”

4:15-18 *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.* [16] *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* [17] *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.* [18] *Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

- There is a day coming, when living believers in Jesus Christ will be taken up to meet the Lord in the air; the bodies of dead believers will rise first, and we will all come together in the clouds to meet Jesus in the air.

  e.g., I asked my family at the dinner table one night what this is called. My 8 year old daughter (now 41 years old), answered quickly and enthusiastically: “Cooperation!”

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  It’s actually called “the rapture.” From the Greek verb *harpazo*, which means “caught up, pulled [up], plucked [up], seized.” For those who object by saying that the word “rapture” is not found in the Bible, the response is that the verb in Greek is *harpazo*, and the Latin for harpazo is *raptura.* So while it’s not in the English Bible, it is in the Greek and Latin Bibles.

- We don’t know when the rapture will occur, precisely. Jesus emphasized, repeatedly, that His coming for us could happen at any time.

  Matthew 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”

Matthew 24:42 “Watch therefore, for you do not know what [g]hour your Lord is coming.”

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Different views on the timing of the rapture: post-tribulation rapture- Jesus comes to get His church at the end of the tribulation; mid-tribulation rapture- Jesus catches us up in the middle of the tribulation period; pre-wrath rapture- Jesus comes to get His church prior to the pouring out of the wrath of God upon the earth during the tribulation period; and the pre-tribulation rapture- Jesus comes prior to the tribulation period to catch up His living believers and bring them with Him to heaven.

NOTE: The doctrine of imminence is is one of the strongest arguments for the pre-tribulation rapture position.

- “And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

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John 14:1-3 “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. **2** In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not *so,* I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.”

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The Day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. [2] For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. [3] For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. [4] But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. [5] You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. [6] Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. [7] For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. [8] But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. [9] For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. [11] Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

***5:1-3** But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. [2] For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so*

comes as a thief in the night. [3] For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

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- The day of the Lord, spoken of often in the writings of the prophets. It's the time period in the future in which the Lord directly intervenes in human history, and ends the day of man. Man was given the task of having dominion and stewardship over the world, but we have miserably failed. Man's day will end as the day of the Lord arrives.
- This day will not take us by surprise, as it will the unbelieving, Christ rejecting world. The Christ rejecting world will be exulting in their own version of peace and safety, based not upon faith in God, but in human wisdom and religion.

5:4-11 *But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. [5] You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. [6] Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. [7] For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. [8] But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. [9] For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. [11] Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.*

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Verse 4: True believers are not in the dark about such things, because they're in the Word of God. And, because true believers don't live in darkness. Neither are they asleep.

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Verses 5-8: True believers are urged to (1) watch; (2) be sober; (3) put on the breastplate of faith and love; (4) put on the helmet, [which is] the hope of salvation.

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Verse 9: True believers are promised that God has not appointed us to experience God's wrath (which is exactly what the day of the Lord involves), but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ.

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Verse 10: True believers are exhorted and commanded to comfort each other (times are hard), and build each other up.

How do we do that? The book of Romans supplies the answer.

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Romans 13:11-14 And *do* this [love one another], knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. **12** The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. **13** Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. **14** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

CONCLUSION