

## “Why We Should Be Thankful: Part Two”

**See John 14:1-3...** Jesus, on the eve of His own execution, speaks words of comfort to the eleven, in the upper room, so that they should not be troubled by the incomprehensible reality that He is going to be taken from them and put to death.

**See John 14:4-6...** Jesus expected the disciples to know that He would be returning to the Father in heaven, as He had already told them in **John 7:33**, yet they had not understood it. Thomas states the obvious lack of understanding among the disciples, they do not know where He is going or the way to get there.

Jesus' response in **verse 6** is the sixth “I AM” statement made by Jesus in John's gospel, and it is undoubtedly one of the most quoted sayings of Christ, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

Jesus is the only Way to God, the only Truth of God, and the only Life with God.

Day by day we draw closer to the time when Christ will return for His people, in the air; after which, dramatic events will occur: the rise of the Antichrist to world power will precede seven years of Tribulation (**cf. Daniel 9, Matthew 24, Revelation 8, 9, 16**).

The earth will experience a time of great suffering (*chaos, confusion, war, famine, disease, death* and destruction) like the world has never seen before and will never see again.

But before the tribulation period begins, Christ will leave the Father's side and descend to the clouds above the earth, at a predetermined time, unknown to man.

**See 1Thessalonians 4:13-18...** Paul speaks of the hope that all believers have in Christ; we are not to grieve like unbelievers who have no hope, for we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and be with Him forever, wearing heavenly bodies that won't suffer decay or death!

The believers in Thessalonica were young in the faith, and they were confused about the timing of the removal of Christians from the earth. Paul reassures them that no believer will miss this event, whether they have already died or are still alive at Christ's coming in the air, we will all be changed.

This event, the Lord's coming to get His people, is often called “the rapture of the church.” The word “rapture” [from the Latin “raptus”] meaning “to seize” “to catch away” or “to snatch up,” [from the Greek *harpázō* (*har-pad'-zo*), suddenly and decisively]. Paul doesn't tell us much about the rapture in **1Thessalonians 4**, so let's go to another text where Paul gives us more information about this event.

**See 1Corinthians 15:50-58...** Paul tells us that some of the Lord's people will not have to go through the experience of death, but that they will be “changed,” “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”

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**Moment** = from the word translated here, we get the word atom, it refers to “something that is indivisible,” i.e., “in the smallest amount of time imaginable” our mortal bodies will become immortal.

**Twinkling** = the word translated here means, “a very rapid movement,” because the eye can move faster than any other visible part of the body, i.e., the change from our earthly to our eternal bodies will be instantaneous.

When Jesus comes for us, it will be instantaneous; it won’t be a process, but will happen so fast it will be over before we even know it started! It makes no difference whether our bodies are dead in the grave or alive on the earth; all of God’s people will be raptured, in their bodies, taken away suddenly and changed forever!

The earth will be emptied of all Christians (prior to the 7-Year Tribulation), after which the first 3.5 years will have a pseudo-peace between the Jews and the Arabs, and the last 3.5 years will be The Great Tribulation, the Day of the LORD.

See **Matthew 24:1-8...** Jesus is answering a question from His disciples about the signs of the end of the age. Notice in **verse 8**, “all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs” [sudden sharp pains]: wars and rumors of wars, nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

**See Matthew 24:9-14...** Christians are the most persecuted and harassed religious group in the world today. The major conflict in the news today is what is going on in Israel-Gaza. We should all be opposed to the killing of thousands of civilians and non-combatants on both sides, but more appalling is the fact that half of the casualties are children.

There are 16 million Jews in the world today, and 464 million Arabs whose religion and culture promotes the animation of the Jewish people.

**Matthew 24:4-12** speaks of the days we are in now (**2Timothy 3:1-5**), “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.” **12-13**, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad* to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

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**See Matthew 24:15-23...** The abomination that causes desolation occurs during the middle of the 7 year Tribulation (cf. **Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11**); the Antichrist will seek to kill all of Israel, and all those who hold to “the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ” (cf. **Revelation 1:2; 20:4**).

Both the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation make it clear that the time of Tribulation is 7 years, and the time of the Great Tribulation (cf. **Matthew 24:21**), will be a period of 3.5 half years that will close with the Son of Man appearing (cf. **Matthew 24:29-30**).

We should not be setting dates for the Lord’s return for us, we should be living for Him as we wait for our imminent departure when the Lord will take us home.

We are saved through Christ, so while we are on this planet, we should be telling others about Him. We are purposed and provisioned (cf. **2Corinthians 5:14-21**) as ambassadors for Christ, urging, pleading with, unbelievers to be *reconciled* to God through Christ [*reconciliation x2, reconciled x2, reconciling x1*].

God has given us eternal life through Christ Jesus and we will have unlimited joy and celebration throughout all of eternity to make up for the short time of suffering and struggle that we experience in these mortal bodies, on this earth.

**See Matthew 24:42-44...** Christ’s return should not surprise you like a thief breaking into your home. Think about that! If you are awakened at night to the sound of what you think is a thief breaking into your home, it might cause you to be fearful; however, if you are awakened at night to the sound of what you think is a loved one returning home from a long trip, you will most likely become happy.

As we await the time when we will be raptured to meet Christ in the air -- we should be busy doing God’s business, living obedient lives and sharing the good news of salvation with all who will listen. Once we are taken to heaven, it will be too late for us to witness to those who are left behind. So, while we still have the opportunity, we must spread the truth of the Gospel of Christ through our words and our life to every one who will listen.

**1Peter 2:11-12**, “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

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**2Peter 3:17-18**, “ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

See **2Peter 3:9-10...** God is merciful and long-suffering, He doesn't want anyone to die in their sins, but instead for everyone to come to a knowledge of the truth (**John 14:6**), Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me,” (**1Timothy 2:3-4**), “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men [women and children] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

God's timing for Christ's return will not be delayed, it will not be late, but will be according to God's perfect timing, when the fullness of time has come, which will also coincide with God's patience reaching its maximum capacity.

Those of you who have the assurance of salvation ought to continually be giving thanks to God.

Anyone who has not yet repented of their sins and believed in Christ for salvation can be very thankful that there's still time to do so.

**John 3:16**, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” **36**, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, [for] the wrath of God remains on him.”

In **Acts 4:12** says, “there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved,” only that of Jesus Christ (**Philippians 2:9-11**), “God... ..bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” (**1John 5:11-13**), “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

God provides forgiveness for sin and eternal life through Jesus Christ: crucified, resurrected, coming again to take all who believe in Him to be with Him forever.

November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – (full sermon notes)

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What should you do with that marvelous message?

**2Corinthians 5:20-21**, “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

How should you be living because of that marvelous message?

**1Thessalonians 5:16-18**, “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

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