

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 - The Rapture of the Church

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[0:00] So this morning we're in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. So if you have a Bible, you can go ahead and turn there. And this morning we are dealing with the question, what difference does it make if you believe Jesus is coming back?

So just quick newsflash to those of you who haven't kind of discovered this yet or don't notice about Christians, but we believe that Jesus came the first time.

We call that Christmas. Amen. Good. And we also believe that Jesus is going to come a second time. We haven't figured out a festival for that yet because it hasn't happened, right?

So like the Christian, the Christian, there was a Christian doctrine called the second coming of Jesus.

That's all we can handle. We can't handle any technical terms. And Jesus is going to come back. Amen. And he's going to come back a different way than he came the first time, but it's still going to be public, right?

[1:04] It's still going to be visible. It's still going to be literal. It's still going to be like him actually coming back, right? And so we come to a portion of our Bibles this morning that deal with and start to deal with this chapter and follow on for next chapter, that event.

And so Paul is writing. And can I remind you that the beginning of chapter four is all about relationship with Jesus. And I don't want us to lose that thread, that thread that Paul is taking us through, because it's easy for us just to stand and talk about doctrine.

Really, really easy. Stand and talk about theology and really get kind of lost in these terms and these things that actually on their own really don't matter so much. And Paul is going to highlight that in our text.

We really need to focus on what he's been saying and why he's been saying it. And the reason why he's been saying it is if Christians are in relationship with Jesus, Jesus is coming back for us.

Right? So that relationship can continue. So he hasn't left us alone and he hasn't left us alone forever. Right?

[2:15] So this is what he says in verse 13 of 1 Thessalonians chapter four. He says, I don't want you to be uninformed brothers. Now, pause there because again, in the last few weeks, Paul was writing to the Thessalonians in his writing because he had been with them for a period of time, maybe two weeks, maybe three weeks.

And it seems as you read this letter, he has not completed his teaching on the return of Jesus. You remember he was run out of town.

He had to leave under the cover of darkness. He had to move on and he left. He then sent Timothy back. We know the whole story, right? And it seems from this letter that Paul had kind of taught about Christmas.

He taught about Pentecost, which is today, by the way. Not literally, but like it's Pentecost Sunday, if you didn't know. And he hadn't got to like the end times bit yet. And he kind of only filled them in partially.

And so he left a whole bunch of questions unanswered. And so when Paul left, it seems that the church in Thessalonica were kind of troubled by what Paul had said.

[3:24] And actually, more importantly, what Paul hadn't said, what he had left out. Right. And so they didn't know, for example, the whole deal about when Jesus would return, how he'd return, when he would return, all of the complications around, like getting that in their head.

Like Jesus is coming back. Okay. If that's true, when, how, why, what? All of that was predominantly left unanswered.

And that's kind of the thrust of the text. That's why that's here. And so Paul says, I don't want you to be uninformed. And look, four times in the New Testament, Paul uses this phrase.

He says, in Romans chapter 11, I don't want you to be uninformed or ignorant about God's plan for Israel. I don't want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 12. I don't want you to be ignorant about suffering and trials in the Christian life. 2 Corinthians chapter 1. And here he says, I don't want you to be ignorant about the second coming of Jesus.

[4 : 36] And here's the great irony. Are we ignorant about those four things? Still, right? They are some of the most complex issues to deal with. They are some of the most divisive issues to deal with.

Why? Because we have this ignorance. We don't understand. And oh boy, YouTube, that hasn't helped us, has it? Right? Some of the nutjobs on YouTube are not helping us in our understanding. They're adding ignorance to us. And so it's good for us this morning to open God's word that is the authority for our lives. And go, okay, let's see what God says about Jesus coming back.

And so Paul now writes to address this problem. And the problem is this. This is the problem that is facing the church of Thessalonica. And it's a specific problem, not just to the church of Thessalonica, but actually to the church in the first century.

And the problem is this. Is it possible for Jesus to return and we miss it? Okay, that's the question. Now, most of us have probably never asked that question before in our lives, have we?

[5 : 43] Like, have I missed Jesus' coming back? Why? Because most of us don't even, we're not even on that radar. Right? But to the Thessalonica, they'd had a certain amount of teaching from Paul.

Paul, all the way through the New Testament, whenever he's teaching, he's saying, Jesus is coming back. Jesus is coming back. And so they're going, when is he coming back? Have I missed it? Has he already come back? And I'm just like now left? What's the deal? And as we go through, I want to encourage you on a couple of things. Number one, if you've read the Left Behind series, please park that.

Right? Like, I've never read it. I don't plan to. But I do know that when those books came out, they did a lot of damage.

Right? When the film came out, was it Nicolas Cage? Yeah. If you've seen that, park it. I'm not saying that it's wrong, but there's a lot of creative license to that series.

[6 : 50] Okay? And so if you are big into your YouTube, please park that. Please park Left Behind. Please park Nicolas Cage in every single possible way.

And that was, I didn't think it was going to be that confrontational. Clearly uninformed. And let's see what the Bible has to say.

Right? So is it possible for Jesus to return and we miss it? Or, in a bigger question, what difference does it make today if you believe that Jesus is coming back?

So he says, look, I don't want, verse 13, I don't want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

First point. I've got three points for you. I don't know whether they're all coming on the screen at the same time. They are. So for you note takers, there they are. All right? So three points for you.

[7 : 55] Number one, we grieve differently. Let hope shape your sorrow. Secondly, live expectantly. Let eternity reshape your daily life.

And then thirdly, stay awake spiritually. Let truth displace apathy. Okay? So here's the first point. Grieve differently. Let hope shape your sorrow.

This is what Paul is saying. That you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. Now, this is not a denial of the reality of death.

This is not what Paul is trying to say. Look at what he says. He says, who it is about is about those who are asleep.

Okay? So I don't mind telling you I had the longest sleep on Friday night that I think I've ever had in my life. Like, Laurie will testify.

[9 : 06] I've been struggling with my sleep all week. And I went to bed Friday night. And sometime Saturday afternoon, I woke up. And I'm like, what?

And if you've ever done that and you're not normally like that, you're like, how did even that happen? Now, I know for some people that I speak to, that's normal.

For me, it wasn't normal. But we're not talking about sleep here. Can we understand that? We're not talking. Laurie was not thinking about, well, he's been asleep a long time.

Have I missed the rapture? Like, I don't think that went through her mind. Right? This is talking about those who have died. And we know that because other places in the New Testament uses that same language.

And we even use that same language, don't we? Right? John chapter 11, verse 11, talks about Jesus going to see his friend Lazarus, who has fallen asleep.

[10:09] And he says, but I'm going to wake him. Now, that's a ridiculous statement if he's not talking about someone who's died. Right? Even though Lazarus's sister had said that Lazarus had been dead for four days and his decomposing body is beginning to smell.

Jesus says, yeah, our friend Lazarus, he's asleep. We're going to go and wake him. The young girl in Mark chapter 5 was dead. But Jesus says, why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child's not dead, but sleeping. And so sleep is a common way for us to express death. This is not a denial of the reality of death.

But a way of speaking about it in a temporary, of the temporary nature of death for God's people. Just as sleep ends with an awakening, so death ends with a resurrection.

And that's why he says that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope because of all of this.

[11:18] It's about hope. And we need hope, don't we? There's not a lot of hope floating around the world right now. and if you've ever been faced with death either yourself or a loved one you know that it's a terrible thing to have to go through and that's because God didn't make us to die like we're not designed to die like he made us to live and we're not equipped to deal with death that's why it's difficult for us to deal with in fact the bible describes death as an enemy that needs defeating and we see that that that defeat in the work of Jesus and Bill shared this morning and that's what Paul refers to now in verse 14 he says for since we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so through Jesus God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep so there it is the resurrection of Christians who have died now now listen the thrust of the text is not that we will be reunited reunited with those who have died like and I know I don't know that that's a valuable conversation to have right and I know that it's a valuable conversation to talk about you know um seeing loved ones one day again and I know that and there's a hope in that isn't there right but listen this isn't the thrust of the text the thrust of the text is that one day we will be reunited with Jesus not our loved ones right he doesn't play down the fact that we will be reunited with our loved ones he's emphasizing look if you're in relationship with Jesus now you've got so much more to look forward to because he's going to come back for you you're going to be reunited with Jesus right and it's because of the resurrection of Jesus Christians grieve with hope and not despair and we don't ignore the pain right the pain of death we don't try and cover it up you know we don't slap it with fridge magnet bible verses just thinking oh well you know all things work together for good to those who love you know you know and those kind of verses and sometimes look sometimes they are helpful sometimes they are helpful but they are plasters more than anything else aren't they and so even though we don't ignore the pain of death that it is real and it is it does hurt we must remember it's not the end and that word sleep tells us that and so it means that those who have died and this is again the the thrust thrust of the text if you just skip down to verse 17 you'll see it so he says so we will always be with the Lord right so it's that separation that this text deals with and it's in response to relationship of the previous text like you could sum up all of the world's problems all of the world's issues with that one issue we are separated from God right that's our issue the issue of materialism the issue of consumerism the issue of selfishness the issue of lostness the issue of anger the issue of spite all kinds of issues go back to the garden of eden where man and woman rebelled and were separated from God and yet here's what paul writes to the church of rome about those who are separated but are saved by jesus he says i am sure that neither death nor life will be able to separate us from the love of god in christ jesus our lord so while there is this massive separation

separation and that separation is the cause of all kinds of ills in christ paul is sure that death can't separate us from the love of god jesus talked actually about it first in john chapter 14 one of his most famous kind of um sermons in john 14 he says let not your heart be troubled if you believe in

god believe also in me in my father's house are many rooms if it were not so would i have told you that i go to prepare a place for you so he's on his way out right he's on his way to leave and he says to his disciples i'm leaving and they didn't get it right they're like you're doing what no we're oh can we come and jesus like you will come but not right now right um i'm going to prepare a place for you and if i go and prepare a place for you i will come again and will take you to myself that where i am you may also be that's the intention of this text that's the intention of god's heart that god wants to be with his people to to to heal that separation and it's always been his intent you know when he created us he put us in the garden and god was there with us right he walked with us and rebellion came and that communication or that communion was broken so god commanded moises to do what build a tabernacle why so that he could live in the tabernacle and commune with people and later solomon built the temple so that god could meet with his people and then when jesus came we're told that his name would be what emmanuel which means god with us and so john stated in his gospel that jesus became flesh and dwelt among us that's the first that's the incarnation the first coming of jesus what was his purpose to be with us what's the purpose of his second coming for for us to be with him and look the the end game in revelation god with us revelation 21 verse 1 then i saw john says in heaven a new earth and then i saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away like you only have to turn on the news to know that that's a reality coming that the earth is passing away in one way or another right you know depending on who you talk to either climate change is going to get us nuclear proliferation is going to get us or something else is going to get us some plague or whatever you know again turn off youtube as much as you can but the bible says that the heaven the heavens and earth are passing away and the sea is no more and and i saw he said the holy city and new jerusalem coming down out of heaven from god prepared as a bride adorned for her husband and i heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place he could have said anything couldn't he put his emphasis on the dwelling place of god is where it's with man right that that's and he will dwell with them he they will be his people god himself will be them with them as their god that's in that's his intent that's his desire and it's still his desire today through his spirit right but listen this is why god sent his son to seek and save those who are lost and to die on the cross in our place that we might be forgiven of our sins and the separation between us and god removed and us then brought to god in relationship and that's the challenge that we know god do we have a relationship with jesus because the thrust of this text again is that jesus is coming back and he is going to extend that relationship forever and ever and ever it's about having a genuine relationship with jesus and the hope that one day it will be more than a distant thing it will be a face-to-face thing isn't that what paul wrote about in first corinthians chapter 13 he says for now we see in a mirror dimly like as i'm getting older i'm wishing i'd see in a mirror more dimly right now we see in a mirror dimly but paul says but then face to face and what he's saying is look we see some of this stuff like we see shadows of this stuff we see a kind of like smudgy versions of this stuff but one day uh face to face he says now i know in part i shall i then i shall know fully even as i am fully known and that's what the this passage of the bible is about and i had a big question that everyone wants to ask okay is when all right so so when will this happen when will and i'm going to frame it specifically like this when will our relationship with jesus be a face-to-face thing right now notice i'm not asking when the antichrist is coming i'm not asking when you know the rapture is going to take place i'm not asking i'm not saying suggesting that that any of those other kind of things are going to take place what paul is asking is when will the relationship with jesus be a face-to-face thing and that's what paul now begins with in verse 15 he says for or because this we declare to you by a word from the lord that we who are alive so there's an expectation that that jesus was going to return in their lifetime right that we who are alive who are left until the coming of the lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep now notice that phrase coming of the lord is the word parousia that's a greek word right so it appears 24 times in the new testament so this is not like oh this is the end times verse okay as if this is the only time it ever appears 24 times in the new testament that specific word is used and 22 of those times it refers to the second coming of jesus right twice it's just about a normal general coming right the first time we see it in the bible is actually in matthew 24 jesus is sat on the mount of olives his disciples come to him privately and they say tell us jesus when will these things be what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age so this is not a merely general coming this is a specific coming this is the second coming of jesus that paul is speaking about and he says that those christians he says of those christians who have already died won't get to be reunited with jesus before um such time so this is the reason that

paul gives verse 16 for the lord himself now notice that would you not a prophet not an angel not some kind of secret coming to know what he knows about right the lord himself he will come personally why because look people aren't in relationship with anyone else apart from jesus like he's not sending a proxy he's not sending ambassador he himself is coming like and i love that you know because um growing up um believe it or not i was a little bit of a rebel

i know that's hard to believe right uh and um i uh my parents said i started to rebel as soon as i could walk and uh i have two brothers an older one and a younger one i know again that's hard to believe being a middle child uh if anybody knows what that means and um i uh we always used to get on really well in my household okay no we didn't um and so you know my brothers and i we used to um we used to fight like cats and dogs is that a phrase maybe if it is if it is and it should be right um and uh i even still remember one of my mom's favorite phrases you wait till your dad comes home my dad's great but listen it means two things it meant when dad comes home things are going to get sorted the the window that you broke while trying to kick your brother and the shoe flies off your foot go straight for a window dad's going to fix that you're not going to live forever with broken windows you know that right and the injustice that i sometimes felt and i'm being honest and i hope my brothers are listening to this the injustice i'm going to look at a camera the injustice uh that i sometimes felt i'm like i remember hearing those words again yeah dad's going to come home he's going to get them right he's going to sort he's going to fix it but also that that that respectful fear that when dad's going to come home he's going to right all the wrongs he's going to fix all the problems and that includes me and what paul is saying is that the lord himself is going to come like he's not going to send anyone else and the lord's going to come and when the lord comes he's going to fix things right things that get ironed out and that includes you and me like we don't stand distant from that he's going to he's going to right all the wrongs he's going to bring in justice and so he will personally come why because we're in a relationship with him and no one else it says that he will descend from heaven with a cry of command with the voice of an archangel now look let me set this straight there are some okay so jehovah's witnesses teach that jesus is an archangel right and uh he's archangel michael and so um the problem with that is there's only one archangel mentioned in the bible his name is michael right and um it says there that the lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command with the voice of an archangel and they say well look there there is your proof there is jesus he's descending and he's got a voice of an archangel so therefore jesus and um this michael must be the one in the same now look there are there is um you know the jews believe there were seven archangels um so uriel rafael raguel michael uh sarukel gabriel and ramiel um and they're all else for they and they match um you know some some match those who are mentioned the seven angels in revelation eight eight you can go and look at that yourselves uh but one thing we can be sure about and one thing listen one thing we can be sure about is jesus isn't one of them right so um he will come and he will come in the company of prominent angels possibly those seven who knows but he will also come would you notice in that same verse with the sound of the trumpet of god so look a game i like to play

game you can play uh with your uh jehovah's witness doorknocker friends right when they come in i like to ask them is jesus a trumpet amen and um if they didn't lie about their reading age um they will have to conclude that either jesus is a trumpet or jesus is not an archangel because the text says that he comes with the sound of an archangel and with the sound of a trumpet and this trumpet actually sound is really biblically important because in the old testament it's a rally cry and we know this we know this from you know armies today um you know you um you sign up you get uh taken to some distant far out camp somewhere and uh they don't they don't set an alarm for you like a nice like sweet iphone alarm how do they wake you up in the morning a trumpet and you're thinking like the rapture's cut every single morning and then and then it's a rally cry get yourself out on the parade ground and dinner time lunch time comes what do they do they sound a trumpet why each time dinner time they sound a trumpet to eat again and they even sound a trumpet just before you go to sleep which is incredibly difficult by the way and so um they there is this trumpet a rally cry and and leiticus 23 24 and and numbers chapter 10 verse 2 it was a signal for god's people to come together and there are um there are three other associations of the trumpet and return of jesus actually that we see in the new testament so again this isn't on its own it's not like some kind of bizarre teaching that paul has given and he's only given once right so in first corinthians chapter 15 verse 52 paul says in a moment in a twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet and then he associates that last trumpet he says the trumpet will sound the dead will raise imperishable and we will be changed talking about the second coming of jesus seven trumpets culminate in uh revelation

8 uh so 11 verse 15 uh we read the seventh angel blew his trumpet there was a loud voice in heaven saying the kingdom of our world has become the kingdom of our lord and of our christ and he shall reign forever and ever again he's talking about the second coming the trumpet gathering the elect of israel at the end of the age in matthew chapter 21 excuse me matthew 24 uh he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call now look i have no doubt in my mind there aren't angels who actually play trumpets like i don't think that's a reality it's the sound of the trumpet right while this is a literal thing it's it's loaded with poetic language right so the big big difference between those two trumpets trumpets revelation 11 and 20 matthew 24 is what paul says happens when the trumpet is sounded notice what happens when the trumpet is sounded in our text the dead in christ will rise first paul's point to the thessalonians is clear those dead christians will not be left out of either the resurrection or the resurrection or the return of jesus in fact paul says they're going to get to experience it first that there's going to be a day when in god's eternal plan the dead in christ will receive their resurrection bodies now i don't know how that's going to happen and i'll be honest with you like

[31 : 31] people have been cremated i don't know how that's going to happen like if your ashes have been set out to see i don't know how that's going to happen either i do know the story of abraham and isaac when isaac was taken up to mount bariah and uh uh uh abraham had enough faith to believe that god could reconstitute isaac's body from um ashes into into a body again he knew that so um there are some things and i think we need to be humble enough to go you know what i just don't know how that's going to work but like god created us in the first place i'm pretty sure he can recreate us again right and so um the point is is that that there will come a day when in god's eternal plan the dead in christ those who are christians who have died are going to receive their resurrection bodies and until that day we can be confident that the dead in christ are not in some kind of soul sleep or suspended animation right and we know that because paul made that really clear in second corinthians chapter 5 that to be absent from the body is to be present with the lord now again we don't really know what that looks like either the present dead in christ are with the lord in a spiritual body awaiting awaiting their final resurrection body or because of this would be spin some of you out because of the the the the nature of timeless eternity they have received their resurrection bodies already because they live in the eternal now don't get spun out of that however listen what we know is that god is going to do it and he will do it verse 17 then so the dead in christ will rise first then now you can circle that word you can highlight that word let me just tell you what it means the word means next right it's a it's a an adverb of time and order which marks a sequence going from one thing to another right so paul is referring to what comes after the dead in christ rising first next got it good we who are alive how many people are alive this morning some people aren't sure like alive but not caffeinated fully enough to join in right so he says we who are alive who are left now pause there i want to just show you some technical details about this verse i want to make something crystal clear it says then we who are alive who are left scroll back to verse 15 it says we who are alive who are left until the coming of the lord paul is saying exactly the same thing he's just missed out that phrase so paul is talking about the same people right um he's going back to verse 15 to speak about christians who are alive when jesus returns same people so we're not talking about uh the dead anymore we're talking about the living okay so what about them what about the living and here's the second point that i think paul is making they are to live expectantly letting eternity reshape their daily life they are to live expectantly letting eternity reshape their daily lives paul says that they those ones who are left who are still alive when jesus comes back what's going to happen to them

well they're going to be caught up now pause there you know we were going to pause on that word for a little while the verb translated caught up me here means to seize or to carry off by force um it's uh this passage um let me tell you is the basis for the doctrine of the rapture if you don't know what rapture means don't worry about it honestly and i would say normally in this case go find out go go on youtube and look but that's probably a really dangerous thing to do um many there's there's many many skeptics and some scoffers argue that the rapture can't be a real thing can't be a real doctrine why because the word rapture doesn't believe in the bible and i'm like give me a better reason right because the word trinity doesn't exist in the bible either but we believe that right some of you like yes i think so i mean the trinity is actually harder to understand than the rapture right but um so look um what we what we mostly fail to see is that and it's going to get a little bit complicated but um you you understand my reasoning in the latin vulgate okay which is a bible translation and

it's a primary bible translation and it was the primary bible translation for like a thousand years before the protestant reformation it translates in like written in latin and michael's reading it um that's a that's an inside life group joke you won't get um so um it translates the greek word harpazo so greek word harpazo as rapturous or our english word rapture um so where do we get the word rapture from you're right doesn't it doesn't appear in the bible it appears in the latin version of the bible the latin translation of the greek word harpazo which means to to be caught up that's this word here now setting that aside a better question should be do we ever see anything like a rapture or a catching away or snatching away described in the bible right so do we ever see an event like that described even it doesn't use the word the same specific words and of course because i've brought it up the answer is yes acts chapter 8 verse 39 uh this is philip the ethiopian eunuch verse 39 says when they came out of the water they show philip had just baptized this ethiopian man the spirit of lord carried that's the word for rapture carried philip away so there was a snatching away that philip uh experienced and the eunuch the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing like i don't know what that relationship was like between him and philip but like god took him away and philip's like thank goodness praise be second corinthians chapter 12 verse 2 paul says i know a man in christ he's talking about himself i know a man in christ who for 14 years was caught up that's the word to a third heaven right um whether in body or out of the body i don't know god knows and what's interesting in our text in chapter 5 is that paul starts speaking about a thief that comes in the night and the related word to caught up and i don't know if you know this already but the related the related word to caught up to snatch away is to steal this is hapaj um and it means to rob or to plunder and another 13 times in the new testament hapazo rapture is used it's it's also used 34 times

in the greek translation of the old testament the septuagint the first time when um the first time we see it is when do you remember in the story of joseph and his brothers probably had brothers like mine um who tried to sell him and now they did sell him to some slave traders like i think joseph was too much for his brothers and they bring back his you know they concocted this story do you remember they bring back this this his coat of many colors and um they tear it up they kind of find some blood they dip it in some blood and they say look look what's left been left behind um by the wolves and joseph's father says this it is my son's robe a fierce animal has devoured him joseph is without torn to pieces that word devoured is snatched away in the latin translation it is the greek word for our rapture and so this idea of rapture is apt the idea that it never appears in the bible is absolutely false now as fascinating as all that is paul says that we who are alive who are left until the coming of the lord will be caught up together with them who is he referring to who is the then well i think it's referring to those who have previously died because that's the topic of the conversation as well as jesus and the angels who have come then right and so so um we who are alive who are left until the coming of the lord will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the lord in the air resulting in so we will always be with the lord the word meet in greek culture um describes the visitor king uh the visitor would be uh the king would be formally met by delegates by citizens who had gone out of the city for that purpose and then be ceremonially escorted back into the city it's used in matthew 25 where jesus is speaking about his second coming surprise surprise and in verse 6 but at midnight there was a cry here is the bridegroom come out to meet him so look paul's language here in first thessalonians is so straightforward and free from any kind of figurative or poetic speech there's no missing his intent this is a movement of god's people to be with jesus at a particular moment in time and notice that what we see primarily is that it's a movement of people to heaven not the other way around do you notice that now if you if you flick forward to revelation chapter 19 you'll see almost like a second second coming like if this is a second coming what's happening in revelation 19 what's happening in revelation 19 is that it is a movement not of people to heaven but revelation 19 seems to be a movement of heaven to people and specifically jesus coming with his people to earth not to heaven and so here it's focusing on jesus or excuse me here it's focusing on christians going up and the other one is focusing on jesus coming down and look let me also say that that that this happens and i'm just going to state this as a as a bible

interpretation and you can argue with me later but i just don't think this part is worth arguing about let me just say that this happens before the events of revelation 6 to 18 right so this event that paul's talking about first thessalonians chapter 4 i think happens before what is commonly known as the great tribulation period okay so there is going to be according to the bible a future period of worldwide tribulation and we see it in the news coming every single day don't we right um so let me

give you a quick rundown if that helps john chapter 16 verse 33 jesus says in the world you're going to have tribulation and we all say amen why because we know that we all have tribulation everyone whether you're a christian or not actually there is tribulation there's strife there are challenges there are problems right but jesus also says in matthew 24 that there will be great or mega which i love growing up in the 80s is is megos there's going to be mega tribulation right great tribulation such has not been from the beginning of the world until now no has never been right so jesus says yeah okay there's going to be great tribulation everyone's going to everyone's going to face that but it's also going to be megos tribulation it's going to be great tribulation that the world has never seen before daniel chapter 12 verse 1 there will be a time of trouble such as never has been since there was a nation until that time which jeremiah then echoes in jeremiah 30 he says alas that day is so great there is none like it it is a time of distress for jacob or for israel now you could say that the time of trouble the great tribulation is the destruction of jerusalem but while 70 ad was a time of horrible distress to the jews it pales in comparison to the distress of world war ii and what jesus is saying what daniel is saying what jeremiah is saying what hosea says what malachi says what joel says what ezekiel says is that there is going to be a time of trouble so terrible that it's never been witnessed before and you can both count on tribulation in a general sense but there is a period of time of great tribulation that is different from all other kinds of tribulation a tribulation that john describes in revelation as absolutely world changing and even though the language there in revelation we've talked about isn't precise i don't think there's good enough reason to either read them as simple pictures of something else or even hyper literally right john says that in those days and this is world changing listen in those days the sun will become as black as sackcloth the moon as blood that's world changing like if we woke up this morning and the sun didn't rise that's going to change some stuff the stars fell from from heaven to the earth as fig leaves shed its fruit in winter that's world changing and while that language is fairly poetic and fairly figurative there's absolutely no reason why those aren't literal things it echoes isaiah chapter 13 the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light the sun will be darker it's rising the moon will not shed its light jesus later describes in matthew 24 immediately after the tribulation of those days that tribulation that he has just been talking about the sun will be dark and the moon will not give us light the sun will oh the stars will fall from heaven the powers of the earth will be shaken so there is enough biblical reason even if it sometimes will kind of mock our intelligence we're like how can that even be right there is enough biblical reason to conclude that the tribulation that israel suffered over the course of 3000 years are actually a precursor to something yet future and even bigger even though the language isn't precise and so look here's the point that paul is making in first let's learn is chapter 4 verse 17 let's go back to it then we who are alive paul says who are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the lord in the air so we will always be with the lord therefore encourage one another with these words it's encouraging precisely because salvation from the wrath of god during the tribulation is in view that's an encouragement and that's what he said earlier quickly flick back to first haslonians chapter 1 verse 10 paul says that we wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come to come and bill quoted that this morning that's what jesus does he is talking to christians and telling them that jesus delivers us from the wrath that is to come and he's going to do that before this tribulation period begins he says uh the same thing in the next chapter in verse 9 for god has not destined us for wrath but to obtain salvation through the lord jesus christ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep i.e. whether we're alive or whether we have died we might live with him and so all of that saying let's round this off so concerning this is verse 1 i believe of chapter 5 we're not going to tackle all of chapter 5 relax so concerning the times and the seasons brothers so in answer to the question when is this going to be he says you have no need uh to have anything written to you and what that means is that there is an inevitability to all of this just like the times and seasons right for you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the lord will come like a thief in the night so i take that to mean that that god once this day right that that the events described in verse 17 is to be expected but the time is to be unexpected that's all right right so the time is to be unexpected while there's a certainty times and seasons um the time of it is to be unexpected so that we're always prepared and this is going to take us back to what we talked about earlier about living with holiness as we wait right how do how do these things affect us today and the challenge is not it the challenge uh for us is that uh we're not living in spiritual apathy towards these things towards the coming of jesus now doesn't mean that we do what some people do you know and like um sell all of our possessions and purchase acres of land in the middle of nowhere and buy solar panels

and starlink from elon musk and um build food bunk bunkers right like i kid you not um when covid hit the pandemic hit if you can remember that far back um there were people that we knew who thought that the best christian witness that most holy witness was to fill their house with toilet roll for whatever so paul reminds us listen paul reminds us that jesus will return and that very fact that jesus is going to return changes how we live today like dad is on his way what happens you start cleaning things up you start putting things right

[51 : 57] you may even be bold enough to say sorry to your brother you may even be expectant of a sorry from them you're going to clean things up why before he comes back and that's paul's point we're not just waiting passively we're we're preparing actively and so we examine our priorities we cultivate our alertness with daily repentance and prayer and readiness we share the gospel freely not assuming that there's more time and then paul moves into this last section knowing that most of us are not tempted by hoarding toilet roll are we great good thanks right um we're not we're not tempted by by doing too much our temptation is actually doing too little our temptation is not towards spiritual hyperactivity our temptation is towards spiritual apathy and so he now tells us how we stay awake spiritually by letting truth displace apathy paul says in verse 3 while people are saying there is peace and security then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman they will not escape but you are not in darkness brothers for that day will for for that day to surprise you like a thief so paul is contrasting being asleep and being alert end times apathy is more real than end times crazy and you you've been on youtube i'm not blaming youtube you've been on other video social media whatever thingies there's there's bazillions of stuff on there and it's junk it's it's end times crazy out there but listen that's not the danger the danger is not end times crazy it's end times apathy in my experience it's far easier to become distracted spiritually lazy indifferent spiritually spiritual apathy is a problem can i suggest that really quickly it creeps in in four main ways and we won't dwell on this cultural distraction endless media news entertainment dull art awareness of eternity secondly delayed expectation it is easy for us to say oh yeah but this was written 2 000 years ago and he hasn't come yet so i've got time right where is the promise of his coming second timid 2nd peter chapter 3 they will say where is the promise of his coming we don't believe that like it's been 2 000 years and peter says for ever since the fathers fell asleep all things are continuing as they have from the beginning of creation there's been no change and peter actually says that that's a danger when when christ delays we drift thirdly comfort and routine we stop longing for heaven when life feels comfortable on earth fourthly moral compromise when sin is tolerated spiritual donor soon follows apathy is not always rebellion it is often distraction dressed up as normal life and we need to be on our guard against that and finally paul says in verse 5 and it is a finally i promise for you are all children of light children of the day we are not of the night or the darkness so let us not sleep as others do but let us keep awake and be sober

for those who sleep sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night and he's not talking now about the analogy of life and death and being alive or being dead he's talking about are you awake do you know do you know the times and the seasons that you're living in are you looking for the return of jesus or have you been subject to cultural distraction or delayed expectation or comfort and routine or moral compromise where are you at with that that's what paul's asking he says you know the truth don't set aside the truth but since we belong to this day he says in verse 8 let us be sober having put on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet of hope of salvation for god has not destined us to wrath but to obtain salvation through our lord and jesus christ now that invitation extends to everyone today who died for us that was the price he's coming back because he's paid for us right and that price was valuable so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him therefore encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing let's pray together father thank you for your word lord we want to be people who are not only alive physically as we are now lord but we want to be alive spiritually we want to be able to discern the days in which we're living in lord but more than that lord we want to be able to see the days and and live accordingly lord we don't want to be people who just give head knowledge to the second coming of jesus lord we want our lives to be the sermons of it and so we pray lord that you would help us this morning lord help us to remove some of the things that are just unknowns that sometimes can trip us up about your coming lord help us to hear that voice lord if you're if you're coming back then what kind of lives towards godliness should we be living and so lord we pray again this morning and we confess lord that our lives haven't always reflected that we haven't

always lived with the belief that you're coming back and you can come back at any moment lord we want our lives to reflect that lord we want to when you return to be well pleased with our lives lord we want when you come back the relationship that we will have for eternity be an extension of the relationship that we have now and so do we have a relationship with you now and so lord we just turn to you this morning lord and just ask lord that you would set our hearts right lord help us to see that the things that are happening in this world lord are all snowballing to this event that we spoke about lord and we look forward to your coming lord but we more importantly look forward to your coming where we will not only be reunited with you but we will be reunited with those that we love and so we pray this morning lord would you move on our hearts as we have understanding lord would you move on those that we love who do not have understanding and lord would that relationship that we have be a reality for them lord we ask these things in jesus name amen as