

The Blessed Hope!

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;” –(Titus 2:13)

Diamond & Nugget #25

The Hope of the Resurrection – 1st Thessalonians 4 & 5

Paul always taught people about the future - that salvation carried a promise of eternal life. He surely told his audiences that the same Jesus Christ who died, arose, and ascended would one day return. This would be His “Second Coming”. The believers knew that this could occur at any time and that it would be unannounced. The rest of chapter 4 and the first part of chapter 5 are addressing several questions that had come from the church through Timothy regarding the resurrection of believers and the Second Coming.

1st Thessalonians 4:13 deals with a cogent question to Paul from the Thessalonian believers regarded **the Christians who have died**. The believers had been taught that Christ would one day return and take His people to Himself - every believer should be ready for that return at any moment. Apparently, in the interim as the believers awaited Jesus Christ’s return, some of them had died. The Thessalonians were wondering why this had happened before Christ’s return, and what would happen to those who had died before He came back. Some may have feared that believers who had died would miss the Kingdom. No doubt, the thought that their loved ones would not be with Christ caused them great sorrow. We can empathize with their feelings and concern.

These contrasts strongly with Paul’s view -(1 Corinthians 15:53-55; Philippians 1:21-23). Paul wanted the Thessalonians to understand that death is *not* the end. When Jesus Christ returns, all believers - dead and alive - will be reunited, never to suffer or die again. Believers need not **be full of sorrow like people who have no hope**. Paul recognized that the death of loved ones naturally results in grieving; but when Christians grieve for Christians who have died, there is a huge difference. Their grief is not hopeless. While the pain is real, the fact is that these loved ones will be seen again as the following verses describe.

In 1st Thessalonians 4:14, Paul states believers can have hope in the resurrection because of what happened to Jesus. Because Jesus died and was raised to life again, believers can also trust that those who have died will also be resurrected (see also 1 Corinthians 15:12-20). Then, **when Jesus comes, God will bring back with Jesus all the Christians who have died**. Believers who have died are with the Lord already!

They are presently with God and will come with Jesus at His Second Coming. They haven't missed out - in fact, they are enjoying God's presence. Second Corinthians 5:8 and Philippians 1:21-22 teach that believers go to be with the Lord at death.

What did Paul mean when in 1st Thessalonians 4:15-16, when he wrote, **"I can tell you this directly from the Lord?"** Either this was something that the Lord had revealed directly to Paul, or it was a teaching of Jesus that had been passed along orally by the apostles and other Christians. Most likely this was told to Paul during Paul's three years in Saudi Arabia. In the book of Galatians, Paul emphasizes that he received the gospel from Jesus directly and not from the other apostles.

As evidence, he offers the following information in Galatians 1:11–20: ***"I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie."***

One of the ways, there are many, that we can be confident in the Word of God is the facts reference to other books to corroborate the textual commentary of the Apostles, and individuals' words are quoted. The book of Galatians in this case provides us greater insight into Paul and his words.

In his letters Paul followed the usual ancient letter pattern: greetings, prayer for addressees, thanksgiving, the particular contents of the letter, special salutations and greetings. In Galatians, these divisions break down as follows: the greetings and prayer for the addressees, 1:1-5; the particular contents, 1:6-6:17; and the special salutations and greetings, 6:18. Paul has omitted the thanksgiving since the Galatian Christians were tempted to leave the way of grace for that of law, of works.

Some of the first Jewish Christians in Jerusalem failed to understand the true meaning of salvation by grace alone; they thought that to believe in Jesus was only the beginning. Each believer was expected to live totally as a Jew in order to be saved. This included circumcision. Acts 15:1, 2 informs us that these Jews from Jerusalem had come to Antioch and caused havoc in the church. Some went on to trouble the new churches in Galatia. To add anything to the work that Christ did for salvation is to negate God's grace. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, not by returning

to the Law. ***"I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing"*** -(Galatians 2:21).

These Jewish Christians, often termed Judaizers, had told the Christians of Galatia Paul had not been faithful to his instructions, that he had failed to tell them the complete requirements for salvation. Because of this, in his opening statements Paul stressed that he had received his commission as an apostle not from men nor through the agency of man. Rather, he had been personally called ***"by Jesus Christ, and God the Father."*** Then he added an important phrase: ***"who raised him from the dead."*** Christ's resurrection guaranteed the certainty of salvation by grace alone -(1st Corinthians 15; Colossians 1:13-23).

There are many groups today with beliefs/practices very similar to those of the Judaizers of the New Testament. The two most prominent would be the Hebrew Roots Movement and the Roman Catholic Church. The teachings of the Hebrew Roots Movement are virtually identical to those of the Judaizers whom Paul rebuked in Galatians. A primary focus of the Hebrew Roots Movement is to put followers of Christ back under the bondage of the Old Testament Law.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches a doctrine similar to that of the Judaizers of the New Testament in this way: its doctrine is a mixture of law and grace. At the Council of Trent in the 16th century, the Catholic Church explicitly denied the idea of salvation by faith alone. Catholics have always held that certain sacraments are necessary for salvation. The issues for the 1st-century Judaizers were circumcision and Sabbath-keeping. The issues for modern-day Catholics are baptism, confession, etc. The works considered necessary may have changed, but both Judaizers and Catholics attempt to merit God's grace through the performance of ritualistic acts.

The Christians at Antioch, including Barnabas, joined Paul in greeting the churches which he and Barnabas had established during their first missionary journey -(Acts chapters 13 and 14). ***"Grace"*** means God's unmerited love made possible through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. ***"Peace"*** with God is the blessed result of receiving God's unmerited grace. Peace is spiritual well-being -(Romans 5:1, 2). Paul added, ***"and from our Lord Jesus Christ."*** Because He has paid the ransom price for the believer's salvation, He is their Lord and King. Christians belong to Him completely as their spiritual King -(Romans 6). "Jesus" means "Saviour" as the angel explained to Joseph -(Matthew 1:21).

To stress the certainty of grace, Paul carefully explained the true role of Christ - (Galatians 1:4), namely, as the One who gave Himself freely for the salvation of the world. The Jews viewed the present age as the wicked age, the age of the Evil One. In contrast, the age to come was to be an age of peace and prosperity for those who were truly members of God's covenant people. Paul stressed that such deliverance is the will of God who is also the Father. This tremendous statement reminds the believer of God's promise that the woman's Seed would crush the power of the Evil One -(Genesis 3:15) and the prophecy of Isaiah 53 that Jesus would become the obedient suffering and then

victorious Servant for man's salvation. Through the Spirit's work, all believers in Christ now belong to Him, yet are still in the present evil age -(2nd Corinthians 5:17-21).

The beautiful doxology Paul added here (vs. 1:5) is not found at the end of the greetings and prayers in his other letters. God's glory means the total radiance of His presence, all that God is. God is worthy of ongoing praise and adoration to the end of time into all eternity -(Psalms 29:2; 96:8). Paul ended his doxology with "**Amen**," solemnly confirming what he had just said. In Hebrew '*amen*' had the same emphatic force; the hearer (or writer) was strongly affirming the truth of the preceding statement. Other New Testament doxologies also end with Amen -(e.g., Romans 16:27; 2 Peter 3:18), as do the Old Testament doxologies at the end of the first four sections of Psalms (Psalms 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48).

Paul's style now became more terse in Galatians 1:6, 7. He went at once to the very heart of the Galatians' problem. Acts 14:21-23 records that Paul and Barnabas stopped at each of the new mission churches in Southern Galatia to strengthen, encourage, and organize them before returning to Antioch. Paul's use of the phrase "**so soon**" suggests that not much time had passed before he heard that the Galatians were being influenced by the message of the Judaizers. Paul expressed his utter amazement and astonishment; almost in disbelief to their lapse in faith.

The apostle used the verb "**called**." The Galatians had been called by the grace of Christ. The Holy Spirit, working through the gospel which Paul and Barnabas had shared, had worked faith in their hearts -(Titus 3:4-8).

But now they were being tempted by the Judaizers who stressed that salvation was by works, by living as Jews. In Acts 15:10 Peter said that to live according to the Law was too heavy a yoke for even Jews to carry, let alone requiring Gentiles to live that way. History informs us that before A.D. 70, the Jewish rabbis had added 341 rules for daily life. Keep in mind that Paul was himself once a Pharisee.

Paul emphatically stated that the so-called "gospel" with which the Galatians were being tempted was "another" gospel. The Greek word translated "another" -(**heteron**, verse 6) means "different in kind." Paul used this word to emphasize that the gospel which the Judaizers said was the true gospel was a totally false gospel. Then he went on to describe it as not being in any way a gospel at all.

To emphasize that he and Barnabas had shared the *genuine* gospel with them, Paul used a decisive illustration. He stated that even if an angel from heaven would bring a gospel different from what they had shared, God's eternal curse and condemnation would rest on him. He restated this fact in another way to emphasize most emphatically the fatal consequences of listening to the Judaizers and their false gospel. All who believed what these were promoting as the true gospel would experience God's wrath and His eternal damnation. What the Judaizers were promoting as the only way to salvation was in fact the certain path to damnation. My suspicion is that God "called"

Paul to the ministry of Grace because Paul was a Pharisee, and he knew what it meant to be as one of the elite religious school.

Paul went on to stress that his role as the called apostle of Jesus Christ was to be faithful to the true gospel. Seemingly the Judaizers had accused him of seeking to please the Galatians by not telling them they had to live as Jews in order to be saved. Paul carefully stressed that this accusation was totally untrue. The gospel which he preached was that which he had received from Jesus Christ himself. And this true gospel he had faithfully shared with them.

Next Paul provided decisive information on how he had received the gospel. In doing so, he used the term translated "brethren" -(**adelphoi**), fellow members of God's family. He used this affectionate term a number of times in this letter, especially when he had to use harsh words to emphasize that the true way of salvation is grace, not works. In this way he stressed that, despite their spiritual wavering, he still had a deep love for them as the sheep of God's flock. He also frequently used this affectionate term in other letters in which he had to take his readers to task for unchristian behavior or had to encourage them in the light of difficulties they faced. This is especially true of 1st and 2nd Corinthians and 1st and 2nd Thessalonians.

Paul informed them that the origin of the gospel he shared with them went back directly to a revelation of Jesus Christ himself. The Book of Acts records what happened, once in Luke's account -(Acts 9:3-19) and twice in what Paul himself told two different sets of hearers. In Acts 22:3-16 Paul spoke to the temple mob which had almost killed him. In Acts 26:12-18 he spoke especially to Agrippa II, a part-Jew. In each of these instances, his listeners would understand that Paul had experienced a heavenly appearance of God's glory.

Each of these accounts stresses that on the Damascus Road an exceedingly bright glory-light shone down from heaven on Saul (Paul) and his companions. From the heavenly light came the voice of the risen and ascended Christ. Saul's respectful reaction to that voice indicates that he understood it was the glorified Christ himself.

Acts 25:13ff. records that Herod Agrippa II made a state visit to the Roman governor Festus in Caesarea. He was reputed to be an expert in Jewish religious questions. He also had the right to appoint the high priest. In the words spoken to Agrippa II and Festus, Paul carefully informed them what Jesus had told him. He was called to share Christ as the fulfillment of the prophecies of old. This message of salvation by grace alone was to bring men, through the work of the Holy Spirit, from darkness to light and free them from the control of the devil -(Acts 26:15-18). As the servant of Christ, Paul had faithfully shared this message in Galatia. The Greek term translated "servant" - (**doulos**) in verse 10 actually means "slave," one who has been purchased and therefore totally belongs to the purchaser. Jesus had redeemed Paul with His precious blood from the power of the Evil One. Now Paul totally belonged to Christ, and this Paul never forgot. He remained faithful to Christ always.

Paul reminded the Galatians that they knew of his earlier way of life. He had probably shared this with them when he and Barnabas brought them the gospel. In describing his attitude recorded in Acts 26:11, Paul used a strong Greek word -(**eporthoun**) to show his religious fury toward Christ's followers. He had regarded them as blasphemers for believing in One condemned by the Council as a blasphemer and executed at their behest.

This word **eporthoun** was also used of a wild animal which mauls and devours its prey. Wild animals were often used in the arenas in the cities and towns of Galatia to entertain people. Unarmed humans were forced to face such wild animals and, as a result, were mauled to death and devoured to the glee of the crowds present.

Paul reminded the Galatians that they knew of his life before Jesus Christ appeared and called him to be an apostle. He did this to emphasize that he knew the way of works and its implications far better than did the Judaizers. Paul had excelled his fellow Jews in his zeal for living totally as a Jew in accordance with the traditions of his fathers.

Paul's letter to the Philippians describes his former status as a Jew -(Philippians 3:4-6). First of all, he noted that he was circumcised on the eighth day and thereby became a "son of the covenant." By descent he was an ethnically pure and true son of Israel, God's covenant people. As such, he was a descendant of Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob and his beloved Rachel, who died soon after his birth. He was the only son of Jacob to be born in the land of Canaan, the covenant land. Because of the location of their small territory through which passed an important north-south road and several east-west roads, the Benjaminites were forced to be warlike. They were known to be first in battle. Psalm 68:24-27 states that they were also first in worship. Paul (Saul) was named after Saul of the tribe of Benjamin, the first king of Israel. The tribe of Benjamin remained faithful to David's dynasty.

Paul went on to say in Philippians that he was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." The religious language of his pious home in Tarsus was Hebrew, the language of the inspired Scriptures. It was rather rare for this to be true of a Jewish family living in the Dispersion. In fact, in a synagogue service in the Dispersion, the Scriptures were first read in Hebrew if anyone present could read the Hebrew even if he did not understand what he was reading. This was then followed by a reading of the Scriptures in the Septuagint, in the Greek, the universal language of that day.

Paul was a Pharisee trained by the illustrious Gamaliel, the successor of his famous grandfather Hillel who died about 20 A.D. -(Acts 5:34-39; 22:3). In Philippians 3:6 Paul described himself as so excelling in righteousness that he was "**blameless**" from the Pharisaic viewpoint. A Jewish scholar has stated that before the year A.D. 70, 341 rules of the oral Law were added to what was already present in the written Law, the Torah (Pentateuch). These additional laws were to be followed by those zealous for living out their ancestral faith.

Like Jeremiah -(Jeremiah 1:5) and John the Baptist -(Luke 1:13-17), God had planned a special role for Paul before his birth. This included growing up in the cosmopolitan, international trade and cultural center of Tarsus. Historical references rank Tarsus after Athens and Alexandria as outstanding cultural centers.

All this was part of Paul's preparation for serving as a missionary to the Gentiles. Jesus' appearance to him on the Damascus Road totally changed his attitude and life, as he noted in Philippians 3:7-9. From the time of his call to the end of his life at the executioner's block, Paul lived in close association with the Gentiles as a humble servant of Jesus Christ. What he had cherished before as a dedicated and devout Pharisee, he now regarded as being sewage -(**skubala**, Philippians 3:8).

Because of the false accusation of the Judaizers, Paul stressed that after his conversion he did not return at once to Jerusalem to receive further instruction and the approval of the apostles and the Church. Rather, as Luke informs us in Acts 9, he vigorously shared Christ in Damascus. This aroused the fury of the Jews. The one sent by the Council to arrest Christ's followers was now a forceful promoter of this blasphemous heresy. To save his life, Paul fled to Arabia, which can mean any place east of the Jordan and outside of Damascus. After 3 years he returned to Damascus and again very actively shared Christ with his fellow Jews. This resulted in their fierce anger against him.

Galatians 1:18-20. Acts 9:22-25 and 2nd Corinthians 11:32, 33 tell us that the Jews, in league with the Nabataeans, planned to kill Paul. (Secular history does not provide information on the exact relationship between the Nabataeans [Arabs] and the Romans at this time.) Paul was let down from the walls at night to permit him to escape to Jerusalem. When the Christians avoided Paul; Barnabas vouched for him (Acts 9:26, 27).

Paul explicitly stated that he went to Jerusalem to "see" Peter. The Greek term translated "**see**" -(**historēsai**) means "*to visit, to make someone's acquaintance.*" Although this term includes informal conversation, it does not permit any inference of formal training. Paul used this term to emphasize that he did not go to Jerusalem to be taught and formally certified for ministry by Peter and the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. He carefully made this point because the Judaizers said that he had been unfaithful to his training and certification.

Jews have historically seen Paul as a traitor, the "black sheep" of the Tribe of Benjamin, and Zionist Jewry has nothing but contempt for Paul as the case for Jesus of Nazareth, and the family of the Messiah. The Talmud leaves no doubt about its hatred of Jesus Christ and His followers.

Christian appreciation for Paul becomes all the more important in light of what I have shared. The Apostle Paul's ministry and gospel becomes pivotal in planting the church's foundation and survival for centuries to come. Paul's ministry of the gospel of "Grace" withstood a lifetime of Judaizers, not to mention being absorbed by the Roman

Empire's satanic elements that later coopted the Christian world with its blend of paganism and religion.

Nevertheless, there was no disputing what Paul was about to say. He wanted these believers to understand that neither the dead nor the living would be at any disadvantage with regard to Christ's return. All believers will share the blessings of the resurrection. Those who have died are already with Christ and will be with him when he returns -(1st Thessalonians 4:14); those **who are still living** when Jesus Christ returns **will not rise to meet him ahead of those who are in their graves.** Instead, **all the Christians who have died will rise from their graves first.** Knowing exactly when the dead will be raised, in relation to the other events at the Second Coming, is not as important as knowing why Paul wrote these words.

He wrote them to challenge and motivate believers to comfort and encourage one another when their loved ones die. This passage can be a great comfort when any believer dies. The same love that unites believers in this life -(1st Thessalonians 4:9) will unite them when Christ returns and reigns for eternity. There is a church homecoming that will exceed anything that we might have experienced in this life time. In Kentucky, church homecomings are very big events.

The Second Coming will occur in God's timing. He alone brings it about. Christ, who is the **Lord himself**, will descend **from heaven**, for that is where He has been since after His resurrection -(Acts 1:9-11). Christ's return will be unmistakable. No one will miss it, for he will descend with a **shout**, with the **call of the archangel**, and with the **trumpet call of God**. Whether these are three different ways of referring to one sound, whether they happen simultaneously, or happen in sequence is unknown. But these sounds will herald His return. Paul used distinctive imagery associated with the end times. An *archangel* is a high or holy angel appointed to a special task. Clearly, the angelic hosts will be taking part in this celebration of Christ's return to take His people home -(Mark 8:38). A **trumpet** blast will usher in the new heaven and earth -(Revelation 11:15). The Jews would understand the significance of this because trumpets were always blown to signal the start of great festivals and other extraordinary events -(Numbers 10:10).

When you read 1st Thessalonians 4:17, think about what the Apostle Paul had to do for us to bring us to this point. After the dead have risen from their graves, the believers **who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** A reference to "clouds" in the Bible often symbolizes the presence of God -(Exodus 13:21; 14:19; 19:16; 24:15; 40:34-38; Mark 9:7; Acts 1:9). There are differing views about whether this taking of the believers and the Second Coming of Christ occur at the same time, as noted below.

Clearly, all believers—whether they are alive or have died at the time of Christ's return - will be together with one another and with the Lord **forever**. This supernatural event will cause a great reunion among believers who are alive and those who have already died. Both groups will experience Christ's return together. This joyous reunion will go on forever.

This verse provides a clear picture of what we call the “rapture.” But Paul does not say exactly when this will happen in relationship to the other great event of the end times: the tribulation. Paul referred to it as a “Mystery” in 1st Corinthians 15:51 and alludes to it elsewhere.

So there are three main views regarding the timing of the rapture with respect to the tribulation:

1. Pre-tribulationists point to the period of tribulation (described in Revelation) that occurs before the Second Coming of Christ and believe that the rapture of the believers will occur before this time of tribulation. We believe, therefore, that believers will be in heaven while the earth goes through a time of great tribulation. This view sees the believers meeting Christ in the clouds, but places his Second Coming as later.
2. Mid-tribulationists say that the rapture will occur at the mid-point of the time period of tribulation. The believers will be on earth for the first half of that time of tribulation but then will be raptured and will escape the last half, which will be a time of intense suffering. This view also sees Christ’s Second Coming as a separate and later event. I would not be concerned if someone tells you we are in the Tribulation already, but not so, and appearances are deceiving.
3. Post-tribulationists believe that the believers will remain on the earth during the time of tribulation prior to Christ’s Second Coming. Then, when Christ returns in the clouds, believers will be caught up to be with him.

If one looks at all the evidence: the promises of Scripture; Typology that includes 300+ examples of the “theme” of ‘deliverance before judgment’; the gospel of Grace; factors known/unknown; world events; unfulfilled prophecies; and fulfilled prophecies; we can conclude with a high degree of confidence that only the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is consistent with the character of God!

As we are seeing indications of the soon unveiling of the “Mark” of the Beast on the near horizon, the “**Blessed Hope**” becomes an even greater promise that God will not allow His elect, those who have placed their trust in the Gospel message of Christ Jesus’ atoning sacrifice on the Cross to face such a decision. It would be just like Lucifer to hold believers’ families as hostage to coerce parents into voluntarily receive the “Mark” as a contingency so that believer’s children would eat, be educated, have access to health care, free to travel, and eligible for employment in the New World Order! Satan wants to be worshipped and attaches strings that enslave those worshipping him through trickery and snares. God gives us free will without gimmicks and loopholes.

Believers should not be intimidated or fearful of being subjected to their DNA being altered by Luciferian entities that are committed to trans-humanism, and the changing

God's creation into a half person half beast! It goes against the character of God in testing the believer's commitment to their loving Father!

If you doubt that Lucifer and his servants are not above torture and intimidation let me remind you that the U.S. government contracted Yale University to come up with a plan to obtain cooperation from the public to take the vaccine, which at the latest survey indicate those stating they will take the vaccine has dropped from 65% down to 42%. I have put below a link that will give you the plan devised by Yale University, home of Skull & Bones, to get your compliance to accept the vaccine!

**YALE UNIVERSITY a REPORT
COVID-19 Vaccine Messaging -
HOW YOU WILL BE FORCED to Take the Vaccine
to
MANIPULATE COVID-19 VACCINATION COMPLIANCE.**

<https://mail.aol.com/webmail-std/en-us/suite>

The government will use psychological tactics to **Shame, Embarrassment, Guilt**, etc. as "motivational" measures to ensure compliance with the government's plan to achieve total participation by ALL the citizens of the U.S. This is being shared so that you will know who your real enemy is in his efforts of manipulation, coercing, intimidation, etc. through psychological warfare required to get you to volunteer to take the "Mark" of the Beast disguised as part of this global plan to protect humanity against unproven pathogens. The "germ" theory of Louis Pasteur remains unproven to this day.

The reader needs to be aware that only God can create; Isaiah 14:13-14 discusses how Lucifer has to be like God, and covets that ability and degree of power: ¹³***"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."*** -(Isaiah 14:13-14). Anyone looking into the eyes of Bill Gates who is planning to vaccinate every human being in the world recognizes that piercing smirk in his eyes is the look of a devil! "The soul, fortunately, has an interpreter – often an unconscious but still a faithful interpreter – in the eye."

²²***"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! ²⁴"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*** -(Matthew 6:22-24).

Paul's point was not to give his readers a timeline or a literal description of how all the end-time events would fit together. Instead, he wanted to reassure the Thessalonians that their fellow believers who had died would not miss out on Christ's return and eternal Kingdom.

¹³“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

-(1st Thessalonians 4:13-18)

The Thessalonians did not need to continue worrying about the spiritual state of those who had died. Paul explained to these believers that being dead or alive at the return of Christ would make no difference, for Christ would bring all His people together to be with Him forever. Instead of worrying, they should ***“comfort and encourage one another with these words.”*** Even in the face of death, believers know that their Lord is ultimately triumphant.

The Exodus encounter of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea at Yom Suph is the premier example of how God “snatched defeat from the jaws of victory” from Pharaoh’s army. I see on the horizon just ahead an example of “Typology” of New Testament “Deliverance” modeled upon the Old Testament Exodus prototype! God finales are always spectacular.

“Faith in Jesus without the expectation of Christ’s parousia is a check that is never cashed, a promise that is not made in earnest.” -(Peter Lewis)

Blessings,

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