

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer's sermon on 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 emphasizes the joy of Christ's return for believers and the serious implications for unbelievers, urging a life of anticipation and faithfulness.

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Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:16

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Description

Paul Washer emphasizes the significance of the second coming of Christ as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, highlighting the joy and hope it brings to believers while also warning of the seriousness of being unprepared. He explains that Christ will descend with authority, and the dead in Christ will rise first, followed by those who are alive, all to meet the Lord in the air. Washer encourages believers to comfort one another with these words, reminding them of the eternal joy of being with the Lord forever. He stresses the importance of living in anticipation of this event and the need for believers to support one another in faith. Ultimately, he calls for a deep, personal relationship with Christ, urging listeners to collapse on Him in faith.

Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to 1 Thessalonians, again, chapter 4, and we'll begin in verse 16, and hopefully we'll finish the chapter this evening. But there is a lot in this, in these verses that we need to look at, we need to have some clarity about. We not only need to know what they're saying, we also need to be careful to recognize what they're not saying.

So many people say so many things about the second coming of Jesus Christ that really are not substantiated by the scriptures. And so we need to work within the limitations of what the scriptures are giving us. Look at verse 16.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we always be with the Lord.

Therefore, comfort one another with these words. Now, first of all, look in verse 16. The Lord himself will descend.

Now, we covered this a few weeks ago, but I want to just look at it again just for a moment. What does that tell us? Him descending. It means that he is presently reigning in heaven in his resurrected, exalted, glorified body.

He reigns as king of kings and lord of lords. There is no higher place that can be given to him that is not his now. All authority has been given to him in heaven and on earth.

So when he descends, he is descending from the highest place. Now, some scholars, when they look at this, where it says in verse 16, for the Lord himself will descend. There's kind of a debate about we got some pilots flying over.

There's a debate about exactly what does that mean? Some would think that it means that instantaneously you will look up in the sky and the Lord will be there. Such as Hebert, he believes that. But when you get to Hedrickson and others, they say, no, that's really not going to be the case.

Although the shout, the trumpet, the command is immediate. When you look up, men will see the Lord descending. Hedrickson says it this way.

It will not be an instantaneous change of location from heaven to earth, but will be characterized by a kind of majestic leisureliness. The whole world standing in awe as Christ slowly descends, although it will be a surprise, he needs no surprise. All authority has been given to him.

In one sense, we could say this is his day. This is his day to shine and the comforting thing about that, the New Testament links the two things together when it is his day to shine. When it is his day to be vindicated, it is also the churches.

It is also ours. It is also yours. Now, the reason why Hedrickson and others believe that the Lord will come down and everyone will behold him descending is because of what was said in Acts chapter one.

And I want to direct your attention there. Versus nine and eleven. This is what it says.

And after he, that is, Jesus said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on and a cloud received him out of their sight. You see what's going on there? It's a gradual ascension. They can see him being lifted up.

They can see him being taken from their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while he was going up, you see that again, gradual ascension. Behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.

They also said, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in just the same way as you have watched him go into heaven. So they watched him ascend up. And some scholars believe you will watch him descend down.

But with such a majesty and such a glory that goes beyond any human definition. Also, this time it will not be isolated to this small group of disciples so that it can be debated whether he's the Lord or not. This time when he comes, there will be no debate, but there's something that I want you to see, whether it's instantaneous or whether it's gradual.

For the believer, it will result in joy, unspeakable and full of glory. Remember, believer, no matter how weak that you and I are, I want you. And even though there will be a judgment of believers, I want you to recognize this one thing.

Jesus Christ did not shed his blood for you so that the first thing you would see when you looked in his face was a scowl. When you look in his face, this is the meeting of meetings, joy, unspeakable and full of glory, but for the unbeliever. And I want you to think about this.

I recognize that tonight I'm not just preaching to believers. If Christ were to come right now for some of you, yes, it would be joy, unspeakable for others of you. It would be something like a terrifying bewilderment.

And I want you to think about that, no matter how young you are, no matter how old this is serious, this is extremely serious. Now, look what it says again. In verse 16, for the Lord himself, it would be possible in the original languages for Paul to give more emphasis, the Lord himself.

Now, it is an amazing thing, as I said two weeks ago. If a king sent his car for you, that would be a great gracious act, or if a king not only sent his car, but sent his top associates to come pick you up, that would be a very gracious thing. But it's quite another thing when the king himself comes off the throne.

In order to receive you. In order to come and get you. I have written this when we think of the infinite glory of Christ.

And the not so glorious appearance, present day appearance of the church, we wonder if it would not be more reasonable that he sent someone to fetch us. After all, kind of like the servant of Abraham went to fetch Rebecca for for Isaac. Or Haggai went to fetch Esther for King Xerxes.

I mean, when we think about the glory of Christ, should he arise from his throne to get a ragged, tagged group like us? Well, he answers that he says, yes, and not only does he come himself, but it seems as though he may bring all of heaven with him for this reunion, for which he has waited more than 2000 years. And also know this, when he comes to get his church, he's not ashamed of her. He comes with banners unfurled.

And you say, but but me, you know what you've got to realize is we're going to see hopefully if we make it through our texts tonight, you're not going to be you anymore. Because when that trumpet blows, you're going to be transformed with such glory, with such majesty that if you could see yourself right now as you will be, then you would have a tendency to want to fall on your face and worship. That's the glorious transformation that Christ is going to bring about that bride right now.

She may look soiled, she may look rather pitiful. But on that moment. The world has never seen such beauty as the bride of Christ is going to be now.

That day is coming, and I want you to see that that day is coming and we need to live for that day, we need to reciprocate he's coming. We need to receive him, but not just think of receiving him on that future day when he comes again, but thinking about receiving him continuously about even now, we have been given eternal life and the door has been opened wide so that you and I can commune with him. And it's a shame not to.

I want to give you a few ways in which we can reciprocate the love of our Lord, that we can respond properly. To his love for us, first of all, if you look in chapter one of First Thessalonians, look how Paul knows that these Thessalonians are believers. In verse nine, he says, for they themselves, that's other people report about a report about us, what kind of reception we had with you and how you turn to God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven.

And we should be, in a sense, waiting and watching every day. There should be at times a far away look in our eyes. When maybe, you know.

For those of you around here, you just kind of put off things and get away from the noise, maybe go out to Bissett Park and just lay down on your back in the grass and look up at the clouds and kind of just have that far away look in your eyes longing for him. Longing for him. Now, how can we cultivate that in our lives only through the study of scripture, only through seeing more and more of the beauty of Christ? Now, how else can we reciprocate by communing daily with him? I'm going to read a text to you that almost always is taken out of context.

And because it is the beauty of it's destroyed, it's used for evangelism when probably it shouldn't be. This text is for you. For you, the church.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will dine with him and he with me. That's Christ knocking not on the door of the sinner's heart, but Christ knocking on the door of the church. And knocking on the door of us as individuals, always desirous of communion, and you and I should respond.

We should respond. You know, sometimes when your children are growing up and maybe you're busy doing something and your child comes in and wants to show you a picture or wants to do something with you and you say, no, I don't have time. And then all of a sudden it's like something just pops you on the back of your head and you say, what am I doing? This child is not always going to be in my house.

I'm going to long for the day when I can hear that voice and see those drawings and everything else. It's the same way. You know, Martha, Martha.

Martha, what are you doing, Martha? Mary has chosen the better part and it won't be taken away from her. Also, by waiting every day for his direction. There's a passage in Proverbs that I just I love.

It's beautiful. Blessed is the man who listens to me watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts. It's almost like that man, he's constantly there just waiting for his master, maybe even to catch a glimpse of him through a window or waiting for the doorknob to turn and see it open so that the master comes outside his home.

He's waiting. He wants to be directed. Tell me what to do.

And then finally, we can reciprocate by being found faithful in carrying out the charge that has been given to us. Now, you'd make no mistake about it. Every one of you has been given a charge.

Now, don't be overly or super spiritual and thinking that charge can only be if you're a missionary or a preacher or this or that. Now, every one of us has been given a charge. Charge to be fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters.

The charge to exercise our gifts, to take advantage of the opportunities that have been given to us, every one of us has a charge. And listen to what the Lord Jesus tells us. Blessed is that slave whom his master finds doing so that is serving faithfully when he comes.

Truly, I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. Let us be found faithful. Don't walk around in a cloud, discover the opportunities that the Lord has placed before you, discover what you can

do in his name.

Do not despise the so-called secular things, because for the believer, there's nothing secular. If you're called to father, you're called to be a policeman or you're called to be a cook or a window washer. Or a doctor, it's all for him.

Let that be your charge. Do it unto his glory and to reach as many people as possible with the gospel. Now, it says also here in verse 16 that he will descend, descend with the shout, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God.

Now, there's three prepositional phrases here. Look at them. OK, it's very clear in our new American standard.

It's clear in the Greek New Testament with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trumpet of God. Now, this construction is a little bit confusing and it lends itself to different kind of interpretations. Really doesn't matter the differences.

But I want to go through them with you just just for a minute so that you'll understand some things. First of all, I want to give you three possibilities of what this is talking about. Believe it or not, it could be referring to one specific thing and not three.

Even though there are three prepositional phrases, it could be referring to this. There will be a shout and that shout will come from the archangel. And that archangel is also what is being referred to when it says the trumpet of God.

Now, some people have gone that way. I don't really agree with that, but it is there. So I wanted you to know about it.

Then there's another possibility that it could be referring to two specific things. There will be a shout which will come from the voice of the archangel and that will be accompanied by the trumpet of God. To me, that lens seems to have a little bit more credibility.

But let me give you the third interpretation, which is the one that I agree with is this, that there will be a shout. And in my estimation, probably the shout will come from the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And then there will be this voice or cry of the archangel.

And then that itself will be accompanied by what is known as the trumpet of God. Now, let me tell you the one thing about this that is for sure. I'm going to read it to you.

The one thing that is for sure is that it will be a sudden blast, all this sudden blast introducing an immediate event. It's like now you see the back of my hand, now you don't. You don't see the back of my hand.

Now you do. It is going to come upon the world. It will be an immediate event.

It leaves no time. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes again, it will leave no time whatsoever for further consideration and it will leave no time for an alteration of your life, your belief system, your plans. It's done.

It's done in one shout. The event is upon us in its fullness in just one moment. And for some, it will be like the swift and immediate rising of the sun.

For another, it'd be like entering into a deadly trap. There's a certain kind of spider that's found in certain areas in arid regions, and it makes kind of a hole in the sand and it's something that has something like a trap door and an insect comes by there and it feels the vibration. And you can't even see the spider moves so fast that it's got its prey and it's gone before you in a blink of an eye.

And there's nothing the prey can do about it. Nothing. Isn't it amazing? For some, it will be an immediate sunrise for the other immediate darkness and death, but a death that never ends.

I want to say there's something I've written here at that moment. All men will be held fast in the destiny that they have chosen for themselves. Michael Card describing the Day of Judgment says he simply speaks the sentence that they have passed upon themselves.

It's terrifying. And even for so many of you, so many of you, maybe some of you young people, do you know it will be horrifying on the Day of Judgment when you knock on the door and say, let me in? And he'll say, no. And you'll say, but but I was there.

I was in the middle of all the saints. I was hearing the preaching. My dad even taught us Bible studies.

I mean, I heard about you. I sing about you. And he says, depart from me.

I never knew you. I never knew you now. Hendrickson says this, the dramatic suddenness and swiftness of the series of events is stressed.

It is in the text. Once the Lord appears upon the clouds of heaven and begins to descend, there will be no opportunity for conversion. His coming is absolutely decisive.

He does not come to convert. He comes to judge. You know, sometimes it's hard for a minister, especially one that's not as cloistered now as I am in my older years where I'm just basically studying and preaching.

I can imagine our brother that works on campus, that you're walking out in the midst of thousands and thousands of people, and it's got to enter into your mind and heart every once in a while. If Christ were to return at this very moment, the suddenness of the event, how many would be saved? How many would be lost? And here for the minister of Christ to keep his sanity, he must trust in the sovereignty of God. Now, it says with a shout, *Kelusma*, this word literally means not just a shout, it means a shout of command.

The Greek scholar Thayer says in the Greco-Roman world it referred to an order, a command, specifically, though, a stimulating cry. It's used in ancient texts to describe the driving of animals, for example, a charioteer driving his horses or a huntsman driving his hounds. It's also used as a shout to signal or direct men, for example, the captain of a ship who yells commands at the rowers.

It's also used as a military phrase in which the captain or the general shouts orders at his troops at the beginning of the attack. See, what we're seeing here is is power is power. Now, the origin of the shout, as I said, if you look in the text, the origin of the shout is not defined.

We're not told who's giving the shout. But remember, preceding this text, we're studying about what the resurrection of the dead. And because of that, I would be more likely to go with the interpretation, as a matter of fact, it's the one that I hold to that this shout comes from Christ himself, because in other texts we see that it is the command of Christ that raises the dead, not the command of angels, but the command of Christ.

If we look at John chapter five, verse twenty eight and twenty nine, this is what Jesus says. Do not marvel at this for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice. Let's hear the voice of the son of God and will come forth those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Now, so many people get confused here and say, well, see, there you go. Salvation by doing good deeds and damnation by doing bad deeds. Now, you've got to take in the whole of Christ's teaching.

These good deeds and these bad deeds are simply evidences of an interior or inward work. They have good deeds, not perfect deeds, not the deeds necessary to justify themselves by their own deeds. But they have good deeds because they've been saved through faith and their hearts have been regenerated and made new.

It's very important to understand now. So here we have this shout of command. Then we have the voice of the archangel.

Now, we could spend a lot of time here and we're not going to do it because most of the time we spent would be in speculation. But we are going to see some certainty, some things that can help you understand this text. First of all, archangel.

OK. The idea here are the word archangel comes from the Greek word Archangelos from Archon, which means chief ruler first and Angelos, which means angel. So it's the idea of a chief angel.

Now, the word archangel is used in only two places in the Bible right here and also in the New Testament in Jude nine. And I'm going to read it to you. It says, but Michael.

The archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said the Lord rebukes you. Now you say, what on earth is going here? Well, going on here? Well, I'm afraid that's another sermon. We can't get into it.

But we do see that there's this archangel and we see something else. His name is what? Michael. Now we pick up on the idea of Michael and we realize that there's a there's an angel called Michael also in the Old Testament in Daniel chapter 10.

And what's going on here? Well, Daniel chapter 10, 13. What's going on is this. There is an angel, not Michael, another angel that Daniel says is awesome in appearance.

So awesome that Daniel's terrified. But this angel that's awesome in appearance comes to Daniel and explains to him why he's been delayed and has been so long and not helping Daniel. That's something he'd been in a conflict.

And he's explaining that to Daniel. And here's what he says. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia, we can only assume here that this is some sort of fallen angel.

The prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for 21 days. Then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes and that were chief princess. When we get over to the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it looks a lot like.

Well, that we could identify him as an archangel, but he says this, he says, one of the chief princes came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. Now, this angel that's so awesome in

appearance that he terrifies Daniel is obviously not as great as this archangel Michael. What's interesting here is it says this, it refers to him as one of the chief princes, which is not absolute proof, but it does incline us to believe that there's more than one archangel.

Now, what can we pull from all this? Well, I said all that not in order to fill your head with speculation, but just to allow you to see that although we need to look at these things, we need to do so with a great deal of caution because there are people who take just one or two texts and invent magnificent stories that have no biblical basis. They're like wives tales and they should not be foundations for our faith. What we can learn from this is this.

First of all, angels announced the first coming of our Lord when he was born. Is that true? Yes. Angels also were there and announced the resurrection.

He's not here. Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He's resurrected just as he told you. All right.

Angels were also there manifested themselves in the ascension. So it's not unusual that angels should be intricately involved in his second coming. Also, there's something that when we study the book of Revelation, we see that angels are often sounding trumpets and giving loud cries, introducing the judgment of God and the second coming of Christ.

So whatever happens in this second coming, we know for sure that it will be accompanied by a manifestation of the angelic, but. We know that we're not going to be over preoccupied with the angelic, are we? Because all those angels, all their glory combined is nothing compared to the one whom they serve, Jesus Christ. And that's why it's such a shame when you see Christians and people who claim to be Christians just so mesmerized by the angelic.

Honestly, we should be mesmerized by nothing but Christ. But Christ now, I want us to go on, he says, with the trumpet of God. This same trumpet is mentioned in First Corinthians 15, verse 51 and 52, and I'll read it to you.

He says, behold, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we all will be changed. Now, a lot of people put that in the nursery of the church referring to the babies, but that's not the immediate context.

Behold, I tell you a mystery, we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable. And we will be changed. And that brings us great hope, that word imperishable.

Now, some of you, especially you young people, you're on your way up every day. You're getting stronger. You're developing more.

Your mind is increasing. Your muscle is increasing. Your bone is strengthening.

But you see, you're going to reach a place. Where are you going to reach kind of the apex? And then what's going to happen? Perishing, perishing, perishing. I was with Richard Owen Roberts this last weekend.

He said he got in a debate with one of his and was a grandson or something about how tall he was. And it went something like this. He told him that he was five, eight.

Then he went to the doctor and realized, oh, my, I'm five, seven or five, six. And then he went back just a couple of months later and he was like five, five. And he said, what's happening to me? I'm shrinking.

Yes, we're perishing and you need to realize that that all the vanity of youth, all of it, it lasts for a moment and then you perish, then the perishing starts. Do you see that? And to live for this world is is asinine. It's foolish.

It's foolish. Now, he says also he uses the trumpet of God, and this commonly refers to something in the Old Testament. When we hear about the trumpet of God, it commonly refers to God's appearance and not only his appearance, but the gathering of his people to him.

It's very interesting. We see it on the mountain, but we also see it around the tabernacle. Now, I'm going to give you one case in Exodus 19.

Just listen to this. So it came about on the third day when it was morning that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound so that all the people who were in the camp trembled and Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. And they stood at the foot of the mountain.

Do you see that here we have a manifestation of God and then we have the people being brought to God. Now, that's something like the second coming, except in the second coming, his appearance and our coming to him is wonderfully different. Listen to the writer of Hebrews.

Now, remember, keep in mind Exodus 19, what happens? There's darkness, there's smoke, there's lightning, there's trembling. They can come to the foot of the mountain, but if they touch the mountain, they're going to die. I mean, this is terrifying.

But now listen to the writer of Hebrews chapter 12, verse 18 through 24. He says this, for you have not come to a mountain that can be touched. And to a blazing fire and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words, which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them, for they would not.

They could not bear the command. If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned. And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I am full of fear and trembling.

But you, the believer, you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to myriads of angels and to the general assembly and the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven and to God, the judge of all and to the spirits of righteous, the righteous made perfect and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkling of blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. Now, how is this possible that here there's only a partial manifestation of God on the mountain and it's just darkness, fear, trembling and warning? And in the second coming, we have a full manifestation of God and it is absolutely glorious. What is the reason for the change? There's only one Calvary.

Where the blood of Jesus Christ was shed and look what it says at the last part of the word in Hebrews, it says, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. You say, what does that mean? What did the blood of Abel do? It cried out from the ground, didn't it? What did it cry out? Vengeance, vengeance, vengeance. What did the blood of Christ cry out, forgive them, forgive them, forgive them.

Not only did it cry out, forgive them, the blood was the basis of the forgiveness, because if the blood had not been shed, forgiveness would have been impossible because God is just. He cannot ignore his justice even in the name of love. So in order for him to show love to us, he must first satisfy his justice, which means someone must appease his wrath.

So the justice might be satisfied, who did that, Jesus Christ on Calvary, where he bore the guilt of his people and he was crushed under the wrath of God, and right before he died, he cried out, it is finished because his suffering satisfied the demands of God's justice. And now God can be just in the justifier of me and you because Christ died in our place. That's why this changes for us.

This changes. I'm not saying that we should be trite in our relationship with God, I'm not saying that that we should be silly or not show him respect, we should show him the greatest respect, but it must be balanced by the fact that all our sins have been paid for, our guilt has been removed, our conscience is clean because there's no longer any outstanding crimes committed against God because Christ nailed them to the tree. We're free.

We're free so that when he comes. When he comes. We expect open arms.

Because that's what he's promised. I remember one time when when he was a baby, he's sitting on the bed like this and I was kind of watching him. He's sitting there, he was a lot shorter then.

A lot wider, too, and he's just sitting there and I came around the corner and I let him see me and he went like this. There was no doubt in his mind what was going to happen. No doubt.

I don't want there to be a doubt in yours. I would dread to think there's a doubt in yours. I know you've said, I know you mess up.

But. But don't you ever think that whatever you can do. It's more powerful.

Is greater than the blood that cries out, not vengeance, but forgive them, you're free. We all know what you are. But you're free if you've trusted in Christ now.

Let's look in 16, so sorry, we're not advancing very much. But in 16 B and 17, it says, and the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds. Now, I want you to understand this because a lot of people don't.

I didn't. What is it not saying? It's not saying that the trumpets going to blow and the dead are going to rise and then the dead are going to be transformed and then the dead are going to ascend up. And then after that all happens, we're going to we're going to lag on in behind.

That's not the idea that's set forth in the text. What's set forth in the text is this. The trumpets going to blow.

The dead in Christ are going to rise transformed. And we're going to be transformed as they're transformed, and then all of us. As this united for the first time, for the first time in all of history, this united people of God, absolutely perfect, absolutely splendid, absolutely one with no friction doctrinally or morally absolute perfection, then we will all go together and rise to meet our Lord.

Now, the phrase caught up, it says, then we who are alive and remain will be caught up is translated from the Greek word *harpasal*, and it is kind of a violent term. It doesn't mean he's going to yank us out of here, but it does demonstrate power. The word can mean to seize, to catch up, snatch away, carry off, take

away by force.

It's used in another place in the New Testament in Acts 8:39. Let me read to you. When they came up out of the water.

The spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing, snatched him away by the power of Christ. We will rise. But even though it will do no harm and it is not to be feared at all, know this.

It is going to be a violent gathering up, but a violence with regard to power, a violence with regard to joy. It's almost like being cast up in the waves of God's love, drawn to him as a woman madly in love with a man would run to him. That's what's going to happen.

And never forget something I always like to keep in the back of my mind, God's love is as violent as his wrath, maybe more so now just to let you know, because you've all heard the word rapture, right? It's from this Greek word, when this Greek word out of Basel was translated into the Latin Vulgate and even today used in Latin, the word is raptal from which we get rapture. So if you want to know where the idea of the rapture comes from, it comes from this word translated in Latin. Now, the phrase in the clouds.

In the scriptures, like the trumpets, the clouds often are symbols or at least appear whenever we see manifestations of God. So we are going to see some magnificent cloud work, folks, magnificent cloud work. Let me just give you a few verses that talk about this type of thing.

Exodus 9:9. The Lord said to Moses, behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever. Then Moses told the words of the people to the Lord.

Exodus 33:9, whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent and the Lord would speak with Moses. First Kings eight. It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the Lord so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.

Then Solomon said the Lord has said that he would dwell in a thick cloud. Psalms 104. He lays the beams of his upper chambers in the waters.

He makes the clouds his chariots. He walks on the wings of the wind. Matthew 17:5.

While he that is Jesus was still speaking a bright or a bright cloud overshadowed them. And behold, a voice out of the cloud said, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him, Matthew 24.

And then the sign of the son of man will appear in the sky and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the son of man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. It's just going to be so different, though, for each one of us is going to all of humanity is going to be divided into two groups. Some, the moment they see it, will say my redemption draws not.

Not life is over, life has begun and others will cry out, let the mountains and the rocks fall upon us to hide us from the wrath of the Lamb. We will see infinite beauty. They will see infinite terror.

And the only difference is Christ is Christ. Now, it says also to meet the Lord, it says to meet the Lord now literally in the Greek, it's into a meeting with the Lord. The Greek scholar Hebert gives us the following things to think about.

In Hellenistic Greek, the expression this meeting in a meeting with the Lord in a meeting had become a kind of technical term denoting a ceremonial meeting with a person of very high position. OK, you've got a meeting one day with a person of a very high position. For some of you, he will be a judge.

For others of you, he will be a brother. Get to know him now while you're walking in the way so that you're not taken to court on that day in the papyrus usage. Now, papyrus was if you ever go to Egypt, you get a chance to look at papyrus.

It was taking kind of cane, smashing it, putting one this way, several this way and several this way. And then they made a type of paper that they could write on in papyrus uses usage. It was used of an official delegation going forth to meet a newly appointed magistrate or other dignitary upon his arrival in their district.

Yeah, he's about to arrive. In our district, we're going to find out as soon as he arrives, it's not our district, it's never been our district, it's always been his. Now, two Greek scholars, Hogg and Vine, they say something, and I want it, I want you to think now about this because I just I want you to understand some things that are going on and some things that are said about the second coming.

Hogg and Vine remark, almost inevitably, the word suggests that those who go out to meet him. Return to their starting place with the person met. Now, you may not know it, but I just said something, if I was in a room with a whole bunch of theologians, I just said something extremely controversial, extremely controversial.

Some of them would already kind of be ready to fight and just listen to what they're saying. The word suggests that those who go out to meet him return to their starting place with the person they've met. Now, what is he what is Hogg and Vine saying? Well, they're saying something that is called.

It has to do with the belief of post-tribulation. That believers will pass through the tribulation. Suffering greatly.

And then Christ will appear and they will ascend up to him and then Christ will return with them. Gaining the victory and judging the world. Now, the pre-tribulation view would say, no, no, no, no, no, that's not going to happen.

We're going to be taken out and we'll go with him. We're not coming back. We're going to heaven with him.

Then all that bad stuff is going to happen and then we'll come back with him in glory. And here's what I want to say. There's not enough evidence in this phrase to indicate either way.

And that was the purpose of me sharing that with you, whatever your belief is on post or pre-tribulation or whatever you are. I just want to caution you that with this text alone and this simple phrase, you may be able to gather some information, but don't be drawing conclusions. You see, there's not just there's just not enough there.

And it's not really the intention of the text. The text, its intention is simply to say we're going to meet him. We're going to meet the Lord.

And after all, that's all that matters, because once we're with him, I really don't care what happens now. I want us to look at the phrase in the air. I do not think that we should make too much of this.

I think that what it's referring to is that we will simply meet him above the planet in the clouds. And I believe it will be visible to all men exactly how that will be. I do not know.

But that we will meet him above, be gathered with him, but some scholars like Leon Morris and others, they believe that there's a particular reference here in the air to Ephesians 2 to Ephesians 2 to what do we hear about the devil? What is he called? The prince, the power of the air. Here's what Leon Morris says, that the Lord chooses to meet his saints there on the demons home ground, so to speak, shows something of his complete mastery over them. Now, whether that's the case or not, we know this from other texts.

He has complete mastery over them and his victory will be a final and thorough victory. There will be no loose threads. There will not be any enemies running around having to be dealt with when he returns.

It's over. It's over for his people's enemies. The sad thing is it may be over for some of you.

Who are not yet his people now, he says, and I'm going to hurry through this, I want to finish so we can get to five next time, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Now, the literal here is a lot is not as pretty. It's very rough, but it is more powerful.

In the new American and the new American standard, it has. And so we shall always be with the Lord. But literally it is and thus evermore with the Lord we shall be.

Now, in the Greek order is very important when things occur before. A lot of times it is to show emphasis. First of all, it says and thus, what does that mean? It's almost like he's bringing everything to closure, not just the text itself, but he's bringing all of history to closure.

And he's saying, and finally, what we're going to be with him. And that's the consummation of our joy. That's what it's all about.

It's not about, you know, some materialistic view and the streets of gold, gates of pearl, all these things. It's not about a little mansion on the hilltop or even a great big mansion on a hilltop. What it's about is this.

We will be with the Lord and it says we will be with him forever more. It is a permanent state that will never be altered. It will never be discontinued.

There are so many times in prayer when we meet with the Lord and we have a special sense of his presence and we don't want to stop praying because the Lord, I can't bear to just go about a normal day now. That'll never happen. It'll always be the fullness of his presence always and not a presence of faith.

Faith will be no more. It will be a presence of sight. That's wonderful.

That's wonderful. And then he goes with the Lord. Now, here's the thing I want you to see in the literal translation, listen, and thus evermore with the Lord, we shall be with the Lord comes before we shall be.

Why? Because what makes our our future and eternal existence so extraordinary and marvelous is that we'll be with the Lord. That's what Paul's trying to say. He's putting that first.

Not that we shall be forever. That's not the big deal, even though it's true. People in hell will be forever.

But that will be forever with the Lord. You see that. Sometimes I'm so afraid when I hear people consider themselves Christians, when I hear them speak, because they're all about.

It would be like. Heaven would be great for them, even if the Lord wasn't there, but for the believer, they would rather be in hell with the Lord than in heaven without him. You know, the greatest fear of the believer is you talk to a lost man.

He may be afraid of hell, but he's not afraid of being without Jesus. The true believer that's mature in what his fear is. It's not hell.

It's separation from Christ. I couldn't bear to think that I'd have to walk around again with that huge hole that nothing can fill on this planet except him now. I want to read this to you, something I've written because I want to get it all in there, and it's this.

The text does not tell us where we will be. But with whom we will be, this is the great emphasis of Christianity and any true teaching on eschatology, if it's teaching on eschatology and it's given you times and seasons, go to the door and just get out there. Because true teaching of eschatology is not about times and seasons.

True teaching on eschatology is this. He's coming and we're going to be with him. OK, we do not need all our questions answered if we know him, we do not need to know exactly where we will be or what will happen as long as we know we will be with him.

It doesn't matter because we'll be with him. You say, you know, when when a girl first finds that guy that she's going to marry and she's just all in love, you know, and her friends call her one day and say, hey, you know, that new mall we've been waiting for, it's open. Let's go tomorrow morning.

Let's go to the mall. And she says, no, no, my boyfriend called. He invited me, he's going to change the oil in his car.

Why would I want to go to the mall? I can be with him changing oil. You see, and then later on, you know, 15 years later, he goes, you want to go out to eat? She goes, no, I must stay and do dishes. It shouldn't be like that, but it is, I'm afraid.

Many times, but the whole point is, what more do I need to hear? It's like I sometimes I walked in this I've walked into groups several times and they're talking about, oh, when I get to heaven, I'm going to have this and I'm going to have this and I'm going to be rewarded and I'm going to this. And I'm sitting there going, I'm just going to be happy to be there. To be with him.

To see him, you see now, look at what it says in 18, yeah, we're reaching there and we're going to finish. Once again, look what it says, therefore, comfort one another with these words. Here we see that the purpose and emphasis of the entire text, the purpose and emphasis of teaching on the second coming is either to encourage or comfort.

And in this case, it's the comfort to comfort people who are greatly concerned about those who had died, believers who had died prior to the coming of Christ. Now, before we go on to talk about this, let me just give you something from the papyrus that is an amazing thing. It's found at this time around this time when Paul is writing and it's some pagans writing pagans to comfort them with regard to the death of someone.

Now, listen to this encouraging piece of work that we find from these pagans without Christ. Irene to say on office and to feel good comfort, I was sorry and wept over the departed one. But nevertheless, against such things, one can do nothing, therefore comfort one another.

Farewell. So. We're just a lot of comfort there, isn't there? Comfort one another with what you have nothing to comfort you and you have nothing to give comfort to another, you don't.

But the believer is different. You see, we can draw comfort for ourselves and we can give comfort to others. Why? We know we are going to rise transformed and perfect.

How do we know that the skeptic says? Because he did it historically. He rose again from the dead. He ascended up to the right hand of God and his promises are true.

This is our comfort. This is our comfort now. Paraclete, I love when this word is used because it always comes with different meanings and you have to look at the context.

But sometimes I believe there's the idea of both meanings or more than two meanings when it's used. And here's something that I want to tell you. We need to comfort people who are weeping over these types of things and comfort people in their sadness.

But don't leave people just with comfort. It would be wrong. Soupy.

Would not be beneficial. Don't just leave people with comfort. We not only want to comfort people, we want to exhort them to take hold of the promises and not continue on in this defeated, depressed state.

Now, we want to be sensitive again. We want to comfort. Comfort and young people, whenever you're going to give counsel in this area, think more about comfort than exhortation, because young people like to exhort more than comfort.

We want to comfort, but we also want to encourage people to say, look, lay hold of the promises so that you come so that you cry no more. Also, this is very important because death is like the biggest thing on the on in life. I mean, it's what everybody's concerned about.

And we as believers ought to be able to show there is a true and substantial difference between us and the pagan, that we have a hope that's for real now. Also, look at this. This is extremely important, church.

Look at this. Look at verse 18. You'll miss it if you're not careful.

Therefore, comfort one another with these words. Notice Paul is not comforting them with these words. He's telling them to comfort one another with these words.

It's not that the apostle never comforts, but the whole idea here is a reflection of what he wrote to the church in Ephesus in chapter four. Listen. And he gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ.

Do you see how this applies? It's not like, oh, there's someone suffering here in the church, so let's immediately go get the pastor because he's the only one who can comfort someone. No, we ought to be all instructed in the word. We ought to be growing to maturity so that we can be a part of this body life in which we are also ministering.

We are also comforting. We are also exhorting, but in a way that is helpful to the pastor and not something he has to go back and fix again. Do you see this is why every one of us must be mature, we must study the scriptures.

Now, finally, he says with these words, comfort with these words, literally in these words, comfort them, not with your own personal wisdom gained from your own personal experience. That's not what he's telling you to do. He's not saying comfort them with your quaint cliches or your supposed spiritual insights that no have no biblical foundation.

He's saying comfort them with the living word of God. What do people need? I'm sorry, I hate to rain on your parade, but they don't need all your all your little wisdoms and they don't need mine. They need what that when you open up your mouth, the word of God comes out in its context and properly applied.

And that's something that all of us can do through our sincere and careful study of the word of God. So finally, we come to the end of chapter four, but we come to an end knowing that. All right, we probably don't have.

A whole lot of our questions answered with regard to times and seasons, but we do see this. That we live between two days, don't we? The day when Christ died on Calvary for us. When he hung on Calvary before all men and the day when he returns and all men will stand before him in judgment, we live between those two days, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Hold on to both of them. This second coming would mean nothing but judgment if it wasn't for his first coming in Calvary. Brothers and sisters in Christ and you young people and those of you, all of you who are listening, this is serious.

It could happen even tonight, so we're trying to scare people, no, I'm just stating a fact. It could happen even tonight. Be ready, be prepared.

I would say run to Christ, but then people say, well, I don't think I'm running right enough. I could say grab a hold of Christ and you would say, well, I don't think I'm grabbing a hold tight enough or with enough devotion. Well, then try this one on collapse on Christ.

I think that's maybe at least in my small mind, that's the best way for me to understand saving faith. Because there's I mean, everybody can just collapse. I've never held on to him tight enough to boast about it.

I've never run to him with a flaming heart that someone would want to write a song about. But I collapsed on him and I remain collapsed, people say, hey, Paul, climb over to the edge, there's a lot of neat stuff to see. No, I'm staying right here in the middle of the rock on my belly, face down with my arms extended.

I'm not moving. You see, collapse on Christ. And he will pick you up on that final day.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for the patience of your people to learn.

Lord, please help us, Lord, from this pulpit to be a blessing to your people that they might be strong and happy in the Lord. In Jesus name, amen.

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