

He is Coming (Part 2)

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[0:00] Let's open our Bibles this morning.

I'm a little hoarse. I sang too hard. That's all right. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 And read all the way to the end of that chapter.

Chapter 4. Have you got it? But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

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

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

[1:18] For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Therefore, comfort one another with these words. Excuse me. Tremendous words, aren't they?

And having read that text, and thinking about each move of the text, every phrase, every sentence, even down to some of the specific words.

When you put it all together, we are encouraged, aren't we? To comfort one another with these words. The words that Paul has just written.

[2:22] And I would say to you that, without a doubt, at least in my own heart and mind, when it comes to those passages in the Bible that speak about the second coming, I think this one is the most thrilling.

Not to minimize the importance of other references to the coming of Christ. Not to say that one is better than another. But obviously our hearts and minds kind of respond to certain ways of articulating this truth, more so in some ways than in others.

And I think of all those places in the Bible, this one is the most thrilling to me. Now, it is intended, that is what Paul has written here, is intended to excite you.

It is. And I believe that the way Paul wrote it, verse by verse, as he moved throughout this portion of the chapter, his intent was to get us excited about it.

Now, certainly his intended audience was the Thessalonian believers, the church there in Thessalonica. And certainly that was his intent for them.

[3:50] Now, I don't think Paul was inspired in such a way as... Oh, thank you, dear brother. I will... I'm sorry to say dance at your wedding, but you're already married.

Ah. Perfect. Thank you. I don't know if it'll help me. It sure tasted good. Now, what I was saying, the way this reads, even in our English text, and I think it probably read this way, or in this sense, even in the original letter that Paul wrote, as he wrote to those believers of Thessalonica.

Paul didn't have anything in his mind about Don Coleman, who would read this letter a couple of thousand years later. Or for you, who have certainly read this text before, and now you're hearing it again, I don't think he had in his mind us, necessarily.

Now, the Holy Spirit did. As the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write these words, but they were intended to excite God's people over this event, in God's end times events.

But not just to excite us, because we certainly need more than that. But these words were intended to inform. Because the Thessalonian believers were, shall we say, unclear about certain things concerning the second coming of Christ.

[5:28] They didn't have the full revelation as we have it today, and so Paul was certainly writing to inform them. But it also informs us as well.

And it's not a stretch for me to assume that there might be at least one or two people in here who have never really considered this passage in 1 Thessalonians. Maybe you've never heard a sermon on the subject.

And so, it is intended to inform us about certain events that are going to take place at the coming of Christ.

But I would say to you this morning that the primary intent here is to encourage. Now, that's pretty close-skinned to excite, but it's a little different, and it's something a little bit more than just simply being stirred inside and excited emotionally.

Paul's intent was to encourage, to inform, yes, but also to encourage us. Certainly, that was his purpose, I believe, when he originally wrote, when he wrote the letter to these believers, to encourage them, to comfort them.

[6:41] And we have a clear indication of that in verse 18 when he writes, comfort one another with these words. So, the words that he wrote here, not just in this section that we read, but certainly in the entire letter, but specifically at this point in the letter, his desire is that we be encouraged.

Now, why would that be his intent? Well, the Thessalonian believers had a problem. When you read both of the letters, and you kind of piece things together, and you don't really have to read between the lines, and certainly not in this text, we understand that the Thessalonians were ignorant about something.

I mean, after all, Paul began this portion of the chapter with the words, I would not want you to be ignorant, brethren, speaking to the believers.

So, they were ignorant about something. Will Rogers said, everybody's ignorant, only on certain subjects. And that's true, isn't it? And so, the Thessalonian believers were ignorant about a certain aspect or feature of the second coming of Christ.

The believers there were, in a sense, incomplete in their knowledge. They were lacking something. That's what ignorance is, isn't it?

[8:04] It's just a lack of knowledge about something. And so, we need to be informed. They were ignorant, or they had a limited understanding, because the revelation had not yet been fully disclosed.

They had a limited understanding about a certain doctrine in relation to the second coming. Now, I think they understood a lot about the second coming. I mean, they had Paul as their teacher, and no doubt Paul had informed them after they became believers that Jesus was going to come again. I think they knew some specific facts about that. I think that's obvious from the letters. I mean, they knew that Jesus would one day come again. They knew that His coming was imminent.

They certainly knew that. And it is, isn't it? The second coming. It's imminent. Imminent. Imminent. But now, dear people, maybe this is a point of information that we need, as well as a point of information the Thessalonian believers needed.

The word imminent does not necessarily mean immediate. See, I think sometimes we confuse the two. That we think imminent means immediate. That means it's going to be right now. Well, it may not be right now.

[9:23] But it still can be imminent. It was imminent for these believers there in Thessalonica 2,000 years ago. So you know that imminent does not mean immediate.

It does not mean necessarily that Jesus is coming today. We know that, don't we? I mean, just logic would help us understand that point.

It also does not necessarily mean in the truest sense of the expression that Jesus coming is soon. Though it may mean that for us today.

I don't think that we could say that imminent meant that for the Thessalonian believers because, you know, it's been now 2,000 years and I think that's way beyond soon for them.

But it could be soon for us today. Couldn't it? And we're hoping so, aren't we? I hope you are. And so it could mean that for us.

[10:24] And so imminent may turn out to mean immediate for us today. I mean, Jesus could come right now.

He could. Now He didn't, did He? But He could. And it could be, very soon, could be immediate.

Alright, so what does the word imminent mean then?

Well, imminence means that the second coming of Jesus Christ is the next event on God's agenda.

That's what it means. It's the next event. And, as such, it could happen, may happen, at any moment. There isn't anything that must take place first.

That's why we as believers are not to be looking for signs. I think there are some signs in the sense that we can notice some, as the Bible calls them, birth pangs on the earth.

[11:25] We can see certain things happening that give an indication. And yet, that does not necessarily mean that Jesus is coming in our lifetime. So, we're not looking for signs.

We're just waiting for that next event. And it's imminent. It means it could happen at any moment. It's the next thing on God's timetable. And it may happen in our lifetime.

It may not. Now, ironically, I think, it was their belief, the Thessalonians, it was their belief in the imminent return of Jesus Christ that got them into trouble.

There's where the, kind of the problem resided. In their understanding of this imminence. To them, imminence meant immediate. To them, apparently, they thought that Jesus was going to come in their lifetime.

I think there is some indication, even in this text here, if I might say, that the Apostle Paul had a similar feeling about it. That Jesus was going to come in His lifetime.

[12:34] I know there's a lot of argument about that among theologians, and I don't want to make too much of it, but if you'll notice there in verse 15, as a matter of fact, and I read it a moment ago, it says, For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we, who are alive, and remain to the coming, until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who are asleep.

We, who are alive. I think there's, kind of an indication here, that Paul had that idea, that thought. You can argue about that if you want to, it doesn't matter, because really, when it comes down to it, it's okay, to think He's coming in your lifetime.

It's okay for us to feel that way, today. It's okay for Paul, to have this thought, even if it's just simply an expectation, that Jesus was going to come, in His lifetime.

It's alright for the Thessalonian believers, to have this thought, this idea, this desire, that Jesus was going to come, in their lifetime. There isn't anything, wrong with that, at all.

Okay? Let's just, let's just make sure, we understand that. See, the Apostle Paul, can think that way, and that doesn't make, or negate anything, he's written in the Bible, to negate it, as if it were some kind of error, just because, maybe he had a thought, that Jesus was coming, in his lifetime, and he was wrong about that.

[14:05] His thoughts are not inspired, by the Holy Spirit. Not all of them. Now those thoughts, that turned into words, and were put on the printed page, those were guided, and moved, and inspired, by the Holy Spirit.

But Paul, can have a thought, that Jesus was coming, in his lifetime. And I suggest to you, that we ought to feel, the same way. Even though it may not, happen that way.

And my point, is simply this, the believer, as believers, we are to be living, every day, in the constant anticipation, that Jesus is coming, may come, at any moment.

That's how we're to live. I think the Bible, teaches us that. That the believer, is to be living life, as though Jesus, is coming, today.

Now I would ask you, just to think about it, logically. Would that kind of, anticipation in your life, make any kind of difference, in the way you live, your life?

[15:12] And, in any way, would it? I think so. The places you go, the activities you're involved in, the things you're doing, in life. I think we could make, a pretty good case, from scripture, sure, that the Bible teaches that, that we're to be living, looking, longing for, and anticipating, the coming of Jesus, at any moment, so that we're ready.

Now I don't mean, that we're to, get a lawn chair, move up on the roof, of our homes, and just, you know, quit our jobs, and sell everything, just sit up there, and wait for Him to come.

I'm not saying that. No, we're to be living, our lives, as the Bible prescribes, that we're to live it. As the Bible commands, us to live it. Doing those things, that God has called us to, and gifted us to do, and so forth, and so forth.

In this thought, with this thought, that Jesus may come, today. And whatever I'm doing, I don't want anything, that I'm doing, that is coming, to in any way, dishonor Him, and dishonor His Word.

Alright, so I would say that to you, by way of introduction. But now, the problem, with the Thessalonian believers, was not so much, ignorance, about the second coming, in, in, with the idea that, you know, He is coming.

[16:36] They knew that. And they had some knowledge, about that. The problem was not, so much that. The problem, was not, in their belief, that it was going to happen, at any moment.

I mean, we could look at them, and analyze them, and maybe even, criticize them wrongly, and say, you shouldn't be, thinking that, you don't really know. But that wasn't the problem. The problem, was in their, ignorance, concerning, their dead, family members, and friends, those who had died, in Christ.

lost, what was going to happen, with them. Would they, miss, the second coming, because they're dead now? I know that seems, kind of ridiculous to us, today, several thousand years later, and, based upon what we know, and understand, from the word of God, it's kind of, difficult, for us to, think how, the believers there, in Thessalonica, could have that idea.

But, apparently, they did. It's helpful, for us to understand, that the Thessalonian church, was a new church. It was, when Paul wrote this letter.

We would call it, today, a new church start. And so, consequently, the members, of this, fairly new church, were unbelievers, prior to this, and just very, very, not long ago, had become believers.

[18:04] And so, they were, baby Christians, in that sense. And, there was a lot, that they, still did not know, and, and a lot, that Paul, was going to reveal, to them, and teach them, and others, of their teachers, would teach them, and, eventually, they would learn more, but they were new, in their faith.

We need to understand, that about this church. Now, it was an exciting church, I believe. I mean, they're all, pretty much, brand new believers. And, they're very excited, about their new found, faith in Christ.

Something, that sadly, we tend to, lose a little bit, after, we're believers, for some years. Shame on us. We kind of, get comfortable, kind of, ease into it, and, oh yeah, yeah, Jesus died for me, I know that.

That's, kind of old hat. And, that's sad, that we would, we would kind of, move in, and gravitate into, that kind of feeling, that, you know, the great, great things of our faith, and the grace of God, and faith, and the cross of Christ, and, and our sins forgiven, and eternal life granted, all these things, that those things, would not, stir us anymore.

But, this church, church in Thessalonica, was brand new. And the believers there, were very excited. Jesus had died for them, and Jesus was coming again, for them. Any day now, they're thinking, he might come, and they were excited, about the prospects of that, the prospects of his second coming.

[19:38] But then something, tragic happened. Something inevitable, took place in this, brand new church. Someone has described it this way, let me read it to you.

Just a, kind of a, imaginative scenario. It is Sunday morning, and the newly established church, of Thessalonica, is meeting for Sunday school.

Can you picture that? Let's look in on, one young couple's class. Today's lesson, the second coming. The whole class is buzzing, with excitement.

They've all studied their lesson, and can't wait, for the teacher to begin. Their teacher is, brother Thaddeus, brother Thad, they call him. And he was one of the first, of Paul's converts.

He had been personally taught, by the apostle, and had himself led, many in the class, to faith in Christ. He's a great teacher, and the class enjoys, an incredible fellowship, with one another.

[20:42] After they open with prayer, brother Thad, gets right into the lesson. Dear brothers and sisters, I am so excited, about our lesson for today. As you have studied, brother Luke, writes about the holy apostles, as they stood there, with the Lord Jesus, and watched him ascend, up into the clouds.

And remember, the holy angels, were there, holy angels were there, and said to them, you men of Galilee, why stand you, here gazing up into heaven?

This same Jesus, which is taken up from you, into heaven, so shall he, in like manner, come, as you have seen him go, into heaven. He goes on with the lesson.

And the whole class, then erupts, with joy, and excitement. Amen! One young lady shouts. And don't forget, about the words of Jesus, before his death.

Remember, John the old apostle, still speaks about it. Jesus said, that he would come again, and receive us, unto himself. And suddenly, everyone is talking, at the same time.

[21:48] Oh, how exciting. I can just see him, how, see him now, in the clouds, with his holy angels. Oh, when will it be? It won't be long now, surely.

Maybe he will come, right now. And we will all go up, to meet him, as a Sunday school class. Oh, wouldn't it be great, if we were all together, with Jesus, when Jesus comes. Fast forward a year. It's Sunday, and the young married couple's class, is meeting, in the usual place. But there is, a different teacher now.

There are some new faces, in the class, but some of the old ones, are missing. Brother Thad, had become ill, in the past year, and died. Another young man, in the class, had been stoned to death, because of his faith, in Christ.

And there were others, in the church, who had now passed away. The lesson, once again, centers on the second coming, and there is excitement, as before, but there is also, sadness, and concern.

[22:52] And someone, finally speaks, aloud, what everyone else, had been thinking. I know Jesus, will be coming soon, and I'm glad. But oh, how I wish, Brother Thad, could be here, when he does come.

And the others, they're going to, miss it too. You see, this is, what the problem was, with the believers, in Thessalonica.

They believed, in the second coming, and they, were excited, about that, and knew that Jesus, would be coming, at any moment. And so, Paul is compelled, to write, to them, because, they had a misunderstanding, about it.

And so, this is why, he writes, what he writes, in chapter 4, verse 13, and following. And that brings us, to the first point, of the message.

And that is, the faith, in his coming. Do you have a faith, in his coming? I mean, a faith that you live in, that, quite often, comes into your mind, that is a faith, concerning, the sure return, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[24:14] A faith, in his coming. You see, the believers, in Thessalonica, were grieving. We don't get that, just from this story, this kind of, fictitious, kind of scenario, that I read, a moment ago.

We get this, from the text itself. It's implied, clearly, in, Paul's, subject here. It is obvious, that the people, there were grieving, over their loved ones, who died, that is, other believers, in the church, who died.

And they were going, to somehow, miss, the coming of Christ. And so, they were under this, kind of, cloud of grief. A grief, that went, way beyond, a natural, kind of grief, grieving, over someone, who has died.

And that's, why Paul said, in verse 13, that they were, grieving, even as those, who do not, have any hope. And so, their grief, was based, upon an, underdeveloped, faith, an understanding, of the truth, concerning, the coming of Christ.

Jesus was coming, and their dead, loved ones, were somehow, going to miss it, was their thought. This belief, filled them, with a sense, of, hopelessness.

[25:43] Hopelessness. Because, it's just, a short step, from being concerned, that your dead, loved ones, are going to miss, the coming of Christ. Just a short step, from there, to, then entertain, the thought, well, what if I die, before Jesus comes?

And I believe, this is what they were thinking. And so, it led to, kind of a, a point of, hopelessness. Kind of a despair, in their life. And so, the apostle Paul, had to solve, this problem.

And that's why, he wrote this letter. Now, having said that, it is, highly unlikely, that anyone, in this room, here this morning, has the same problem, that the Thessalon, I can believers had.

I mean, you're, you're, you're, more informed, than they were. We have the, completed word of God. We have the full revelation, right here, from cover to cover.

God's not going to add, any more to it. Everything we need to know, not only about the second coming, but everything else, that God wants us to know, is already given to us. And, and, many of us, maybe even most of us, have read, through that, book, from cover to cover.

[27:04] And we've considered, the things that have been said there, written there for us. And we have studied, many parts of it. And I would, uh, uh, venture to say, that, uh, most of us, have studied, and, uh, quite extensively, those passages, that deal with the second coming.

Because we're excited, about that prospect. And so, we're not, uh, like these Thessalonian believers, in that, uh, you know, we have the idea, that our dead loved ones, and friends, in the church, those who've died in Christ, are going to somehow, miss the second coming.

I doubt there's that thought, that idea, that belief, in the heart and mind, of anybody here. And so you might be thinking, well, what, then, is there here, in this text, for me?

And why would, this be important, for us today? Well, it's very clear. You see, in Paul's approach, to solving, their fears, in his approach, to doing that, their fears, and their hopelessness, he reveals, to us, the remedy, for any, and all, fears, that we may have.

Any, and all, points of hopelessness. And it has to do, with his word. You see, when we know, the truth, as revealed, in God's word, then it removes fear.

[28 : 33] And it removes, hopelessness. Because hopelessness, and uncertainty, are products, of, ignorance. I'm not trying to be, disrespectful, or offensive to you, but you're ignorant.

We all are. Remember, Will Rogers, only on certain subjects. We have a point, of ignorance. And where do we go, to have that ignorance, removed, from our lives?

We go to God's word. And so, when the ignorance, is removed, so is the, hopelessness, that's produced, by the ignorance. And so that makes, the word of God, important.

And that's why Paul says, I would not have you, to be ignorant. And he says, ignorant makes you, act like people, who have no hope. And so Paul, gives them, the word of God. That's what he says, in verse 15.

He says, this we say, to you, by the word, of God. The word of God. And now, what then, is the word of God?

[29 : 39] Well, that Jesus died, and rose again, on the third day, just like the Bible said. That he is coming back, and when he comes, he's going to be, bringing with him, your brothers, and sisters, who have died, in Christ.

They're going to be, coming with him. That's what the Bible, tells us. And you and I, will be, snatched up, out of this, world, out from this earth.

And we will all, be meeting together, with the Lord, in the sky. That's the word, of God, that Paul, preaches, or teaches them, through this letter, so that, they're not ignorant, anymore, and so the hopelessness, is removed.

And this is a great truth, Jesus, meeting him there. And all of your, dead loved ones, will be there, those who have died, in Christ. And you and I, will be there.

Glory, hallelujah. Great, great truth, great word. It dispels hopelessness, because it removes ignorance. But it, listen, it doesn't matter, what the point, of ignorance is.

[30 : 56] Whether it's pertaining, to the second coming, the events of the second coming, and some of your, concerns about that, and doubts about that, or maybe it's something else, in your life, that you're grappling with, and dealing with, and maybe some misunderstanding, or misconception, or shortness of understanding, of God's word.

And so we get into God's word, and it removes the fear, removes the ignorance, and removes the hopelessness, and it brings comfort. That's the formula we find, unfolding for us here, in this chapter.

The word of God, produces the hope of God, and fills your heart, with the comfort, of God.

May I say that again? That's why it's so important, that you get into this book, read this book, because the word of God, produces the hope of God, and fills your heart, with the comfort of God.

Whether it is your questions, related to the second coming, and the events, that will take place then, or whether it is, any other issue, in your life, in your family, anything, whatever it is.

[32 : 20] The word of God, produces the hope of God, and fills your heart, with the comfort of God.

Paul said, comfort one another, with these words. And so having said that, let's look at the word of the Lord, here.

The word of God. What is this word specifically? And so not only, is there the faith, in His coming, but secondly, the facts, concerning His coming.

They're given to us, right here in the text. The facts are there. All of them, not all of them. Every minute detail, concerning the coming of Christ, no, not every minute detail.

You know, that's kind of, what we want sometimes. We want every detail. But, the pertinent facts, are given to us, right here. The facts, the Thessalonian, Thessalonian believers needed, and the facts, that we need today.

Now, remember, it is the facts, the truth, that is, that removes ignorance. And, it is the removal of ignorance, that removes hopelessness.

[33:32] And, brings comfort. So, let's look at the facts. Now, verse 14, if you look there first, just kind of set this up, because he's going to get into the facts, but he's going to introduce them, in a very special, kind of specialized way.

Verse 14, is what, we call, a first class, conditional sentence. What does that mean? It means, an if, then, kind of sentence.

We write that way, and we read, these kind of, sentences all the time. If, this is true, then, this is true. That's the first class, conditional clause, or sentence.

And so, if, or, since, we know that Jesus, died and rose again, this is what Paul said, in verse 14, since we know that to be true, and, I assure you, the Thessalonians, believe that to be true.

Do you believe that to be true? That Jesus died and rose again, on the third day? Do you believe that to be true? If that's true, or since that's true, and that's really the force, of the, of the sentence, since that's true, Jesus died and rose again, then, Thessalonians, then, you folks here today, then we know, something else.

[34:56] What do we know? That when Jesus, that when Jesus comes, the dead in Christ, are going to be coming with Him. If, then. And then verse 15, is kind of a continuation, of this, this approach, to laying, forth the facts.

It's a continuation, of this conditional sentence, and, we know that by the word, for. For, this, we say unto you. Which means, that, we know, some other things, about, the second coming of Christ, that are equally true.

Jesus died, and rose again, and so the dead in Christ, are going to come with Him. And we know some other things, about that. This is, Paul's kind of flow, of thought here.

And we put that together, and I think it helps us, to feel the, and sense the full force, of what Paul's teaching. And so, we know some other things, we know some other facts, and what are these facts?

Number one, and we'll just take this, just as they, unfold before us, in the text. Number one, the Lord, Himself, will, descend, from heaven.

[36:10] Do you see that there, in verse, 16? Now let's just stop right there. The Lord, Himself, will, descend, from heaven.

What a glorious, true. The Lord, Himself. Have you, ever considered, that it was an angel, that announced, His first coming?

The angel, Gabriel, announced it, to Mary, and Joseph, through a dream, to the shepherds, I believe it was, Gabriel there, but even if it was, a different one, it was an angel, the angel of the Lord.

A specific messenger, from God, who came, and visited, with those shepherds, there, out there, on that hillside, tending their flocks, by night. And, the announcement, was made, of the coming, of the Messiah.

It was an angel, of God, who did that. Have you considered, that it was, the Holy Spirit, of God, that was, there, who came, at the birth, of the church, the bride, of Christ?

[37:23] That happened, at Pentecost, remember? That story, in Acts? The Holy Spirit, came down, upon, and indwelt, and the church, has been indwelt, by the Holy Spirit, ever since.

It was an angel, of God, that announced, the first coming, of Christ, at his birth. It was the Holy Spirit, of God, that was there, at the birth, of the church. But, the Son, of God, Jesus himself, is, coming, to take, his church, out of this world.

Not anybody else. He's coming, himself. The Apostle Paul, wrote to Titus, in Titus chapter 2, verse 13, he said, we are looking, for that, blessed hope.

What hope, is that? The glorious, appearing, of the great God. Who is that God? Our Savior, Jesus Christ.

He's coming, himself. Number two, he will come, Paul said here, with a shout. With a shout.

[38:38] With the voice, of an archangel. And with, the trumpet, of God. What, what is this, talking about? Well, the word, shout, really, is referring, to a command.

That's the idea, behind that word. He's coming, with a command. A shout, a command. And the phrase, voice, of an archangel, is referring, to authority.

Authority. So, he's coming, with a command, a command, backed up, by the full authority, that he possesses.

I believe, the shout, and the voice, will be coming, from Jesus himself. I believe, it's going to be Jesus. Not an angel. The voice, the shout, the command, the command, of authority, comes from Jesus, himself.

We, you know, we do have, a kind of a sneak preview, of this, there in John chapter 11, when Jesus raised Lazarus, from the dead. Remember that story? And Jesus, comes, to the open tomb, of Lazarus, and he, shouts, Lazarus, come, forth.

[40:00] And Lazarus, comes hopping out, alive. I don't think, it's, just mere speculation. Some have suggested, and I, tend to agree, that if Jesus, had not been specific, about that command, every tomb, would have opened, and all the dead, would have come out.

He said, Lazarus, come forth. But one of these days, he's going to be, giving that command, that shout, with the authority, full authority, for all the dead, in Christ, to come out of their graves, and they're going to come out, wherever those graves are, and wherever their bodies are, and the particles, of their bodies, whether they were burned, and ashes spread, all over the ocean, or wherever they may be, or burned up in a car, and never seen again, but all, that's going to come back together, and he's going to shout, and they're going to come forth.

See, it's a shout, that is, it's a command, a command that will be obeyed, just like Lazarus obeyed, when he came out of that tomb. And it's with authority.

That's the idea, behind these expressions, shout, and the voice, of an archangel. But what about, this trumpet of God? What is this? Well, is this Gabriel, blowing his horn?

That's usually, how it is characterized. Maybe that's right, I don't know, but I, I think otherwise, maybe it's Jesus. Maybe he's going to blow the horn, at his coming.

[41:35] You know, kind of to announce his coming. Actually, I believe, this is talking about, not talking rather, about a literal trumpet.

Now, if you believe that it is, it's alright. You're in good company, but I have to, proclaim it the way I believe it. I believe, this is the sound, of his voice.

Jesus. The sound of his voice. And it's, carries the idea, of attention. The sound of attention.

You know, the book of Revelation, is prophetic, of things to come. And, I believe, that the book of Revelation, is neatly organized, and kind of, kind of organized, according to, the chronological, order, of things, that are going to take place.

And so, chapters 1 through 3, I believe, are, referring to the age, in which we live right now. The church age. And so, we have the letters, to the churches, in chapters 1 to 3.

[42:40] In fact, the last church, listed there, is the Laodicean church, that lukewarm church. And, I'm one, that just takes, each of the letters, to the churches, as signifying, certain eras, in the church age.

And, the last one is, Laodicea, the lukewarm church. I believe, that's where we're living, right now.

And so, maybe, you know, that's the last age, so Jesus is coming, very soon.

I don't know about that. I don't know how long, that age will last. But, the chapters, first three chapters, are about the church. And then, when we get to chapter 4, then the Bible, begins to describe, the great tribulation.

That's seven years, of tribulation. And, the first two verses, of chapter 4, I think, are alluding to, the same event, that Paul is speaking of, in this text, in which we're looking at.

First, Thessalonians chapter 4. The same event. I believe, he's talking about, the rapture, of the church. Now, look at, chapter 4, verse 1, in Revelation, if you have it open there.

[43:50] I'll go ahead and read it. After these things, what things? The letters to the churches, and the things that Jesus says to them. After these things, I looked, and behold, a door standing, open in heaven.

And, the first voice, which I heard, was like a trumpet, speaking with me. Saying, come, up, here.

And, I will show you things, which must take place, after this. I believe, it's an illusion, to, rapture the church. Come, up, here.

One of these days, that's what, Jesus is going to do, when He comes. He's going to shout. Give a command. With His full authority. And, with the trump, of His voice.

He's going to call us, out, of this world. That's what, this is all about. And then, what's next, after that?

[44:53] What comes next? Verse 16. The dead in Christ, will rise first. See, it's going to be orderly. There's going to be, things taking place, in their proper order.

And, according to scripture, not just here, but in other places, the dead in Christ, are going to rise first. This is the first resurrection. This is that part, of the bride of Christ, who have died.

These are the ones, that Thessalonian believers, were concerned about. Their dead loved ones, those who died in Christ. These are the ones, who died, and whose bodies, have been laid to rest, in the grave, somewhere, in multiple places.

And, the bodies, of all the dead, in Christ, are going to be, coming up, out of their graves. And, these bodies, that have been, sleeping in the grave, so to speak. That means, they'll be laid to rest. These bodies, that have been in the grave, they're going to be, raised, they're going to be, changed. They're going to be, changed to, incorruptible, and immortal, just like Paul, describes, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15.

[45 : 59] And, their souls, have been with Jesus, in heaven. Because, see, the souls, are not asleep, in the grave. Just the bodies, are there, where that grave is. But, their souls, have been with Jesus.

Paul said, to be absent, from the body, is to be present, with the Lord. And, then in verse 14, here in our text, he says, that those which, sleep in Jesus, will God, God will bring, with him, when he comes.

And, this is what, the Thessalonians, needed to hear. You know, they're, dead friends. Maybe, maybe they were saved, the same day. You know, and, God gloriously, saved them.

And, then maybe a month later, one of them dies. And, they're concerned, about that one who died.

And, what's going to happen? They're going to miss, Jesus coming. And, now, Paul assures them, and reassures them, that when Jesus comes, their dead loved one, is going to be with him.

Coming with him. Because, the dead in Christ, will rise first. And, so the dead in Christ, are resurrected. Then, what happens next? Verse 17. Then, we, who are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together, with them.

[47 : 17] Who, who are them? The dead in Christ, and Jesus. Raised, caught up together, with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord, in the air.

There it is. That's the rapture. You say, I don't see the word, rapture there. Well, it's not there. That word isn't. Paul said, that, we will be caught up.

Caught up. It's a translation, of a Greek word, harpazo, is, the word, but it means, to seize. To, carry off, by force.

To be, snatched, away, involuntarily. I mean, it's not, you're not, we're not going to be given the option, you want to come now?

And we say, well, I, I think about it. No, by force, we're caught up, and snatched up, out of this world. That's where we get this, doctrine, or this idea, of the rapture.

[48 : 25] Now, the word rapture, doesn't appear in the text, not in the Greek text, it appears in the, Latin text, of this passage, and, and so, we have rapio, in the Latin, and it is kind of morphed, into the word, rapture, that's where we get the word, rapture, but the idea is the same, whether it's harpazo, or rapio, or whatever it is, it is the idea, of being caught up, snatched up, out of this world.

It's the rapture, of the church. The apostle Paul used the same word, in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and verse 2, when he described being caught up, into the third heaven.

Same word there. Rapture, kind of caught up, seized, snatched, into the third, third heaven, as Paul described it.

And we shall be raptured together. And the rapture, the raptured church, will join, the resurrected church, those who died, prior to the coming.

And we shall meet Jesus, there in the air, and never again, will we be separated from him, or one another, forever, and ever, and ever, and thus, shall we always be, with the Lord.

[49 : 42] Paul said. All right, so, the faith, in his coming, the facts, of his coming, there they are, he just lays them right out for us.

And they're meant to excite us, as well as to inform us, and certainly meant to encourage us. And then, one final thing, as we close, and that's the fellowship, of his coming.

See this, this doctrine, of the second coming, and all the events, that are associated with it, as God reveals in his word, are meant to, to be a comfort to us.

And, they are, points of fellowship, for us. We fellowship, around these things. Now folks, there are several reasons, why I believe, the resurrection, rapture of the church, will take place, prior, to the tribulation, is not my intent, to cover all those, this morning.

We'll do that, another time. But let me give you, at least a couple of them. Right here, from this text. In the first place, though the Bible, certainly promises, that God's people, will, experience tribulation. [51:01] We all will. God's people, throughout time, maybe not so much, in our lifetime, and not in our context, of life, but God's people, have endured, tremendous, seasons, of tribulation.

Many have died, for their faith. The Bible doesn't promise, that we're going to be, excluded from that. That's clear, from scripture. scripture. But nowhere, does the Bible, associate the church, with what it, specifically identifies, as the great, tribulation.

That, time period, Bible ascribe, seven years to, and I take that, very literally. Nowhere, is the church, associated with that. In fact, in Revelation, after chapter 4, and as the, tribulation is described, for us, nowhere is the church, inside at all.

And why is that? Because we're not here. No need to mention us, because we're not here. Alright, so I think that's, clear from scripture.

And it will be, you know, the tribulation, will be a time, of God's wrath. He will pour out, upon the unbelieving world. That's what the tribulation, is for primarily.

[52:25] In fact, in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5, and verse 9, he says, for God, did not appoint us, to wrath, but to obtain salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake, or sleep, we should live together, with him, therefore comfort each other.

Here's that, same expression, comfort each other, and edify one another, just as you also are doing. So we're not appointed, for that. And that's one reason, right from Thessalonians, why I believe, the church will be raptured, before the tribulation.

There's another one though, and it comes here, in verse 18, and it may be very subtle, it may not be, the only point, of scripture, that you would use, to justify, a belief in the rapture.

There's one, very major one, in my opinion, and that is, what he says, in verse 18, therefore, comfort, one another, with these words. He says, I don't get the connection.

It would be awfully difficult, would it not, to comfort one another, with the words, concerning the second coming, if we're going to have to go, through the tribulation.

[53:45] Not a lot of comfort in that. We think we have tribulation now, but the indescribable horrors, of the tribulation.

But the bigger point, that I want us to see, and leave us with, this morning is, that the second coming, is a point of fellowship, for us. Not only, should it, certainly, mean, a great deal, to you personally.

Not only, should it then, be kind of a motivation, a very profound motivation, for how, each of us, should live, personally.

In our anticipation, of the second coming. But it is, a tremendous, point of doctrine, for God's church, to come around, and gather around, with one another, and fellowship around.

We, we share, the same anticipation. And we comfort, one another, with this same, anticipation. I think, that the second coming, is a tremendous point, of comfort, comfort, for whatever, troubles we face, within the body, of Christ.

[55:18] The issues, in your life, and the tragedies, that occur, in your life, and the losses, that take place, in your life, the struggles, points of struggle, that we all experience.

One, common, point of comfort, is, that Jesus is coming, he's coming.

He's going to make everything right. And we're going to be with him, forever, and ever, and ever, and ever, the fellowship, of his coming.